

Recreo offers eight one- to five-bedroom villas, all with panoramic views of the Guanacaste Mountains.

# Attentive elegance at secluded **Recreo resort** in Costa Rica

By Johanna Jainchill

Recreo, a 63-acre resort on the coast of Costa Rica's Guanacaste

province, was aptly named for the Spanish word for "recess." An hour's drive from the border with Nicaragua and just over an

hour from the nearest international airport, in the town of Liberia, Recreo is one of those very secluded and remote resorts designed for travelers who truly want to get away from it all.

The last half-hour of the drive from Liberia is a bumpy ride down a long dirt road, adding to the sense of seclusion upon arrival.

### Private idyll

This resort is the definition of privacy and is not designed for clients who wish to socialize with other travelers.

Every couple or group staying at Recreo enjoys its own private villa and a personal chef.

Recreo offers eight one- to five-bedroom villas, all with panoramic views of the Guanacaste Mountains and, in some cases, of nearby Bolanos Bay.

Each villa is privately owned and is completely different in terms of size, style and location. Some are quite modern — the one-bedroom being the

most contemporary — while others have a more "traditional tropical" design aesthetic.

Travel agents should be sure to check out a sufficient number of villa photos at the resort's website, [RecreoCostaRica.com](http://RecreoCostaRica.com), and ask management about each residence before making any decisions on clients' behalf.

Each villa at Recreo has its own pool — with Villa No. 19 sporting the largest — which is wonderful for late-afternoon dips. A local masseuse, originally from France, can come to Recreo and give guests poolside massages.

For \$40 per day, guests can rent a golf cart, which is highly recommended for exploring the expansive property.

A mountaintop sitting area is perfect for watching Pacific Ocean sunsets while spider monkeys swing from nearby trees. The almost-private beach, a five-minute ride away, is a long and secluded stretch of the Pacific tucked into a horseshoe-shaped cove, making the clear water calm and ideal for swimming.

Recreo guests often find themselves alone at the beach or are sometimes joined by other Recreo guests or local fishermen launching small boats.

A Recreo staff member is stationed at the beach all day, and a small trailer is stocked with body boards, Frisbees and kayaks. The staff presence means guests can take long walks and



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## Looking to be environmentally responsible, Recreo has developed just 12% of its 63 acres.

swims without worrying about their belongings.

### Top marks for service

The staffer at the beach is one of the many reasons the service at Recreo earns top marks, with employees going out of their way to accommodate guests' needs.

For example, Mike, the guest services manager, has no problem running to the nearby town to fulfill special requests. Laundry requests are taken care of on the same day. The chefs are willing to cook almost any special requests, and dietary restrictions are graciously accommodated.

(Note: The chef for Villa No. 20, Recreo's only one-bedroom villa, usually doubles as the chef at nearby Villa No. 19, making the two units the only villas where the chef is not exclusive.)

The chefs quickly learn what guests like: in my case, it was fresh tropical juices every morning and lunch packed in a cooler to take to the beach. And on the night my travel partner and I brought home a huge tuna we'd caught during a fishing excursion, Ernesto, a former sushi chef, served it as sashimi.

In terms of activities, Recreo has an on-site stable for horseback riding as well as complimentary mountain bike rentals. It also offers boat tours for guests who would like to go snorkeling or fishing.

Recreo also offers several excursions, including a full-day trip that includes a zipline tour, a slide down a mountain waterslide and a soak in mud baths (\$85 per person plus a \$200 transportation fee). Recreo's most popular trip is a full-day visit to Nicaragua.

### Fishing with locals

A fishing excursion, at \$75 per hour, is a highlight among Recreo's many activity offerings and exemplifies the symbiotic relationship the U.S.-owned resort has with the Costa Rican community in El Jobo, a small nearby town where most of the property's staff live.

Rather than charter the services of a large sportfishing company, Recreo works with a local resident who owns a clean, modern fishing boat and has spent most of his life fishing the local waters.

During my visit, he knew every spot in the area where tuna would be biting during a sunset fishing expedition — and bite they did.

As good as it was to bring a fish home for dinner, being able to deliver 10 other tunas to the locals in El Jobo was even better. The resort is proactive in community outreach and paid for a new well and pump and 10

new police bicycles for El Jobo. Recreo also sponsors a litter-cleanup program for kids and is planning a recycling initiative.

As much as it can, Recreo sources locally grown produce, and in its quest to be environmentally responsible and preserve the region, Recreo has developed only 12% of its total land area. Another way the resort minimizes impact is by

not using harsh pesticides, which means insects of all kinds are part of the experience here.

Tip: In the dry season, Recreo is very dusty and brown, but, on the plus side, rain is never an issue. In the wet season, everything is in bloom and green.

For more information or to book, see [www.recreocostarica.com](http://www.recreocostarica.com).



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