

Home » World Travel » Dream Time at the Villa Manzu, in Costa Rica

WORLD TRAVEL

# Dream Time at the Villa Manzu, in Costa Rica

By Anne Z. Cooke



Aerial views of the Papagayo Peninsula, on the northwest corner of Costa Rica, reveal the 30,000 square-foot mansion, the Villa Manzu, in splendid isolation, alone on five green acres, Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

If you can answer “yes” to three essential questions, a dream vacation at Villa Manzu, on Costa Rica’s Papagayo Peninsula, may be in your stars.

Do you have a dozen or more buddies, besties who’ve been vaccinated for Covid-19 and are itching to get out of the house? Are they the free-wheeling sort, willing to splurge, always up for an adventure? Lastly, are they cheerful and tolerant, relaxed enough to share a house with 21 other people?



Plant trees around any Costa Rican deck and monkeys will be regular visitors, Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

SUBSCRIBE TO FREE NEWS LETTER

Get the best viral stories into your inbox!

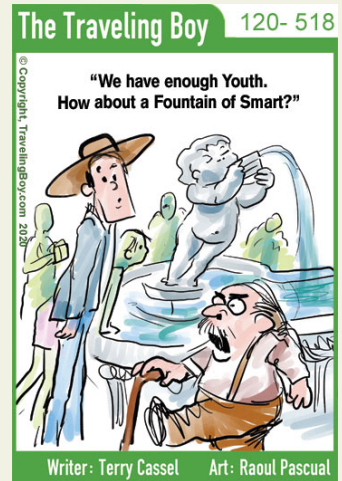
GUEST WRITER: ANNE Z. COOKE



Anne Z. Cooke, a travel and adventure writer, covers the world from digs in Los Angeles and a log cabin in the Rocky Mountains. A regular writer for the Tribune News Service, a wire service, her stories appear in travel and lifestyle publications in the U.S. and internationally. A some-time blogger and columnist, she covers a range of topics, ranging from luxury lodging to Arctic exploration and wildlife conservation, always with an eye out for the back story.

▼ MORE

TRAVEL CARTOONS



VISIT OUR SPONSORS

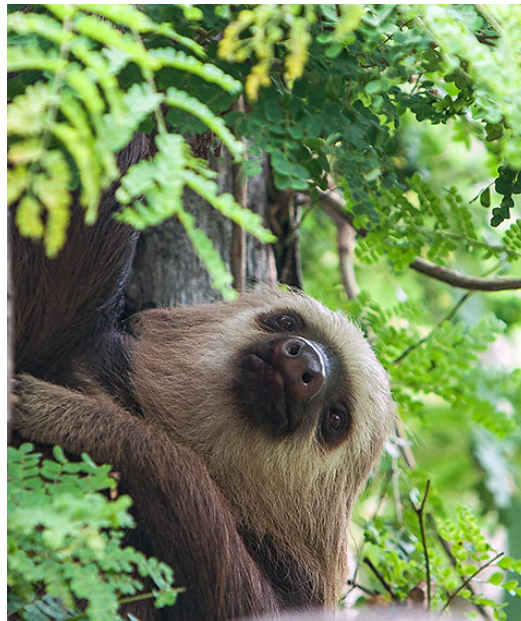


When a letter arrived from Stephanie, one of my oldest friends, announcing her anniversary and proposing a getaway with 20-odd other people – mutual friends and colleagues – I was tempted to toss it. A six-day vacation at Villa Manzu, a private, fully-staffed mansion with two dozen strangers? Crowds aren't usually my thing. But in a mansion like Manzu, she explained, you need a crowd – or a big bank account – to share the cost.



Bold forms, both inside and out, echo the rugged cliffs of the location, on the Papagayo Peninsula, Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

"Do join us, you won't be sorry," she said, reeling off the benefits. Guests are guaranteed privacy and luxury, of course, as well as a variety of activities: ocean swimming, two heated pools, kayaks, paddle boards, fishing gear, impeccable service and chauffeured drives in the area and to and from the airport in Liberia. Chef-prepared meals and butler-served cocktails served at any hour, are part of the pleasure, she insisted, along with glimpses of neighborhood residents, including Costa Rica's most popular furry friends: monkeys and sloths. I hemmed and hawed, and then I jumped.



Three-toed sloths at Diamante Eco-Adventure Park's zoo, near Playa Matapalo, a half-day outing from Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

Six weeks later we – my partner and I – were on our way, flying into Liberia Airport, where a Manzu driver was waiting. Forty minutes later, driving out onto the exclusive Papagayo Peninsula, we got our first look at the house, an adobe-colored contemporary building spread out over five acres, with connecting wings flanked by patios, lawns, native trees and flowering bushes.



Find Your Dream Vacation!



Big Sur's 2020 Promo  
STAY 2 NIGHTS, GET 20% OFF  
OR STAY 3 NIGHTS, GET 30% OFF



Big Sur Lodge  
BIG SUR, CALIFORNIA



Booking Now

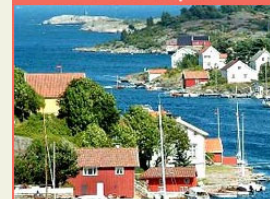
FOR THE BEST RATES OF THE SEASON



Booking Now

FOR THE BEST RATES OF THE SEASON

VisitNorway.com



Switzerland.  
get natural



Sitka.org



Sitka, Alaska  
The natural place  
to visit





The design and décor in Villa Manzu's interiors reflect the arts of local and Southeast Asian indigenous cultures, Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

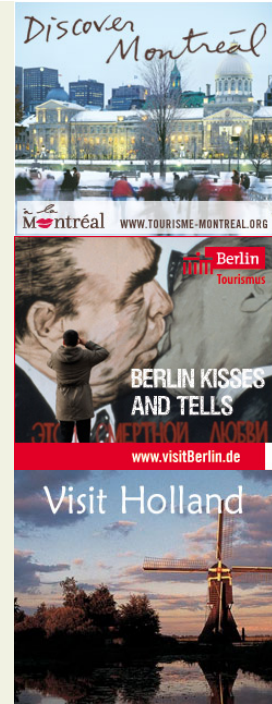


Villa Manager Jennifer Cowles, at dinner, seen through a glass of wine, Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

"Make yourself at home," said Stephanie, greeting us with warm hugs and introducing her three children, ages 9 to 14. "Take in the scenery. Join us in the pool; it's heated," she said, motioning toward an outside pool and an infinity pool. "But first, meet the butler, Luis Morera, who makes the most marvelous cocktails."

Melting away to greet other friends, she left us alone to admire the owner's collection of art and artifacts displayed in the corridors and on living room walls. Two chefs looked up from the open-air kitchen, smiling "hello" as they bustled between refrigerators, ovens and chopping blocks, re-supplying platters laden with appetizers.

Following our suitcases upstairs, we settled in, then checked out the other bedrooms, five of them, all spacious, with windows, big closets and indoor-outdoor showers. Designed for couples, friends and families, they were arranged that way, with more beds in some rooms, and nooks for single beds in family rooms. Umbrella-shaded patio decks were tucked into spaces above the rooms below. Back downstairs, I spotted the infinity pool and headed outside for a 180-degree views of the surrounding bays and beaches beyond.





*A slow afternoon in the pool, at Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.*

On the main level again, we followed an outside staircase down to lower level and a second, more private pool with a waterfall, around the corner from a casual party room, bar and a small theater. Crossing the lawn below, we found the path downhill to the beach. Another path, to the west, wound through the trees to the cliff and a viewing space set up with a fire circle and benches, arranged to catch Costa Rica's spectacular sunsets.



*Sunset view over the Pacific, from Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.*

"You can sit at the counter and talk ingredients with the chefs," said Stephanie when we returned to the living room where our fellow travelers were sharing glasses of wine and chatting. "They're happy to share their recipes. Or ask about tonight's recommended wine-pairings." Tomorrow, she insisted, we must walk down to the beach and try snorkeling. "Or you can take a car to the beach club, or borrow clubs and play golf. It's ten minutes away and Villa Manzu has guest privileges. You can dock in the local harbor," she added, with a wink. "Next time come by yacht."







Almaco Ocean Experiences' tours and picnics, pick up passengers at Nacascolo Beach. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

At Villa Manzu, keeping things running smoothly is accomplished to a "t" by a dedicated staff of 22, including two on-the-spot managers – a husband-and-wife partnership – and a butler, three chefs, a ground crew, maids and drivers. Comfort and privacy are guaranteed, which is why Manzu's list of illustrious visitors – celebrities, tech-company millionaires, movie moguls and the like – remains a secret. You could be one of them.



One of four outdoor patios, each on a different level, function as "gathering places," according to architect Abraham Valenzuela, Villa Manzu, Costa Rica. PHOTO: ©STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD.

### Glad You Asked:

Costa Rica's borders are open for visitors and tourists with passports and proof of recent Covid vaccinations. Your best bet? Plan a trip with family or friends and share the cost. The Villa sleeps 22 adults and/or children, depending on ages. Guests in residence have the house exclusively, including meals, wine, cocktails, snacks, sports equipment, fishing gear, a car, guides, and friendly Costa Rican hospitality.

Rates vary based upon the season. Call for dates and availability. More questions? Search the internet for "Villa Manzu Costa Rica."

Tags [beach](#) [Costa Rica](#) [Covid-19 travel](#) [dream vacation](#) [home\\_page](#) [Liberia Airport](#) [Papagayo Peninsula](#)  
[Villa Manzu](#)

[Previous article](#)

[Reimagined Historical Figures, Why Costa Rica](#)

[Next article](#)

[Pura Vida in Costa Rica](#)

