

# JETSETTER

## GEORGIA

IN THE LAND OF A  
THOUSAND TOWERS

### BODØ

A Day in the  
Arctic Jewel

### CAPE TOWN

Luxury in the  
Mother City

### TRAVELLING TIGER COUNTRY

The E&O  
Explores  
Malaysia

+

SEOUL  
NHA TRANG  
GUATEMALA  
URUGUAY  
MOROCCO  
JAPAN  
COSTA RICA





# FINDING HARMONY in the FORESTS of GUANACASTE

**Jared Ranahan** travels to Costa Rica to explore **Las Catalinas**, a unique residential enclave determined to live in perfect balance with its spectacular natural environment.





**B**lessed with lush tropical rainforests, two sprawling coastlines and verdant cloud forests that teem with endemic flora and fauna, the Central American nation of Costa Rica has become one of the earth's foremost authorities on ecotourism, a quality that's largely bolstered by the country's deep commitment to sustainability. Instead of opting to clear out vast swathes of forest to make way for energy-guzzling mega-resorts, Costa Rica's hospitality scene perfectly embodies the delicate balance between high-end luxury and environmental preservation, with Las Catalinas serving as one of its prime examples.

Located on the western edge of Costa Rica's Guanacaste Province, this lavish car-free planned community emulates the idyllic beauty of some of the earth's most renowned villages, with both visitors and residents making full use of the area's beaches, shops and restaurants. However, it's not just people that thrive throughout its borders. Beyond the carefully cultivated streets of downtown Las Catalinas, the surrounding region bursts to life with more than 400 hectares of tropical dry forest — and while Guanacaste has traditionally suffered from deforestation in the past, Las Catalinas stands as a crucial haven for the native species that call this region home.

In order to bolster the beauty of the surrounding forest, the community operates on three core principles of sustainability. While some ecosystems



benefit from forest fires, tropical dry forests suffer terribly from the blazes, most of which are caused by human error. Since the mid-2000s, Las Catalinas has installed more than 80 kilometres of firebreaks across the region, thus putting an end to these once-common disasters.

In an added effort to restore native species, the district has also implemented an ambitious tree-planting initiative, with more than 5,000 native plants taking root since 2007. Finally, the security detail of Las Catalinas is on constant guard to curtail illegal hunting, ultimately ensuring that the indigenous fauna of Guanacaste can thrive — and that's not the only programme in place to preserve the local wildlife.

Monkeys are a common sight across Las Catalinas, with troops of howlers roaming freely among the treetops, yet these curious creatures were once threatened by their human relatives. Throughout the bulk of the 20th century, the construction of human settlements led to a spike in monkey deaths, with vehicular collisions and power line electrocutions wreaking havoc on the native populations. Beginning in 2009, Las Catalinas unrolled an eco-initiative with electric company Coopeguanacaste to install wildlife bridges, ultimately allowing the animals to safely navigate the treetops as they did for millennia before.

While native birds, mammals and reptiles can be found in abundance across Las Catalinas, the community also offers a wealth of curated experiences and amenities designed to showcase the splendour of the natural world. Throughout the forest, more than 30 kilometres of jogging, hiking and mountain biking trails have been set in place for any visiting outdoor adventurers, with spectacular vistas of the Guanacaste coastline found across multiple paths. Meanwhile, younger visitors can come face-to-face with cuddly farm animals through the district's La Estancia Equine Experience, and curated boating excursions offer an opportunity to spot breaching humpback whales from July to October.

Rather than clear-cutting the surrounding forest to make space for guests and residents, Las Catalinas has opted to wholeheartedly embrace the rich biodiversity of western Costa Rica, thus creating a sprawling community that allows both humans and wildlife to flourish in harmony. For those who set foot within the boundaries of Las Catalinas, the gentle hum of the native insects paired with the cry of its native birds stands as a lasting testament to the importance of preserving our natural world.

