

At Tabacón Thermal Resort & Spa In Costa Rica, Pura Vida Knows No Bounds

By [Lyssa Goldberg](#) - August 12, 2016



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Costa Rica is green for as far as the eye can see—a wild, uneven green, swallowing up its surroundings with untamed foliage growing in every direction.

The people, though, they're equally impressive. Yes, Ticos (what natives of Costa Rica call themselves) are enviable experts at living an easygoing lifestyle, that of *pura vida*.

Essentially the *hakuna matata* of Costa Rica, the phrase is an all-purpose expression of eternal optimism. It can be hello or goodbye; it can work as a thank you or you're welcome. Other times, it might mean life is good, life is short, life is beautiful.

The first Tico to greet us—an airport attendant who'd be wheeling around my sister and her broken toe through Customs—welcomed us with a proud "*Pura vida*." I understood the literal meaning ("pure life"), and also his intention, but I immediately wondered in what other contexts it would make sense to use it.

I learned the answer is any and every. Landing in an airport with a view of the mountains, and even volcanoes—that's *pura vida*. Seeing a three-toed sloth, in the wild, so close up I could take a selfie with it. Definitely *pura vida*. My sister breaking her toe the week before a trip full of hikes and adventuring. Welp. Still *pura vida*.

At [Tabacón Thermal Resort & Spa](#), a tropical oasis in the midst of a rainforest, *pura vida* knows no bounds. Upon arrival, we were welcomed into the open-air lobby with a tall tangy fruit drink. As if that were not enough, earthy, wooden accents throughout the property, at the restaurants, and in our guest room, reminded us that we were vacationing in the jungle.

We fell asleep to the sounds of chirping crickets and tiny tree frogs, and we awoke to tons of tweets—for once, not the social media kind, but rather the twittering of tropical bird species singing the rainforest's praises.

Our first full morning began with a horseback ride up the side of a mountain to gain a better view of the active Arenal Volcano, and what a sight it was—though, at Tabacón, we were lucky enough to have a nice view from our bedroom window, too. During Costa Rica's rainy season (May to November, when the country is at its greenest), it's not uncommon for the volcano base to be obscured by clouds in an expectedly hazy sky. The fact that we could see it so clearly? *Pura vida*.

My sister's horse didn't want to play by the rules. Taking the occasional prolonged stop to munch on some grass, the maverick certainly slowed down our pace, but that also gave us extra time to stare out at the lush green hills around us. *Pura vida*.

In the afternoons, we'd unwind in the hot springs, essentially an expansive adult playground of 100-plus Fahrenheit mineral water, stunning rock formations, mini streams and massaging waterfalls, all sheltered by natural greenery. When I ventured off to explore the Shangri-La Gardens, a secluded, adults-only section toward the back of the resort, I wondered if *pura vida* could mean: "Please don't make me leave."

During our hike down to La Fortuna Waterfall, we got caught in a good ol' spontaneous rainforest rainstorm. I heard distant thunder and shook a little as every spectacular tree I was surrounded by suddenly felt like a mile-high lightning rod, but then I told myself: *Pura vida*.

The storm passed. We continued. At the bottom, the loud rush of cascading water drew us in for our reward. The water was cold. Nay, for a native South Floridian like myself, it was *freezing*. But, boy, did it feel beautiful.

The last night of our stay, we opted for a spa treatment at sunset, each of us in our own private outdoor bungalow. I closed my eyes for an hour and listened to the jungle sounds and rain droplets I was becoming so fond of, as I let a stranger whose sole mission it was to

pamper me, rub warm honey and moisturizing olive oil on my body. Oh my god, if that wasn't *pura vida*, I don't know what is.

When You Go

Where To Eat: Enjoy the breakfast buffet at the hotel while dining at Los Tucanes, or indulge in an international dinner at Ave del Paraiso with a view of the hot springs. Want to venture out into the town of La Fortuna? Take a 15-minute taxi ride and grab a meal at a traditional Tico spot, like Restaurante Nenes, known for its ceviche.

Where To Relax: Tabacón consists of two properties, the hotel and the resort. The latter is a five-minute walk (or one-minute shuttle ride) down the road. There, you'll get to relax in the natural mineral thermal springs and Tabacón's award-winning Grand Spa. While the cornerstone of the Tabacón experience is a day spent at the hot springs (typically \$60 for a day pass, but hotel guests get unlimited access), a spa treatment in the outdoor bungalows is also a must.

Resort Special: Stay three nights for the price of two with the [Take Me To The Springs](#) package. This package includes:

- Welcome drink (non-alcoholic)
- Daily buffet breakfast at Los Tucanes restaurant
- \$75 spa credit per person
- One dinner at Ave del Paraiso restaurant
- Unlimited access to Tabacon's natural thermal mineral springs resort
- Complimentary access to Shangri-La Gardens (for hotel guests 18 and over)
- Wi-Fi and valet parking

Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort; Noreste de Centro de la Fortuna de San Carlos 13 Km, Alajuela, Nuevo Arenal, Costa Rica







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