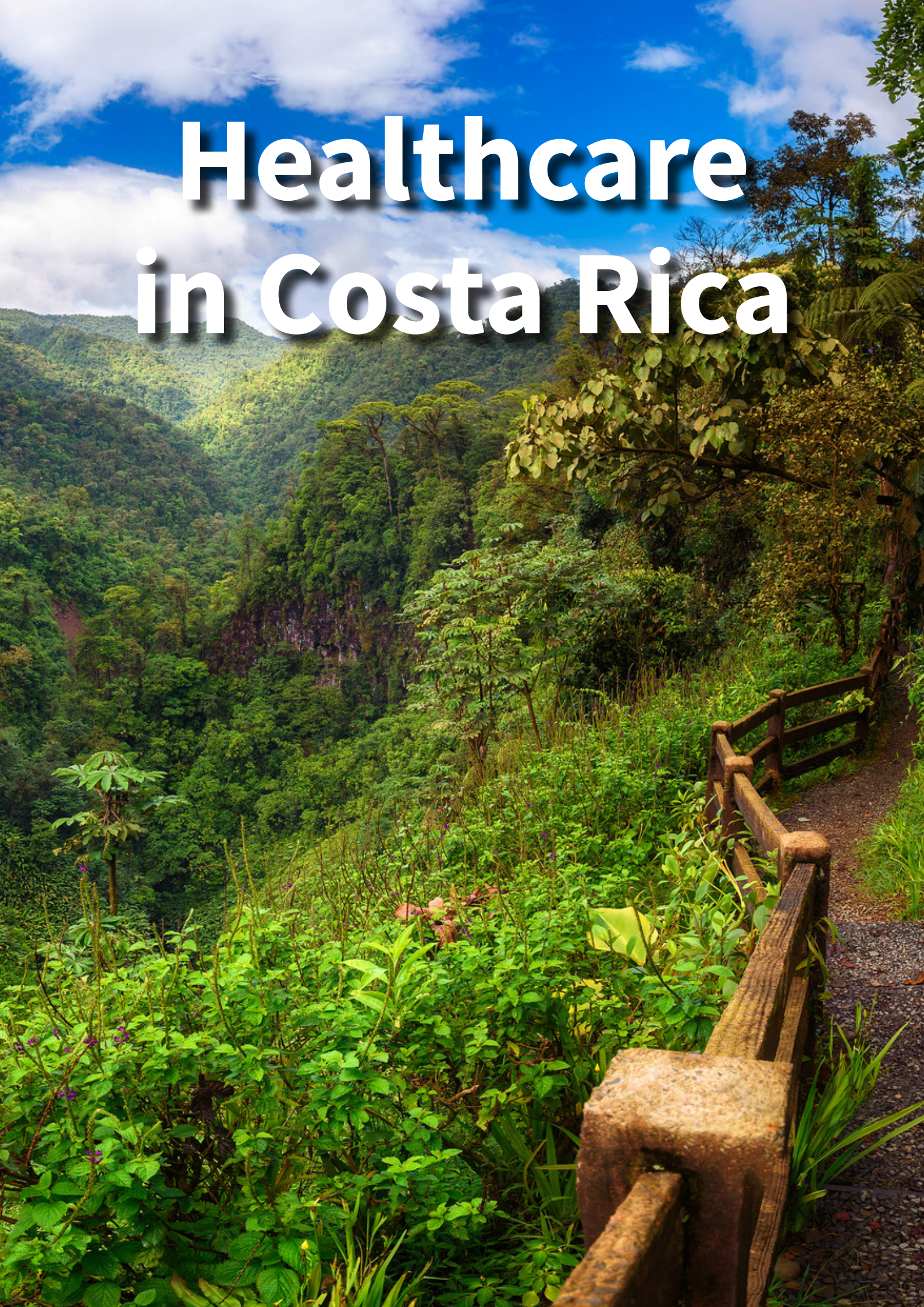


Healthcare in Costa Rica



Costa Rica has some of the best healthcare in Latin America, and the country's public and private health systems are constantly being upgraded. Despite the advancements, healthcare costs are about one-third to one-half what you'd pay in the U.S. Private doctors, for instance, rarely charge more than \$65 a visit, even for house calls. Specialists run \$80 to \$100 per visit.

Drugs are also less expensive. Prescriptions are often unnecessary; you can easily buy many medications in pharmacies that would require a prior visit to the doctor in the U.S. Some big exceptions are drugs that could become addictive and antibiotics. Some pharmacies are allowed to prescribe medicines, including on-the-spot injections, and many pharmacies have an MD on-site.

The Central Valley has the best healthcare, in the San José area. There are three JCI (Joint Commission International) accredited private hospitals there. However, you'll also find good care in both private and public facilities elsewhere. Liberia has a reputable private hospital serving Guanacaste. And many towns in the beach areas have clinics, including X-ray machines and bloodwork labs, to take care of medical emergencies. The larger established clinics have regular visiting doctors from San José, so patients don't need to make the trip to the capital.

The *Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social*, known as *Caja*, is the government agency that operates nearly three-dozen public hospitals and more than 200 clinics. Foreigners living in Costa Rica—legal residents only—must join the *Caja* and receive unlimited treatment (everything from check-ups to prescription drugs to major surgeries) by paying a monthly fee based on approximately 6% to 11% of your income, after allowable deductions are taken into account. A spouse (including a same-sex partner) is also covered under that monthly fee.

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