



Toque of Costa Rica

by Bonnie Carol

The journey began with a seven hour flight from LAX to San Jose, Costa Rica, followed by a cliff-hanger bus ride through the mountains of outer San Jose to the Tempress Explorer, where Captain Hernan Lara Picado, general manager guest services Mauricio Aymerich Peralta and the entire crew greeted us with smiles as we boarded to begin our seven day Adventure Cruise, exploring paradise destinations such as the majestic rain forest, Puntarenas, Drake Bay, Golfo Dulce, Cano Island, Corcovado National Park, Tortuga and Manuel Antonio National Park. to experience the exquisite natural beauty of Costa Rica..

Each morning we jump-started our day with a stretch class on the upper deck, lead by renowned health & fitness expert Sheila Cluff, owner of the Oaks at Ojai & Palms at Palm Springs Spa, followed by a delicious breakfast in the ships dining room. At night this room became a charming candle-lit formal setting where guests enjoyed culinary delights created by



Tempress Explorer.

executive chef Esteban Espinoza Navarette while exchanging stories of their days adventure. Zodiacs (rubber dingys that seat 10 to 12) filled with passengers bounced toward the designated venues of the day where our adventure hikes began. Each day the destination changed, exploring a variety of coastline

locations. The Rain Forest proved to be very challenging and exciting. It was pouring rain when we began the uphill hike to the waterfall, and the ground beneath us was turning to slippery clay, creating an urgent need for focus and concentration with every step. Awareness that this was not Disneyland and the river below had real crocodiles in it. Crossing the rapids over slippery rocks felt like a qualifier for a Cirque du Soleil audition. This was a major adrenaline rush. When we reached our destination at the top of the falls, members of our group took a refreshing swim before the trek back down to the beach for refreshments before boarding the zodiac for our return to the ship. This was a magical

experience!

The jungle plant life engulfs visitors in its lush green aura, and the birds enchanting euphony creates a rhythm that is hypnotic. A useful knowledge of these rare specimens would take a lifetime of study, but our guides Geovanny Bello Carranza, Conrad Weston Hernandez and Jose Calvo Samayos had the credentials and experience to provide a wealth of information, along with amusing stories regarding the Costa Rican bird life, lizards, cats that inhabit the dry and wet jungles of Costa Rica. For instance, the Jesus Christ lizard is named so because it dances across waterways on its hind legs giving the appearance of walking on water! The Iguanas grow to be huge in this area, some look like small dogs, and they blend in the trees almost unnoticeable at first glance. The monkeys are very friendly, coming up to the group members and sitting next to them. The big cats are nocturnal by nature, making it difficult to see them, but their scent is evident.



"La Luz" Restaurant Maitre D' Ronald Villabos, Bonnie Carroll, and Executive Chef Stephen Del Gravo.

Tempress lunches were served on the top deck following a morning shoreline excursion, or picnic style on the beach and at 5:00 each day hors doeuvres and cocktails were skillfully served by our personal bar-