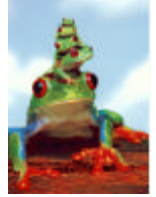


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Casa Gavilan de Arenal  
Casa 25, Las Flores De Arenal  
Arenal, Guanacaste  
Costa Rica*



## Money in Costa Rica

The unit of currency in Costa Rica is the Colone, plural Colones (pronounced “Co-LON-ee”, plural “Co-LON-is”). The exchange rate fluctuates but you can generally estimate 500 Colones to one US\$.

I find a quick way of mentally doing this is to take a price that is quoted in CR Colones, double the number and divide by ten to get US dollars. So a 10,000 Colone bill becomes US\$20.

Currency bills you will see most commonly in Costa Rica are the 10,000 Colones (=US\$20), 5,000 Colones (=US\$10), 2,000 Colones (=US\$4) and 1,000 Colones (=US\$2) bills. Coins are big and heavy – 500, 100, 50, 10 and 5 are commonplace. There is an older generation of silver-looking coins still in circulation and they are as valid as the current, bronze-looking coinage. You will see other denominations of coins from time to time.

You will find that you can get away without changing US dollars into Costa Rica currency at most places - you pay in US dollars, and sometimes you get US\$ back, sometimes CR Colones back... I find most commonly that a tourist gift shop will give you whole dollars in US\$ and the small change (<\$1.00) in CR Colones. Shops where locals shop (grocery, gas, pharmacy, hardware etc.) will give you all change in Colones, bills and coins. Either way you can almost always pay in dollars and not have a problem.

I end up with about a pound of small change, then I spend it all at the airport on the way home!

Never go to Costa Rica with Travel Checks, no-one will take them. Basically, bring what you are comfortable with cash-wise (the security deposit at Casa Gavilan is US\$250) and a VISA/Mastercard credit card.

Incidentally, you will need the credit card for the car rental – car rental agencies in Costa Rica don't seem to want to accept debit cards.

Change is sometimes an issue in Costa Rica, especially on weekends, so try to bring lots of SMALL bills. I recommend you bring about \$100 worth of \$5s and \$1s. Costa Rican vendors have become a little cautious about US\$100 bills – particularly 2001 issue. Apparently there have been several instances of forgeries that have made some vendors refuse to accept 2001 issue bills. I recommend you bring nothing larger than US\$20 or US\$50. If you do want to travel with \$100 bills, I suggest you purchase a forgery detection pen to prove it is real!