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The Costa Rica Reader: History, Culture, Politics (The Latin America Readers)



Synopsis

Long characterized as an exceptional country within Latin America, Costa Rica has been hailed as a democratic oasis in a continent scorched by dictatorship and revolution; the ecological mecca of a biosphere laid waste by deforestation and urban blight; and an egalitarian, middle-class society blissfully immune to the violent class and racial conflicts that have haunted the region. Arguing that conceptions of Costa Rica as a happy anomaly downplay its rich heritage and diverse population, *The Costa Rica Reader* brings together texts and artwork that reveal the complexity of the country's past and present. It characterizes Costa Rica as a site of alternatives and possibilities that undermine stereotypes about the region's history and challenge the idea that current dilemmas facing Latin America are inevitable or insoluble. This essential introduction to Costa Rica includes more than fifty texts related to the country's history, culture, politics, and natural environment. Most of these newspaper accounts, histories, petitions, memoirs, poems, and essays are written by Costa Ricans. Many appear here in English for the first time. The authors are men and women, young and old, scholars, farmers, workers, and activists. The *Costa Rica Reader* presents a panoply of voices: eloquent working-class raconteurs from San José's poorest barrios, English-speaking Afro-Antilleans of the Limón province, Nicaraguan immigrants, factory workers, dissident members of the intelligentsia, and indigenous people struggling to preserve their culture. With more than forty images, the collection showcases sculptures, photographs, maps, cartoons, and fliers. From the time before the arrival of the Spanish, through the rise of the coffee plantations and the Civil War of 1948, up to participation in today's globalized world, Costa Rica's remarkable history comes alive. The *Costa Rica Reader* is a necessary resource for scholars, students, and travelers alike.

Book Information

Series: The Latin America Readers

Paperback: 383 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (October 29, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822333724

ISBN-13: 978-0822333722

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.9 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #435,057 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in [Books > History > Americas > Central America > Costa Rica](#) #59 in [Books > Travel > Central America > Costa Rica](#) #415 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Caribbean & Latin American](#)

Customer Reviews

"[W]orthwhile. . . . complex and compelling." --Heather Wisner, "Costa Rica Outdoors""The volume's intelligent organization economically encompasses both history and historiography, with special attention to social and cultural issues. . . . Highly recommended." --J. Ewell, "CHOICE""[A] poignant resource for anyone with an eye on the country, whether traveler, grizzled Costa Rica oldtimer, flash-in-the-pan tourist, historian, or Costa Rican national." --Robert Goodier, "Tico Times""This is an essential introduction to a very special country admired by many for its peaceful pursuits. The authors reveal a country with a rich heritage and diverse population." --Tim Boxer, "15 Minutes Magazine""Because Costa Rica is a small country, and because its history has been less horrific and dramatic than that of its Central American neighbors, it often receives short shrift in the classroom. This book makes an implicit and convincing argument that the details, the exceptions, and the complexities can be just as important as the generalizations and trends for understanding the whole, and that concerted attention to Costa Rica can deeply enrich our understanding of Latin America." --Aviva Chomsky, "The Americas""Readers of "The Costa Rica Reader "can be assured they are getting a genuinely current 'flavor' of what the country and its people are like, as well as historically grounded materials that help explain the 'why' of this generation's flavor. The editors have deftly drawn together an extraordinarily wide-ranging set of materials, erring quite rightly on the side of brevity and variety. For the student, there are innumerable pathways opened; for the tourist, given the industry's avowed focus on repeat visitors, a single roundtrip flight may not suffice, but the reading will be cover to cover." --Lowell Gudmundson, "Hispanic American Historical Review"

Steven Palmer is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Windsor in Ontario. He is the author of *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism: Doctors, Healers, and Public Power in Costa Rica, 1800-1940* (published by Duke University Press). Iván Molina is Professor of History at the University of Costa Rica in San José. He is a coauthor of *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica*.

Rarely does an anthology of original documents of historical value mingled with insightful interpretative essays come together as a coherent work. Steven Palmer and Iván Molina, against those odds, have put the ball in the back of the net with just such a book. THE COSTA RICA READER'S three-part subtitle ('History, Culture, Politics') is honored along the way with an even touch. Everyone with an interest in Costa Rica as more than a tourist destination with great beaches will find between the covers of this recent collection the stuff that builds insight and understanding. This reviewer lived for sixteen years in 'tiquicia', together with its four million 'ticos', 'nicas', and assorted hangers-on. The West Virginia-sized patch of mountainous land with its sought-after beaches (I rarely found time to visit them) continues to maintain its grip on my soul. I wish this 2004 Duke University Press publication had been available about 1988. It would have rendered easier learning the lessons of tiquicia that had to come the hard, honest way. No matter, it's here now. The editors guide us through a nuanced qualification of 'Costa Rican exceptionalism', finding in the tico experience--whether lived by the indigenous groups who were not quite so few and compliant as the national mythology suggests in the face of conquest and marginalization or by the 19th century coffee lords with their debt to German mercantilism or the 1980s Nicaraguan refugee whose task it is to decide with which of her divergent constituencies to identify herself--deep continuities with the rest of Latin American experience as well as a dollop of the country's celebrated idiosyncrasies. The seventy-odd pieces are brief, illuminating, and usually excerpted from something larger. Individually and as a collection, they leave the reader wanting more. Which is not unlike Costa Rica itself in the experience of many sojourners there, many of whom will never go back but who at the same time never manage entirely to leave. Read by this reviewer on a recent working week back in the land it so effectively describes, THE COSTA RICA READER would be highly recommended at twice the price.

An informative, historical journey through Costa Rican culture. The different formats of content (poems, stories, etc.) gives you a holistic understanding of the culture without leaving you bored.

More like a history review , dry n factual.

A little dry

Beautiful book

Good condition, very detailed.

Great introduction to Costa Rica for future traveler.

A few good stories but not at all what I was hoping for

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