

## Cocos Island

It is located 532 kilometers south west of Cabo Blanco, off the shore of the Nicoya Peninsula, Guanacaste. Getting to Coco's Island is an adventure that will take you from 18 to 36 hours, depending on the speed of the boat, while by helicopter it can take you about 4 hours each way.

This island, still uninhabited by men, was discovered by Joan Cabezas in 1526 and was designated with the name of "Coco's Island" in a map drawn about 1556. Its name came from the hospitality and safeguard offered by this land to seamen who found in it abundant coconut trees and fresh water to satisfy their thirst and rest between voyages.

It was declared national territory on September 15, 1869 during an expedition performed by the costarrican government in search of hidden riches, obtaining this way and without knowing it, one of the largest natural treasures that any country could have found. The Coco's Island was included in the National Park regime on June 1978, saving through this act a piece of land that conserves naturally and almost untouched its flora and fauna for the enjoyment of future generations.

The island presents a very high rainfall, about 7000 mm per year, which turns it into a zone that shows fresh vegetation with a variety of about 235 plant species, some of them endemic, as the copei, ferns and bromeliads. It contains a large variety of insects, reptiles, spiders and 85 types of birds, including sea ones. There are also small mammals such as deer, cats and goats, among others, introduced by boats that visited the island.

The sea around the island is a living showcase that presents 57 different types of crustaceans, sea mollusks and more than 200 types of fish. It is an ideal place for diving since its transparent waters contain 18 different types of corals and an incredible collection of fish, eels and sea rays. If you are a lover of underwater adventure and are willing to meet face to face with a shark, Coco's Island will provide you with the opportunity with little effort. The hammer shark, one of the largest of the species, and the white tip are just some of the specimens you will be able to observe. Also, you will find numberless submarine caves to explore and you will see groups of small colorful fish while diving.

Since the island is so far away from land, it has attracted many scientists and naturalists who see it as a natural laboratory where they can register the evolution of many species. There are only a few ways to get to this Park and the cost of the expeditions is around \$1,500, including transportation, food, explanations and of course, diving.

### Pirate Refuge

There are legends saying that in the XVII and XVIII centuries the island was a refuge for many pirates and corsairs who used to hide the profits of their pillages in the vegetation of the island. Between 1684 and 1821, three legendary pirates, William Davies, Benito "Bloody Sword" Bonito and William Thompson, made Coco's Island famous with the treasures they hid in its territory.

It is said that the treasure of Lima, one of the most valuable of all ages, containing gold bars, church ornaments and utensils and a human size, pure gold image of the Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus, still lies underground in the island. Some people say that this piece of land is where most treasures have been hidden, which of course has inspired many to write fantastic stories about the Island.

Among them, the renown writer Robert L. Stevenson, author of the book named The Treasure Island, based on this legends. Many search expeditions have traveled to the island looking for the most famous treasures, finding just some gold bars; nevertheless, the largest and most valuable treasure, which is the Island itself, is still in the same place for those lucky enough to visit this mystic land.