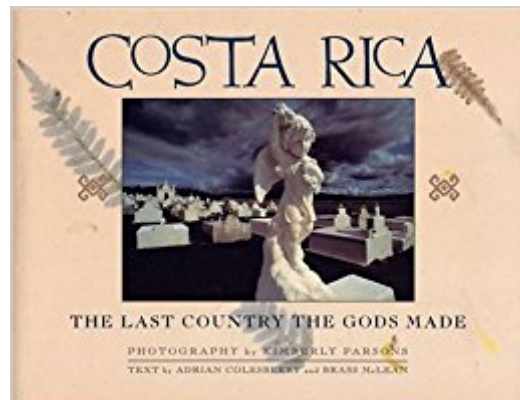




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# Costa Rica: The Last Country The Gods Made



## Synopsis

A collection of stirring essays from writers Adrian Colesberry and Brass McLean (both veteran travelers), "Costa Rica: The Last Country The Gods Made," tells the history of the country from the inside out, starting with its geological formation and ending with its status as the "Switzerland of Central America." "The Last Country," highlighted by the stunning photos of international photographer Kimberly Parsons, showcases the strength of their collaborative and individual talents. Parson's photos of sugar-processing plants, spider monkeys, oxen at work, cemetery angels, fishermen, school children, street musicians and volcanoes form a vivid rendering of life in Costa Rica. Colesberry and McLean match the more than 65 photos with passionate words, adding a human element to subjects ranging from coffee to indigenous peoples, from ants to women's issues, from bananas to religion; their spirit is infectious. The essays are accompanied by sidebars, short, insightful thoughts on little-known facts about the country. Winner of the 1994 Publishers Marketing Association's "Ben Franklin Award" for "Best Travel Narrative" written in the United States.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Illustrated with 62 photographs, this workmanlike overview covers Costa Rican geography, history, geology, politics and mores. Colesberry, a journalist, and technical writer McLean, both of whom are based in Los Angeles, have produced an uninspired text that, despite the book's lyrical subtitle, is unlikely to send readers to the nearest travel agency. Parsons, a San Francisco-based travel photographer, captures the country in shots characteristic of Caribbean travel brochures. Copyright

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"Explores diversity of the people, natural beauty and ecology, portraying its history and politics in compelling prose and vibrant photography." -- 2004 Overseas Adventure Travel's Twice Awarded Travel & Leisure Magazine's Top 10 Tour & Safari Operators in the World's Best Awards. oattravel.com Not the usual picturebook fluff, liberally accented with notes on history and archeology. The result is more illumination than whitewash. -- Coleman Andrews, The Los Angeles Times, April 10, 1994 This spectacular book introduces readers to the authors' love affair with Costa Rica. -- Book Passage, April 28, 1994

This is a fantastic book. In a very enjoyable way it covers just enough of each of the dimensions that make a country. From the geological beginnings under water to the mountains and high fertile valleys, ancient people to modern day inhabitants, ants to orchids, and beautifully illustrated with excellent photos. We bought a copy before we went, left it with our friends at Diquis Del Sur (diquiscostarica.com), and bought another copy when we got home. Enjoy the book and this beautiful country. For a travel guide we were torn between the excitement presented in the National Geographic Traveler - Costa Rica book and the superior information for getting around in the Frommer's book. For retirement and living there we preferred "The New Golden Door to Retirement and Living in Costa Rica". The best map is International Travel Maps - Costa Rica, GPS generally works, and most cell phones don't.

Both photography and writing I liked. Many facts that (personally) I never knew about Costa Rica was very informative. I would recommend this book everyone.

I bought this book based on the numerous adulations on this web site. However, as an up to date travel guide, I found it not -- not worth the money, not a travel guide, not about retirement, not current (copyright 1993). It is a historical summary of the country, people, flora and fauna. The pages devoted to today's needed travel info "Modern Times" were outdated and numbered only from 129-146. It's a nice coffee table book with some beautiful pictures. Buy it for that reason, if you choose to buy it, but not as a travel guide as recommended by another reviewer.

This book evokes the country of Costa Rica and its influence on its peoples by describing the harsh, desolate, yet sublime landscape that embodies the contradictions of Costa Rican life within

it's borders and in it's geo-political stature in Central America. As dry-witted as it is information soaked, this book gives the traveler a place to begin in the land that never seems to be what the traveler expects. "The Last Country the Gods Made" is a contemplative book, a book of essays that creates a spiritual geography, explains the eccentricity of archeology and throws light on the urgency of visionary politics. This masterful synthesis is a refreshingly unconventional analysis informed by anthropology, migratory science, architecture, environmentalism, epistemology and political minutiae. There is a wonderful mini-essay that the authors' call a "sidebar" entitled, "Why No Empire." In it, Colesberry and McLean address the mystery of why the native people of Costa Rica, though amazingly organized, greatly populated and artistically skilled, never formed any urban centers like the Aztec and Mayan empires. Suffice to say, that they pose an utterly unique solution involving Egypt, medieval French wheat farmers, and Vasquez de Coronado's observations of buzzards! They end this delightful foray with, "...perhaps the local Amerindians had no use for urban zones or concentrations of power that would have placed them in the ranks of advanced societies. If urbanity is the litmus test for civilizations, consider this: in the Diquis area, the leaders lived with not the warriors as one might imagine, but with the artists. How urbane can you get?" I'd like to say one more thing. The Search Inside the Book pages that shows you in no way represent the book's text! The pages you can read are just the introduction written by the publisher! It's ridiculous that doesn't present the meat of this lovely text, since the writing is particularly accomplished.

When you see the cover, you know you're in for a MOST unusual book about a country about which 100 guide books have already been written. One sees an angel statue in a graveyard at dawn, or is it twilight? Is this Costa Rica or "have goth, will travel"? Well, maybe a little of both. The eccentricities of the two writers are on the front burner here with subjects like bats, nitrogen-fixing organisms, Arab-oil embargoes, human diseases, hydroelectricity, the Pan-American highway, trash-burning and communism. But maybe that's what makes these series of essays a good read, especially while one is traveling, because the 1-10 page segments stand on their own. And the photos are equally "unique," shall we say-not what one would normally expect from a travel book. Once you get past the beautiful inappropriateness of the cover picture, the reader is further challenged by artsy, gorgeous photos that seem to stand alone from the text. Fruit still-lifes, rodeo-cowboys, father and son mechanics on a lunch break, cattle herders, city street musicians, a sunlit pathway through a rainforest; all these random images "float" through the text without a care for relevance! However, having said that, somehow it works. The book as a whole, pictures plus words, truly gives one a "feeling" for Costa Rican life as it is really lived. That's the best way I can

describe this strange but exciting book. It makes you feel because it makes you understand. I can't recommend it highly enough.

A very pretty book! The cover captures an angel statue at dawn. Surrounding that picture, the publishers have integrated into the cover, pictures of fossils found in Costa Rica, forming a marvelous pattern. My favorite design element, besides the cover, is the essays presented in pastel-yellow boxes at the end of the chapters on funky subjects like the jungle train or the mysterious and ancient Diquis Balls, which are perfectly round, carved stones found all over Costa Rica. And the photography is anything but characteristic of Caribbean travel brochures. In contrast, they are wild and gorgeous and yes, even kooky at times! I display it on my coffee table and visitors comment on it all the time. I think it was worth the price and I'm glad I bought it.

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