

BAHIA SANTA ELENA

By far the most popular first stop in Costa Rica is Bahia Santa Elena. This bay is inside Parque Nacional Santa Rosa and is surrounded by nature. Whales, dolphins, fish, numerous birds all congregate around this park. Protected from all directions the only thing that might disturb your sleep is occasional gusts and pods of hunting dolphins.

Approaching the Entrance

If coming directly from Nicaragua, and the wind is blowing from the ENE, it's best to follow the Nicaraguan coast as far inside Bahia Salinas as possible before crossing the bay. The wind waves you encounter will be a little smaller and be at a more comfortable angle, as will the wind.

The depth upon the approach ranges from 120 to 90 feet far into the bay. Stay in the center of the channel and you will be clear of all the hazards. In fact it is usually possible to sail on a

nice reach into the bay where the winds will quickly drop and you might need the motor to find an anchoring spot.

Approach Waypoint

➤ 10° 56.58' N and 085° 48.36' W ◀

Anchoring

Once inside the bay you'll find the eastern shore to offer the most protection from the occasional wind gusts. The bottom is soft with good holding.

Northern Anchor Waypoint

➤ 10° 55.35' N and 085° 47.53' W ◀

Eastern Anchor Waypoint

➤ 10° 55.1' N and 085° 47.35' W ◀

Southern Anchor Waypoint

➤ 10° 54.7' N and 085° 47.54' W ◀

COSTA RICA



Weather

This bay is well protected from the predominant wind directions and the swell rarely reaches inside. However the wind can be very gusty from the NE and E directions. When the Papagayos are really blowing, the western and southern sides of the bay can get pretty choppy. Take note of this when planning your dinghy landings.

Official Formalities

Officially, park fees should be paid; however, there are no rangers around to pay.

Facilities

None. There is a service road for accessing nearby towns although it's a very long hike.

Around the Bay

The natural scenery and wildlife are the reasons people come and stay for a week or more. In a single day, you might see whales, scarlet macaws, and monkeys just to name a few. There are some nice hikes around the bay and you don't need to beat your way through the brush so look for open areas to walk. Wear tough soled shoes, as there are sometimes thorns on the ground from nearby plants.

The snorkeling is good all around the little island and rocks outside the entrance to the bay. The beaches nearby are also fun for walking, but please leave the shells for the animals to use and others to appreciate.

COSTA RICA

The locations of the following hikes are shown on the overview map of the area.

Hike 1: Waterfalls. Land dinghy at point A ($10^{\circ}54.54'N$, $85^{\circ}47.6'W$). Tie your dinghy high in the trees. Look for the dry creek bed (there may be a swampy pool at the end of it) and follow it S up to the service road at point B ($10^{\circ}54.48'N$, $85^{\circ}47.59'W$). Turn left and cross two small streams to point C ($10^{\circ}54.34'N$, $85^{\circ}47.17'W$) where you turn S again and walk up the larger stream to the waterfalls, Point H ($10^{\circ}54.03'N$, $85^{\circ}47.16'W$). During the dry season the stream can be dry for a little way up the path.

Hike 2: Bird Watching. Land your dinghy at point D ($10^{\circ}55.12'N$, $85^{\circ}47.24'W$). Tie it high in the tree

line. Head off to the right around a ledge to a dirt road. Walk quietly and listen. We saw many different types of birds, and heard the chirping of squirrel monkeys around point E ($10^{\circ}54.6'N$ and $85^{\circ}46.63'W$) at a stream. You can continue on up to point F where you'll meet the main service road.

Hike 3: Playa Blanca. Follow the instructions for Hike 1, but turn right on the road at Point B. Follow the road until you come to the Beach. Arrive after high tide to enjoy the white sand.

Map of Santa Elena Hikes

