



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

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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.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[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"

About the Author

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).

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