

# Dan Youra, Travel Guide



First of 5-part series of articles by Dan Youra comparing Ecotourism on Washington State's Olympic Peninsula to Costa Rica.

What does Washington State's Olympic Peninsula have in common with Costa Rica in Central America?

1. Rain forests
2. Ferry boats
3. Bed and breakfast inns
4. All of the above

The correct answer is 4. "All of the above". Rain forests in the Northwest? Ferry boats in Costa Rica? "What's wrong with this picture?" Let me explain.

I have lived on the Olympic Peninsula for 30 years, during which time I have hiked the moss draped trails of its rain forests, tossed pop corn to seagulls from the decks of ferry boats and enjoyed the hospitality of local bed and breakfast inns.

Having returned from a trip to Costa Rica, I am impressed by the many similarities between the two places, in spite of the fact that one anchors the northwest corner of the contiguous United States, while the other floats between the Pacific and Caribbean and holds together North and South America.

## RAIN FORESTS

The rain forests of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula are the Hoh, Quinalt and Queets, named after indigenous people who inhabited the forests before the arrival of European settlers. These *temperate* rain forests, not *tropical*, as in Costa Rica, are populated by exotic wildlife, rare birds and big cats, namely cougars, and are draped with seemingly endless varieties of flora and fauna. World record holding trees call these forests home and are protected within the boundaries of Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest.

Costa Rica's tropical rain forests span altitudes from sea level to high mountain passes. Rich in untold varieties of wildlife from toucans and monkeys to leopards and snakes, the tropical rain forest jungles are preserved within national parks.

## CRUISES & FERRIES



The first trip for many travelers to Washington and Costa Rica is aboard a giant cruise ship, either headed north to Alaska in the case of Washington or touring the Caribbean in the case of Costa Rica, where they dock for a shore visit at the

Costa Rica's Port of Limon.

Just as travelers in Western Washington become familiar with ferry boats that link Seattle with the more remote destinations around the Olympic Mountains, so also travelers to Costa Rica value the ease of access to remote rain forests afforded



by ferry boats that carry passengers to beaches and rain forests on the Nicoya Peninsula. Even deep in the jungles of the Talamanca Indigenous Reserve I came across a ferry, no more than a large canoe,

*La Estrella*, the sole means of transportation for BriBri and Cabecar Indians to cross the rain swollen Sixaola River.

## BED & BREAKFAST INNS

What about the similarities in bed and breakfast inns? Washington's Olympic Peninsula is known in the Northwest for its B&Bs. Victorian Port Townsend and Sunny Sequim especially bask in this notoriety.

Costa Rica boasts a bed and breakfast experience that is marked by a European flair for hospitality and lavish breakfasts accented with fresh tropical fruits. Unlike an old house with a few converted bedrooms which characterize many B&Bs in the United States, the Costa Rican variety is more similar to a boutique hotel with a full service restaurant.

The combination of hotels with breakfast is pioneered by Minotel, a hospitality concept introduced into Costa Rica by hoteliers with 700 successful properties in Europe.

The five Minotel resorts I experienced in Costa Rica are Las Palmas on Caribbean beach south of Limon, Los Lagos at the base of Arenal Volcano, two in Turrialba, and Villa Tournon in the capital San Jose. Each is an excellent base camp from which to explore the nearby tropical treasures.

A trip to any rain forest, whether temperate or tropical, is an experience to be cherished for a lifetime. These verdant cathedrals inspire our sense of awe and command our respect.

## WEB SITES

**OLYMPIC PENINSULA**

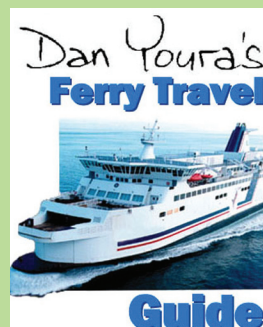
[www.OlympicMts.com](http://www.OlympicMts.com)

[www.OPTravel.org](http://www.OPTravel.org)

**COSTA RICA**

[www.costarica.com](http://www.costarica.com)

[www.minotel.com](http://www.minotel.com)



## INFORMATION

**OLYMPIC PENINSULA**

Visitor Center 1-360-437-0120

**COSTA RICA**

Minotel Resorts Toll Free 1-866-788-MTEL

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