

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN EAU CLAIRE

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Study Abroad



**COSTA RICA
SPRING 2018**

Program Guide

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CONGRATULATIONS on being accepted to the UW-Eau Claire program with Costa Rica Study Abroad, S.A. San Isidro, Costa Rica. Living and studying in a foreign culture is both an exciting and a challenging experience. Past participants of study abroad report that the many advantages of international study include:

Building upon foreign language skills
Gaining new perspectives on a chosen academic field
Increasing understanding of different cultures
Enhancing personal development
Developing different perspectives on U.S. culture
Gaining self-confidence and independence
Learning skills for the future international job market

It is up to you to determine how you can best benefit from these possible advantages. This is your adventure!

This program guide is to be used together with the general Study Abroad Handbook. The handbook has information that is valid for all study abroad programs. This guide will provide you with specific information for the Costa Rica study abroad program. It is designed to complement the handbook, study abroad orientation, information from our colleagues in Costa Rica, and your individual pre-departure preparations.

Please realize that although this guide contains all of the information available at the time of printing, it is impossible for any single resource to answer all of your questions. Your peer adviser will e-mail additional information throughout the semester. Please contact the Center for International Education staff, your peer adviser, and past program participants with your specific questions. You should also make use of the additional written and web resources listed towards the end of this guide.

Basic questions only you can answer include:

- 1) What are YOUR goals for this experience? Common objectives of student travelers include advancement in a future profession; desire to gain fluency in a second language; wish to expand personal and academic horizons; need for a change; and wish to challenge oneself with immersion in a new culture.
- 2) Given the way the program is set up, how can you best prepare to meet your goals? For example, if one of your goals is truly being immersed in Costa Rican culture, yet you are going with a group of UW-Eau Claire students, how can you ensure that you do not spend too much time with other U.S. Americans?

The information in this guide was current at the time of printing, though changes may occur at any time.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Program

Each spring, UW-Eau Claire students are immersed in Spanish language and Latin American studies in Costa Rica. Depending on your Spanish language level, you will either take two intensive Spanish language courses and two classes with a Latin American Studies focus, taught in English, from instructors at Costa Rica Study Abroad (CRSA), or three Spanish language classes and one class with a Latin American Studies focus. Housing is with host families.

The Location

Costa Rica Study Abroad, a private language institute, is located in San Isidro de Heredia. San Isidro de Heredia is about 15 miles, or 35 minutes by bus, from downtown San José, Costa Rica's capital. San Isidro is surrounded by the magnificent cloud forest, Braulio Carrillo National Park.

Academic Calendar

This is a spring semester program. You need to arrive in San José at the Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO).

Arrival: January 19th, between 7am-9pm

Orientation: January 20th

Classes begin: January 22nd

Spring Break: March 24-April 1, 2018

Classes end/Final exams: April 27th

Last day of Homestay: May 4th

You may plan to depart on April 28th or you can stay with your host family up until May 4th.

Note: You may choose to stay in Costa Rica after May 4th, but you will need to sign a waiver provided by CRSA, agreeing that personal security once the program ends is your own responsibility.

ACADEMICS

Additional information on program eligibility, as well as academic topics such as registration, class attendance, credits and course load, grades, transcripts, and accessing the UW-Eau Claire library while abroad in your Study Abroad Handbook is included in the Academics section of your Study Abroad Handbook.

Registration in Costa Rica

You registered for classes by filling out the UW-Eau Claire course selection sheet. **Please note there are no registration changes allowed after arrival in Costa Rica.**

Credits and Course Load

You will earn 12-14 credits on this program, depending on your Spanish level. Dropping below full-time status may result in loss of financial aid and/or insurance coverage and **must be approved in advance by the Center for International Education.**

Past students note that **this is an intensive academic experience.** The semester is only 12 teaching weeks long, as opposed to 16 weeks on campus. Expect to spend several hours/day in class and to have homework in preparation for the next day's classes.

Classes

The classes you will take in Costa Rica depend upon the Spanish & Latin American Studies

classes you will have completed at UW-Eau Claire prior to departure.

You indicated your course selection when you turned in your post-acceptance forms. **Please note that no registration changes are allowed after arrival in Costa Rica.**

If you will not have taken Spanish 301 prior to departure, you will take

Track One:

All students in this track will take the following two courses, taught in English.

- 1) History 311, History & Civilization of Latin America
- 2) Costa Rican Geography and Environmental Seminar, Geog 920L, elective Lower Division

In addition, you will take **two Spanish language courses at the appropriate level.** Choose from Span 101, 102, 201, 202, 301, 302.

If you will have taken Spanish 301 prior to departure, you will choose from Track Two or Three.

Track Two

All students in this track will take:

- 1) Spanish 354, Contemporary Spanish American Civilization, taught in Spanish. This course fulfills the same requirement for the Spanish and Latin American Studies major or minor as Span 352 taken on campus. However, it does not carry any cultural diversity credits.
- 2) Costa Rican Geography and Environmental Seminar, Geog 920 L, elective Lower Division, taught in English.

In addition, you will take **two Spanish language courses at the appropriate level.** Choose from Span 302, 405 and 410.

Track Three

All students in this track will take:

History 311, History & Civilization of Latin America, taught in English

In addition, you take three courses from the following options:

Span 302, Span 405, Span 410, Costa Rican Geography and Environmental Seminar, Geog 920 L, elective Lower Division, taught in English.

Please note that field trips are a required part of the Geography course. They should be viewed as **educational excursions and may figure into course grades.**

Grades

All grades will be given on the Costa Rican scale as number grades, according to the grading system at the National University. The grades will be converted to U.S. grades according to the following scale:

CRSA Grade	UWEC Equivalent
95%-100%	A
90%-94.9%	A-
86.6%-89.9%	B+
83.3%-86.5%	B
80%-83.2%	B-
76.7%-79.9%	C+
73.4%-76.6%	C
70%-73.3%	C-
66.7%-69.9%	D+
63.4%-66.6%	D
60.0%-63.3%	D-
59.9% or below	F

Grading is done on a flat percentage—no curve is used. Short assignments are given throughout the semester, and longer papers, term projects, and/or final exams are required at the end. **The final exams, both written and oral, are comprehensive and usually carry more weight than any other work during the semester in terms of the final grade.**

UW-Eau Claire students abroad are not allowed to take classes pass/fail, and that grades from Costa Rica are figured into your UW-Eau Claire GPA.

Transcripts & Credit Transfer

A grade report for your program will be sent from CRSA to UW-Eau Claire. Grades from abroad cannot be posted to your UW-Eau Claire transcript until after on-campus grades have been added to students' records, so you will initially receive a grade report with "NR" ("not reported") for all courses. Check your MyBlugold CampS account after the end of the UW-Eau Claire semester. Grades from abroad are generally posted within a week or two of the end of the semester.

Foreign Language Immersion Requirement

If you are a foreign language major or minor and need to have the fulfillment of your foreign language immersion requirement noted on your degree audit, **you must go to the Department of Languages and ask them to send a form to the Registrar's Office, confirming that you have met the requirement.** This does not happen automatically because not all foreign language majors and minors have this

requirement. It is up to the individual student to make the request.

Community Project/Service-Learning

All students on the program will participate in the two-week project in a rural area. This is an integral part of your Costa Rican learning experience. It aims to build your self-confidence in the use of Spanish through free interaction with members of the community. Look at these two weeks as a break from the more formal study, a chance to apply your learning, and as a time for reflection and personal growth.

Previous S-L participants have reported that they feel that their outlook in life changes for the better after working as volunteers in a community in need of their help. They feel that they learn to appreciate how people survive in often challenging economic situations, and how much of their few resources the locals are willing to share with them. This transformative process has served as an incentive to former students to go back to their own towns or university campus and organize marathons and fund raisers to send much needed resources back to these communities.

CRSA will coordinate with local communities and choose an appropriate SL project to be carried out by all spring semester participants. In the past, students have volunteered at rural schools, built community gardens, painted murals and benches, repaired playground equipment, played games, and put up fencing. Some groups have worked in an indigenous community, assisting with community-identified projects and eco-tourism efforts. You will work alongside community members

who have identified these projects as being useful to them.

Cultural Differences: Past participants have noted that cultural differences are evident in the service-learning project. In the U.S., we tend to have access to a lot of tools, and use them to make projects go faster. Past students have stated, for example, that chipping paint with scrapers is hard to do and old-fashioned; you can do the same thing much more efficiently with a sanding machine. While this may be true, sanding machines are not commonly used in Costa Rica. They require electricity and have many parts that, if broken, are not easy to replace. Many hands and many scrapers can get the same job done without the expense and without possibility of mechanical breakdown.

In addition, group projects in the U.S. tend to operate with strict agendas for each day. In Costa Rica, you will most likely have a lot to do on some days and less to do on others. The goal is to complete the project, not to have a checklist of accomplishments at the end of each day.

Gifts for Host Families: Former students have mentioned that they'd like to bring small donations or gifts for their S-L families. One good way to do this is to bring school supplies for school-age children.

Suggested donations of school supplies/sport equipment for the children are: glue; construction paper; glitter; small scissors; notebooks; English or Spanish flash cards with letters, animals, numbers or other vocabulary; coloring books; crepe paper; puppets; beads for making jewelry; old jerseys; used soccer balls, basketballs, or volleyballs; etc.

Another idea is to bring small souvenirs or a photo album of yourself and family members/loved ones from the United States to share with local host families and during your S-L assignments.

Service-Learning Requirement:

Successful participation in this project fulfills the UW-Eau Claire service-learning (SL) requirement. You should begin the S-L paperwork prior to going to Costa Rica if you wish it to fulfill your 30 hour S-L requirement. If the specific project description is not yet available, you will complete the paperwork in Costa Rica.

Steps to complete the online service-learning application:

Go to <http://www.uwec.edu/SL>

Part I - Basic Information

The first section of the form includes basic project information, including title, number of hours, begin and end dates, your mentor's username, and the name of the community partner and the supervisor. Much of this will be pre-populated by the system.

You will need to enter the mentor username to submit the form, so be sure to have made contact with both the mentor and community partner supervisor prior to filling out this form.

- Your study abroad coordinator, Courtney Brost, is your mentor. Her username is: **brostcn**

- The community partner is Costa Rica Study Abroad.
- Your supervisor will be Kim Finco

Part II - Service-Learning Project Description

1. Briefly describe the project and the community need you intend to address.

- If the project description is already available, you will cut and paste it into that section, then answer the questions that follow. If not, you simply save the information you have and return to complete the project information once the project description is available.

2. Learning outcomes for this project.

These items should be discussed with your mentor. Provide a brief description for all that apply:

- Develop awareness and/or deepen understanding of a specific community need or societal problem
- Explore personal role in and commitment to civic engagement
- Apply liberal education skills to solve a problem or serve a need in the community
- Other Outcomes

3. Hours of Service

Specifically address the time frame in which your service hours will be accomplished, assuring that you will have either 15 or 30 hours at the end of your project.

4. Orientation/Training

1. Describe the orientation, training and supervision you will receive for the project. Identify the person(s) responsible for these activities.

- *You can write: The project will be supervised by local community leaders with assistance as needed from CRSA staff. We will discuss the project in-depth with CRSA staff prior to traveling to the site and have regular meetings with CRSA staff and local leaders during the project to discuss tasks, progress and goals.*

5. Reflection Activity

In order to finish your service-learning requirement, you will need to complete a mentor-approved reflection.

Students completing service learning while studying abroad in Costa Rica must submit a (minimum) two-page paper to Courtney, addressing all of the following questions:

- What was the significance of your service at the agency/organization?
- What did you learn about the agency/organization staff, those persons served by the agency/organization and their similarities or differences to you?
- What did you learn during your project that enhanced your learning gained in the classroom?
- What impact might your project have on your life-long learning process?
- What impact did your project have on your everyday life?
- What insights did you gain through your project that might assist you in your career or in selecting a career?

- What did your project teach you about community involvement, citizenship and civic responsibility?
- What is the relationship of your service learning project to the “real world”?
- How were you able to contribute to the agency/organization goals?
- What do you feel was your main contribution to the agency/organization?
- What did you do on this project that made you feel proud?
- What was the most difficult part of your work?
- If you were to start at the beginning of this project again, what would you do differently the second time around?

In the online application, you may be asked the question: How would you like your mentor to be involved in your project?

- You can simply state that your mentor will read and comment on your reflection paper and may ask you follow-up questions as necessary.

**Working daily from 8 to 12, plus afternoon hours, and additional cultural activities, you will actually contribute approximately 60 hours to the project.*

After the project, CRSA will contact the Center for Service-Learning and report that all requirements have been completed, and they will forward copies of your essays to Courtney Brost as your faculty mentor. You will then need to complete the post-project survey on the Service-Learning web site for your project to be recorded at UW-Eau Claire.

Costa Rican Academic System

Although you will not be taking courses at a university, it is important that you realize that you are still taking courses from Costa Rican professors in the Costa Rican academic system. The teaching methodology differs from that in the U.S. Computers are used in the classroom when researching assignments only. Homework and written essays are normally completed outside the classroom. Computers are not to be used during a class, or while the professor or invited guests lecture.

The professor's role is to be the classroom facilitator, not the lecturer, as is usually the case in the U.S. **You, as students are expected to be active participants in the learning process.** If you do not come to class prepared to critically discuss whatever reading has been assigned for that class period, very little will happen in class!

Syllabi are also different than those used in the U.S. **They have much less detail and are far less explicit about exact dates things are due, what percentage each assignment counts toward your grade**, etc. Some of your professors have taught or studied in the U.S. system and will use a U.S. style syllabus. **Don't expect that from everyone--part of your experience abroad is learning how to operate in a different academic system.**

You may also be required to do more independent research than you typically do in the U.S. Doing research will present its own challenges. Again, although you are taking some courses in English, don't forget that you are taking them in a Spanish-speaking country. **Ninety-five percent of all library resources will, of course, be in Spanish.** Most of your "textbooks" may actually be photocopies of

books, due to the high cost and lack of availability of actual books.

Another thing to **keep in mind is the privilege you enjoy in terms of academic resources in the U.S.**--and to realize that Costa Rica is a developing country with much less wealth to invest in this area. Library resources are not centralized, as they are in the U.S. In other words, you cannot go to the library, find the book you want listed at another library, and request it through inter-library loan. As explained in the UW-Eau Claire Study Abroad Handbook, you still have access to the UW-Eau Claire library resources as well. You will also be relying on other resources found on the Internet.

MONEY MATTERS

Information about how payments are made, when they are due, the withdrawal/refund deadlines, financial aid, scholarships, budgeting and ways to bring money abroad is in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Cost Estimate

You can find the most current cost estimate for your program, in easily printable format, on the CIE Costa Rica spring only webpage. Be sure you are looking at the correct term. Remember that the cost estimate includes what you pay to UW-Eau Claire, and what you pay to other vendors.

Personal Travel:

The above estimate does not include additional personal travel. How much money

you need for travel is always a difficult and personal decision. Spring 2016 participants who responded to our survey reported spending anywhere from \$500 to \$1,500 additional dollars, with the average being around \$800. Keep in mind that you can spend as much money as you have—but you do not need to! Students who spend more time in the host community often have richer interpersonal experiences than those who spend every spare moment traveling.

Currency Exchange

The currency of Costa Rica is the colon. There are 5, 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 and 500 colones coins, and 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 colones bills. Past participants note that it can be hard to use 10,000 colones bills for small purchases, such as in cafés, in taxis, etc.

You can find current exchange rates at <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

In order to physically exchange dollars for colones, or for any other transaction you do inside a bank, you will need to have your actual passport as photo ID. A photocopy will not be accepted.

Use of US Dollars

CRSA notes that the majority of hotels and restaurants in Costa Rica will accept U.S. dollars, and that many supermarkets do as well.

Credit Cards

Some past participants have noted that Visa is much more widely accepted in Costa Rica than any other credit card.

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks are very difficult to use in Costa Rica and are not recommended. Most students use ATMs at banks in San Isidro to access cash.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Additional information on these issues, as well as information on CISI insurance, is included in the Health Issues and Safety Abroad sections of your Study Abroad Handbook.

Before You Go

In addition to the general health precautions listed in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should consult your physician to see if you should receive any other vaccinations, depending upon the type of travel you plan to do. While there are no required vaccinations for Costa Rica, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) does have several recommendations depending on your travel plans and your health history.

Common Health Problems

The most common health problems for U.S. Americans in Costa Rica are intestinal upsets. They usually occur as a result of the change in diet, the different meal schedule, and organisms unfamiliar to your system.

A very common ailment is traveler's diarrhea. It can largely be avoided by being careful about where and what you eat, and avoiding dairy products if they are not pasteurized. If you do come down with it, the following suggestions will help speed recovery and guide your decision to seek formal care:

1. It will usually run its course in three to five days. The worst symptoms usually occur the first day. Bed rest may help relieve cramps.
2. The main risk of the illness is dehydration. Be sure to maintain fluid intake. An excellent source of fluid replacement is ORS or Oraltye, a prepackaged liquid sold in many countries. If unavailable, the following recipe will provide similar value: one liter carbonated water, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda (not baking powder), 4 tbsps sugar.
3. An over-the-counter medicine like Pepto Bismol may help relieve nausea and vomiting.

If nausea and vomiting persist for more than 24 hours, if you develop a fever over 101 degrees F, or if you develop severe abdominal pain, a physician should be contacted immediately.

Water & Food

The water in San Isidro is potable (drinkable). However, if you are traveling outside of San Isidro, you may want to bring your own bottled water. Stick to breads or fruits that you peel yourself. Fruits that cannot be peeled, fruit juices diluted with water, and raw vegetables and salads that have not been washed with disinfected water should be avoided.

Bottled water, soft drinks, beer, wine, hot tea, and coffee are usually safe. Be sure to wipe off the top of a bottle before drinking out of it, or ask for a straw ("pajilla" in Costa Rican Spanish).

Where water is contaminated, ice is also contaminated. You may wish to learn to order drinks “sin hielo” (without ice).

When you are not in control of your water supply, consider bringing a portable water purifier, available at most outdoor stores, boil water vigorously for at least 10 minutes, or use water purification tablets. One tablet per quart of clear water, or two tablets if water is cloudy.

Please see the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommendations on eating and drinking safely in Costa Rica:

http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/extended_student/costa-rica

Insect Bites

Insect borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, are present in parts of Costa Rica. Discuss malaria prevention with your physician.

Per the CDC, "Dengue fever is the most common cause of fever in travelers returning from the Caribbean, Central America, and South Central Asia. This disease is spread through the bites of infected mosquitoes and cannot be spread person to person."

Severe dengue can be fatal, but with good treatment, less than 1% of patients die from dengue. **See a doctor immediately if you develop dengue symptoms during or after your time abroad:**

Symptoms of dengue include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Pain behind the eyes

- Joint and muscle pain
- Rash
- Nausea/vomiting
- Mild bleeding, such as nose or gum bleeding or easy bruising

As there is no specific treatment for dengue fever, the best prevention in all cases for insect bites is using a good repellent (with DEET) and wearing appropriate clothing. Depending on activity, loose, long-sleeved shirts and pants are good choices. For more protection, clothing may be sprayed with a repellent containing permethrin. (Don't use permethrin on skin.)

Health Facilities in Costa Rica

If you need health care while in San Isidro de Heredia, there are local medical facilities with different levels of service. The staff at CRSA or your host families will direct you to the appropriate one if you do get sick. It is important to note that **you have to pay up front for any services rendered**, and then CISI insurance will reimburse you. See the Study Abroad Handbook for more information about CISI.

Emergency Contacts

General emergency procedures are described in the Study Abroad Handbook, and the CRSA staff is available if difficulties arise. You will receive an emergency contact card with CRSA staff information at your program group meeting in November; be sure to keep it in your wallet at all times. The information is also on the Contact Names & Addresses page of this guide.

In Costa Rica, you will also receive a card with vital host family information that needs to be

kept confidential. If lost or stolen, please report that to the CRSA staff immediately.

Safety in Costa Rica

When you first arrive in Costa Rica, it is recommended that you stay with the group at all times until you are well-oriented to your new environment. Do not walk alone, in even the surroundings near the hostel where the group will be staying. If you leave the hostel, let someone from the CRSA staff know how long you will be gone, and only go with another program participant. Do not get into a car or go to the house of a stranger, no matter how friendly the person seems to be.

During orientation in Costa Rica, you will hear about specific places and behaviors to avoid, particularly in San José. For example, the Coca-Cola bus station in downtown San José is not a place to hang around: if you need to transfer through to catch a bus, go in a group, and time your arrival very close to your departure. While there, keep all bags in your hands.

For specific information on crime and road safety in Costa Rica, see the [Costa Rica Consular Information Website](#).

If you are a crime victim or if you are arrested abroad, get in touch with the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy. U.S. consular offices will do what they can to help U.S. citizens in serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties. They can often direct you to a reliable doctor or clinic, help you contact family, or re-issue your passport.

Independent Travel

Students often travel independently on weekends. When doing this, please be sure

that you leave your itinerary, including the name, address and phone number of the place you will be staying, and when you expect to arrive back in San Isidro, with your host family and/or at least one other program participant, so that you can be contacted if necessary. In addition, if you change your plans during the weekend, alert your travel companions and your host family, so that no one is worried if you do not arrive back at the time you originally indicated.

Marijuana and other Illegal Drugs

Please note that the use of marijuana is illegal in Costa Rica. Even carrying it on your person can be considered drug trafficking. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Costa Rica are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. U.S. citizenship offers no protection if you break a Costa Rican law.

In addition to legal penalties, you are putting yourself at risk any time you buy a drug from a stranger. You may be in danger of robbery or assault, or you may get a much more dangerous combination of drugs than you thought you were buying.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Passport information is included in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Passport

All U.S. citizens must travel with a passport that is valid no less than six months after your departure date from Costa Rica.

Visa

A visa is official permission to visit a country and is granted by the government of that country. To study in Costa Rica, you will not need a visa before you arrive; all U.S. citizens are given a 90-day tourist visa upon arrival. You will leave Costa Rica and go to Nicaragua during one of your required field trips. This will allow you to re-enter the country and have a new visa activated.

Important: While staying in Costa Rica and while traveling in Nicaragua, you need to remember that you don't have an official "student visa." You are considered a tourist studying abroad. The student visa is a special category that is granted by the Costa Rican government under specific circumstances.

Program Letters

You will receive two letters prior to departure, one in Spanish from Costa Rica Study Abroad, and one in English from the CIE, explaining the program and the fact that you will not be in Costa Rica for more than 90 days before leaving for Nicaragua. Please carry these letters with you when traveling to Costa Rica to show to airline agents and immigration officials if asked.

Departure Tax

Please be aware that you will need to pay a departure tax upon leaving Costa Rica. The cost was \$29 in 2017.

PACKING TIPS

In addition to the general packing information in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should know the following about Costa Rica.

Weather

You will be in Costa Rica for much of the dry season. The average temperature year-round near San José is 74 degrees Fahrenheit. For evenings, field trips, and if you plan to travel in mountainous regions, you will want a jacket or warm sweater.

Clothing

In the area of clothing, anything goes. Costa Rican female students are more likely to wear jeans or skirts (often quite short skirts) than shorts or dresses, and usually wear them with dressier shoes than U.S. women might. Cotton t-shirts/sweatshirts with logos are less common than on a U.S. campus, particularly among women, but can be seen.

Also note that during the community project, you may well be doing projects in which you get very dirty, so a few old T-shirt/shorts that you don't care about ruining would be a good idea. You can leave these behind when you are done.

What to Pack

Your Peer Adviser will give you a suggested packing list at your November meeting.

Do Not Bring

Do not bring expensive cell phones, jewelry, or other luxury items that can be lost or stolen. If you do decide to bring items that are expensive to replace, you may want to consider personal property insurance for your time in Costa Rica.

Appliances

Costa Rica uses the same electric current as the U.S.

Forget something? San Isidro de Heredia has pharmacies, super markets and mini-markets available.

GETTING TO COSTA RICA

There is information on student-oriented travel agencies, instructions for booking a flight, and other travel information in the Study Abroad Handbook.

Travel Arrangements

It is your responsibility to make travel arrangements to San José.

Be sure that your flight arrives before 9:00 PM on January 19 or you will not be met by program representatives. If you arrive after 9:00 PM, it is your responsibility to go to the hostel the group is staying in for orientation.

The earliest time a staff member will be at the airport to meet you is at 7:00 AM on January 19. If your flight arrives on January 19 BEFORE 7:00 AM, you can wait in the airport until the earliest pick-up time, or make your own transportation arrangements to the hostel. If you want to be picked up by CRSA representatives, you **MUST** contact the program representatives before your arrival to let them know you are arriving earlier than 7:00 AM and that you will wait at the airport to be picked up.

If you arrive before the beginning program date, or plan to leave after the official end of the program, you will need to make your own arrangements for lodging. Please note that you are responsible for your own transportation back to the airport once the program has ended!

The CRSA staff recommends that you DO NOT fly with Frontier airlines, as they have not allowed students to book flights that were over 90 days.

Airport Pick-Up Service

Please fill out the Arrival Information Form found in the Materials section of your online study abroad account as soon as you have made your flight arrangements. We will forward the information to CRSA.

Clearing Immigration & Customs

Flight attendants will give out two different kinds of forms that need to be filled out, a form with your personal information and another form is the Costa Rica Customs Declaration form. **You do not need to declare anything because you will only be bringing items for personal use.**

Your immigration category for entering Costa Rica is as a tourist. To enter as a student, you need to have been admitted to a Costa Rican university and gotten a student visa.

There is a short walk from your arriving gate to the immigration lines. You should be able to get through the line fairly quickly. You will get in line to have your passport stamped, and the first form is collected at that point. The estimated time for clearing immigration is about 20 minutes, but unexpected delays tend to happen.

After clearing immigration and picking up your luggage, you will head to the exit (street level), which is in the same main area of the airport. (San Jose's airport is very small, so do not worry about getting lost!)

As you walk out to the exit, you will have the choice of going either to the right or to the left; please go to your LEFT. Immediately outside you'll find a lot of people waiting: people offering taxi services, holding signs with people's names and just a general bit of confusion. **You should watch for the UW-Eau Claire sign or for the CRSA staff waving at you.**

Late Arrivals – Expected and Unexpected

CRSA representatives cannot pick you up after 9:00 PM

Expected: If you know that your flight arrives after 9:00 PM, CRSA can pre-arrange pick-up with a trusted taxi service that they know well. This person will carry I.D. and have a sign with your name. Although CRSA can help you make arrangements, you will be responsible for paying the cost of the pickup.

Unexpected: If a flight delay results in a late arrival, we suggest that you take one of the **orange colored taxis, which are the official airport taxis.** The taxi ride to the hostel should cost about \$25-\$30. It will take you about 40 minutes to get to the hostel.

Hostel Information:

Hotel Villa Zurqui
Freeway 32
Heredia Province

Ruta 32, 150 metros antes del peaje hacia
Guapiles, 53017 San Isidro, Heredia, Costa Rica

Phone: 2268 8856

IMPORTANT REMINDER: If you don't feel comfortable communicating well in Spanish, write down the hostel's address on a piece of paper and give it to the airport driver.

Leaving Costa Rica

It is your responsibility to make arrangements to get to your airport of departure at the end of the program, and to pay for the cost of whatever type of transportation you use.

SETTLING IN

Orientation

When you first arrive in Costa Rica, you will be taken to a hostel for Friday night/Saturday orientation. Topics covered will include: living with host families, cultural differences, appropriate behavior, Costa Rica in general, and safety & emergency procedures. This is also a great chance to get to know the staff of Costa Rica Study Abroad, S.A.

Until you are well-oriented to your new surroundings, it is recommended that you stay with the group at all times. If going out for a walk nearby, let a member of the CRSA staff know, and go in pairs, never by yourself. Remember to take with you the hostel's telephone numbers and the numbers of the CRSA staff as well.

Host families will pick you up from the hostel on Saturday afternoon.

Homestays

To encourage the maximum use of newly acquired Spanish language skills, all students live with Spanish-speaking families in San Isidro de Heredia. CRSA arranges accommodations with carefully selected host

families. In general, only one student is placed per family; in all cases, you will have your own room. The cost of room and three meals a day is included in the cost of your program.

Information about your family (name, address, house telephone, cell phone if they have one, ages of family members) will be sent to you in November or December. You may **want to contact your family via email or social media, or call them** after you receive the information, in order to introduce yourself a bit.

Financial Arrangements

While CRSA screens families carefully to try to ensure that they have cultural interests for participating, **most** households participating do so at least partially for economic reasons. This is only logical, given the disruption that hosting a student causes to family life.

Even for families with cultural reasons for participating, it is not easy to welcome a stranger into your home for a semester. The entire family needs to adjust its schedules and habits to accommodate this new person. In addition, there are very real costs associated with having another person in the home. Receiving some monetary compensation for this is only fair, and most families would not consider hosting otherwise.

If you stay after the program ends and want to remain at your host family's house, **you must pay** your family for room and board. In some cases the family truly needs that income, in others the family may be in a position to charge you less than they normally do. **In all cases**, you should not expect your host family to do so for free. The families need your contribution in order to take care of you.

Keep in mind that any relationship is a two-way street. It is as much your responsibility to fit into the family as it is their responsibility to include you in their daily life. A few pointers that may help you fit in more easily:

The House

In the words of a past participant, *"My house was pretty typical. There was a family room, eating room, and kitchen downstairs, then the upstairs had three bedrooms. My room had a twin bed, closet, mirror, and a desk to do homework. I brought pictures of friends and family from home and set those up in my room, which gave it a personal touch to feel like my home."*

"Your" Room

You will have your own room; however, the concept of a private room is different in Costa Rica than in the U.S. A messy room reflects poorly on you and your upbringing. In addition, it will reflect poorly on your host family, as the messy room is part of their house. Keep your room neat, make your bed every day before leaving home, and you will avoid tensions that could otherwise arise. Just closing the door is not acceptable. Your host family may clean or 'rearrange' your room at times. In addition, be aware that **it is never proper to entertain guests, regardless of their gender, in your bedroom.**

Please do not keep snacks of any kind in your bedroom. Students sometime complain of ants and roaches. Often, this is because sweets or other foods have been left open in their rooms.

Guests

You should only invite visitors to your house if you have first cleared this with your host family. Visitors should never be invited for meals or to stay overnight without prior family permission.

If you are expecting friends or family members from the States, make lodging arrangements for them at a local hostel, apartment or hotel prior to their arrival in Costa Rica. The host family should not be expected to have additional visitors stay in their homes, even for just a few days.

Even if a host family offers to allow a visitor to stay in their home for a night or two, they will appreciate a monetary contribution of at least \$20 per day per person. Please be aware that it is not culturally appropriate for you to have your boyfriend or girlfriend spend the night in your room in your host family's house.

Telephone

Telephone rates are very high in Costa Rica, and every call, local or long distance, is charged by the minute. Some families prefer that students use a pay phone rather than the phone at home. See the "Communication" section of this guide for details.

Water

Water is a precious resource in Costa Rica. Most Costa Ricans take a shower every morning, and you can, too--but it should be short, both to conserve water and to keep the bathroom as free as possible. Hot water is not always guaranteed! If you can't figure out how to use the hot water, just ask! Water from your host families' homes is safe to drink.

Toilets

In Costa Rica and Nicaragua, as in many parts of Central and South America, you can't flush toilet paper down the toilet. Plumbing pipes are typically only one inch in diameter, rather than the standard two inches used in the U.S. There will be a garbage can next to the toilet to be used for toilet paper. **Make sure to throw toilet paper in the garbage can, not in the toilet!** This takes some getting used to, but after a few weeks, it will become habit.

Laundry

Laundry will be done by your family. Discuss with them the family laundry schedule. Note that girls may have to wash their own underwear.

Meals

You will be eating typical Costa Rican foods with your host family. Expect lots of beans and rice, fresh fruits and vegetables and a variety of chicken and red meat. The food is not spicy. Unless you have an actual food allergy, it is only polite to try whatever you are offered. Do not expect your family to prepare special meals for you--remember that you should expect to be treated as part of the family, not a special guest.

A few standards that you will encounter:

Gallo pinto: rice and black beans seasoned with cilantro, onions, peppers, typically served for breakfast.

Arroz con pollo: rice with chicken, usually some vegetables and different seasonings

Arroz con leche: a typical dessert made from rice and milk.

Refrescos: a type of juice made from fresh fruit, sugar, and water or milk.

Platanos fritos: frequent side dish—just platanos fried in a pan

Meals are considered family time. Some U.S. students are in the habit of taking their meals to their rooms at home; this is not acceptable behavior in Costa Rica. Also, if you are going to miss a meal for any reason, please be sure to let your host mother know well in advance.

Here is a description from a past participant:
"My mother would have breakfast on the table ready to eat every morning, usually consisting of gallo pinto (rice and beans), eggs, platanos (type of fried banana), fruit, coffee, juice--usually they aren't this big but my mom loved to feed me! Be sure to let them know if it's too much or not enough, or you will have this much for the whole time you are there.

For lunch, my mother would wake up at 5am to start cooking lunch for my sister, dad and me to take with us. It wasn't a typical bag lunch--often rice and beans and chicken, with a salad. It always varies.

Dinner was pretty similar to lunch; sometime she would make pasta, or tortas, which are like mini hamburgers. Be sure you are open to trying new things, you will have a better experience if you are."

The Refrigerator

Typically, families encourage you to eat when you are hungry. However, the fridge and cabinets are not stocked with snacks and food like we do in the United States. Families typically purchase the food they will prepare each day. It is better not to help yourself to snacks, but to ask politely beforehand.

Keep Lines of Communication Open

If you have questions about what your family expects of you, or you feel they do not understand your behavior, talk with them! Open lines of communication are important in building trust in any relationship.

Checking In

Costa Rican parents are generally more protective, even of university-age students, than their U.S. counterparts. This may feel intrusive to you, particularly if you have been living on your own for a while. Remember that this is a cultural adjustment and respect your host family's wishes. Let them know if you are going out, particularly in the evening, where you are going, with whom, and what time you will be back. Be aware that they will most likely not go to sleep until you have returned. If they ask that you be back by a particular time, be sure that you are. If you will be gone overnight, be sure to inform your family well in advance.

Visiting Your Host Family After the Program Ends

Many students establish very strong bonds with their host families and end up going back to visit after the program has finished. It is perfectly acceptable to go back and visit your family, but we ask you to plan your visit when a UW-Eau Claire program is not in session, since your family may be hosting another student, and it puts them in an uncomfortable situation.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Because this program is only for UW-Eau Claire students and is not based at a university, it is really important that you make the effort to get involved in the local community. There are lots of opportunities. Here are some suggestions from past groups.

English Partners/Assisting with English Teaching

If there is interest, the coordinators will try to set up a conversation partners program with students at a university in Heredia who are studying English. The agreement is that you talk for half of the time in Spanish, and half the time in English. This way you both get to improve your speaking and listening skills! The coordinators set up the first meeting, and you take it from there. In the past, some students have also gone into the primary and secondary schools to help with English classes. If this is something you are interested in doing, just ask!

Gyms/Fitness

Walking to-and-from school each day may be enough of a workout for some of you, but for those who want more, there are a couple of gyms. Students that did join a gym reported really enjoying it, since they got to work out with some of the Ticos (like they actually worked out with you and helped you with your workouts!) Look into this and ask a coordinator if you are really into staying in shape!

Host Family

Your host families can be a really good source of connections! **Talk to them!** They might be able to help you out if there is something you are interested in learning more about or getting involved with in the community, and

they may have great tips for places to go on weekend trips.

Church

If getting involved in a church is something you are thinking about, ask your host family or the coordinators how to do that. If you go with your host family, and they are already involved with church activities, you can just join in and meet lots of other Ticos.

Internships

Looking to the future, if you are traveling around any parts of Costa Rica and you see a place and think "I could see myself working here," ask some of the workers how they got started! Chances are there is a way for you to apply for a job/internship and come back in the future!

Remember!

Since you are the newcomers, and you will only be in Costa Rica for a short amount of time, it is up to you to make the 1st (or maybe the 2nd and 3rd..) move/invitation if you want to make any connections with other local people. The people who live there already have their groups of friends in place! You'll find that many of them are very willing to include you—but it's up to you to initiate things.

COMMUNICATION

Information on accessing/forwarding your UW-Eau Claire e-mail address, which you need to check while abroad, is in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Telephone Information

As mentioned previously, phone calls are very expensive in Costa Rica. The telephone is primarily an instrument used briefly to set up times/places for meeting with friends. If you find it absolutely necessary to use a phone at home, and your family approves, **limit yourself to ONE 3-minute call per day.**

Never make a long-distance call from your host family's home unless you make it COLLECT. Ask someone in the family to help you do this. Long distance calls are often not billed until two months later, and the bills may not be itemized. It is therefore not practical or polite to offer to pay for a long distance call.

Past participants note that it is also easy to Skype from Internet cafés, and, apart from the Internet charge, it is free.

It will be easier for you to call home than for your parents to call you at first. However, once you get situated, it is cheaper for your parents and friends to call you. You may want to set a specific time and day so that you are by the phone.

To call from the U.S. to Costa Rica: you must first dial 011, which is the international dialing code. Next, you must dial 506 to get Costa Rica, and then the rest of the number to reach a specific city and location.

There are telephones at the San Isidro school site if you need to make a call to someone in Costa Rica. You will need to get permission from the coordinators before using the phones.

Many students choose to bring their Smartphones with them to Costa Rica and call

home over the Wi-Fi. If you don't have a Smartphone, an iPod touch or tablet works really well, too. Most students choose to use Facetime or Skype to call home. There are several texting apps, like WhatsApp, that you can use to text back home when you are connected to Wi-Fi.

E-mail/Internet

At the San Isidro school site, there is a wireless connection and students can stay in touch with their families and friends through Skype. However, the use of Internet and wireless in school is limited to the lunch break, class recess, and at the end of classes. The CRSA administrative offices schedule is from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. When needing to use the school Internet to complete assignments, please respect the office hours.

Internet is a great resource and the program uses it for regular communication with the students as well as for academic research; nonetheless, patience is required as the service is not as reliable as it is in the U.S. You should exercise all precautions when saving your work, as problems with electricity, Internet failure and others can render the product of your effort "disappeared" in seconds. Bring a flash drive with you for backing up your school work. Send yourself a message with your work attached, just to have it in a safe place. You might also want to send it to a friend of yours or to a second address of your own.

San Isidro has several Internet cafés with printing and photocopying services you can use at a very affordable price. They are normally open until 8:00 p.m.

Keep in mind that Internet cafés in Costa Rica are not the same as in the states. You mostly have to use the cafe's computers, and they are typically not a sit-down-and-drink-coffee café where you can use your laptop with wireless.

Please be sure to not 'over-use' the Internet! Don't forget that you are in Costa Rica, and it is important to experience what is in front of you!!!

Language

Students generally report that Costa Rican Spanish is fairly easy to understand. People speak fairly slowly and clearly, and they tend to be patient with non-native speakers. One thing that may confuse you at first is the use of "vos" as the familiar, rather than the "tu" form typically taught in the U.S. This form still takes the "te" reflexive. "Usted" is widely used, even among friends and family. In the words of a past student: *"I used Usted with my host mom, my family, and my Costa Rican friends, and when I listened in on their conversations, I noticed that they did the same with each other."*

Below is a list of common vocabulary you may hear in Costa Rica:

mae (pronounced my)—dude; more commonly used among young adult males

tuánis—"I'm great!" or "That's awesome!" or "Too nice!"; used among teenagers and young adults in response to a greeting or reaction to something really cool

chosa—house; pad

pura vida—direct translation: "Pure Life"; used for nearly *everything*; most common phrase native to Costa Rica; mostly used in greetings and farewells

chunche—thing; object; "cosita"

rico—direct translation: "rich"; another word that is used for describing the greatness/richness of many things. i.e.: "¡Que rico duerme!", "Comida rica," "Clima rico," "¡Que rico descansar!"

gallo pinto—common dish comprised of rice and beans

¡Salud!—"Bless you!"; expression used after someone sneezes

¡Que torta!—direct translation: "What problems!"; "How hard!"; or "How difficult!"

toque—a little bit; usually referring to time

Con gusto - This is used as thank you instead of "de nada"

CULTURAL NOTES

Greetings and Addresses

Observe proper greeting and leave-taking etiquette. Always shake hands when you meet an acquaintance. It is also acceptable for women to kiss friends (men and women) on the cheek; men shake hands. Using titles and addressing people with the "Usted" form is considered polite.

Tico Time

Former students have reported that the concept of time in Costa Rica is different than the one in the United States. While buses and tourism agencies are usually very punctual and dependable, departure and returning hours might change due to unexpected circumstances. Traditionally, the Ticos tend to be more relaxed about the concept of time and are not driven by the belief that "time is money." This laid-back attitude has become known as "Tico Time."

There is a sense that what you are doing at the present is important, particularly if you are spending time with a person, and that things planned for later will be taken care of later. In Costa Rica, it is not uncommon for a friend to show up a half hour after an agreed-upon meeting time, or for a party to begin two hours later than announced. It would be considered rude to arrive on time if invited to a friend's house for dinner. Relax and try a new style.

Note: The more relaxed time concept **does not apply** in academic situations, such as class or a meeting with a professor. In these situations and other more formal business settings, punctuality is expected.

"Developing World"

Part of U.S. students' frustration with time and schedules in Costa Rica may be that, on the surface, Costa Rica can seem similar to the U.S. There is a McDonald's, Ace Hardware, the Gap, Subway, and TCBY in San José. The glaring poverty in many Central American countries is less evident there – people are generally well-educated, the buses are clean and new-looking. There are ATMs and phone booths in many locations.

Despite the outward appearance of relative wealth, however, Costa Rica is a developing country. You may become frustrated when the ATM doesn't work, and when you are forced to stand in line at the bank for two hours to complete a transaction that takes three minutes at home. Keep in mind that this is all part of truly experiencing life in a different culture.

Family

The family plays an important role in Costa Rican culture. The extended family is often a very large, close circle of relatives and friends. It is not unusual for children to live with parents until they marry—or to continue to live with parents if they never marry. Your host family may include several generations in one house.

Traditional family roles, although not as pronounced as in the past, are still apparent to a U.S. observer. The man is still the authority figure and main provider, while the woman, even if she works outside the home, is usually responsible for running the household and caring for the children.

Gender Issues

Women in Costa Rica have made great gains toward equality. They make up 50% of the student body at all educational levels up to the university and are better represented in professional roles than in most other Latin American countries.

Despite the above paragraph, as you interact with Costa Ricans your age, you may become aware that social rules and etiquette are stricter for women than for men. A woman's reputation is important. You may notice that Costa Rican women rarely drink very much, and they almost never go to clubs or bars alone.

Female students should refrain from drinking too much for obvious safety reasons. Also, flirting openly with local men may send out the wrong signals to them—you could be seen as an easy sexual conquest. You would want to avoid this stereotype. Remember you are an

ambassador of your country and of your university while studying abroad.

"Piropos"

Piropos (catcalls) are a fact of life for women in Costa Rica. Although they may be considered "harmless" at one level, they often do not feel that way to U.S. American women. The best way to deal with piropos is to just ignore them and continue on your way.

Other Notes

Pedestrians never have the right of way—be careful when crossing the street!

Visiting students usually notice that there are no pollution controls for vehicles, buses, industry, etc. With the advent of eco-tourism, Costa Rica is becoming more environmentally conscious.

Be sure to agree on a price before you get into a cab, or you may be charged a high rate. Also ask if the driver has a taxi meter (Maria)—if not, look for another taxi, as the rate could be set arbitrarily.

TRAVEL WHILE ABROAD

Fieldtrips

The program will include **academic fieldtrips** intended to introduce you to a few of the several faces of Costa Rica. There are visits to museums, theaters, university campuses, mercados, etc., as well as field trips to the beach, rainforest, and cloud forest.

Please note the cost of these field trips is included in your program costs. You should not ask to stay longer at certain places, or to have the bus driver come back and get

members of your group later, because you want to spend some more "free time" exploring. The trips are carefully planned and budgeted for by the program directors. If you want to go back to visit an area, that is great, but you should plan to do so during a free weekend.

If you are on a program fieldtrip and choose to pursue your own itinerary rather than staying with the group, your travel from that point on is your own responsibility. Please note the Costa Rican police will not begin searching for missing persons until 24 hours after a report has been made.

Guidebooks

If you are like many students, you may want to travel around a bit on your own. To make the most of this, you'll want to do some advance planning. Travel guides such as Lonely Planet receive good reviews from past participants and are available at any major bookstore. Some guides are written specifically for economy travelers. Christopher Baker's Costa Rica Handbook has lots of good information, also.

Past Participants Tips: Travel

Past participants recommend the following:

Manuel Antonio: The Manuel Antonio National Park, is a must! Once you get into the park there are beaches, wildlife, and different hiking areas everywhere. There are also great restaurants, and you can find relatively cheap hotels to stay in.

Montezuma: Located on the Nicoya Peninsula, so you have to take a bus and a ferry then another bus to get there. It's a long

trip so be sure to plan accordingly and spend as much time there as you can. Montezuma has some of the most breath-taking waterfalls you'll ever see; ask local people how to get to them.

Volcan Arenal: You can go horseback riding, there are hot springs, canopy tours, hiking, hanging bridges, you can also get tours of the volcano at night and see the lava coming from the top.

Puerto Viejo: Heavily influenced by the Caribbean/Jamaican culture, it is a completely

different atmosphere than anywhere else in the country.

Guanacaste: Heavily influenced by tourism; it has a great night life and good beaches, it also has a lot of tourist shops.

Rioceseleste: This has the most beautiful water fall! It is naturally a baby blue color because of the sulfur in the water. This is a great place for hiking too!

WEB RESOURCES: COSTA RICA

COSTA RICA	CULTURE	TRAVEL
San Isidro de Heredia http://www.govisitcostarica.com/region/city.asp?cID=220	Spanish Language http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_language	Costa Rica by Bus http://www.lonelyplanet.com/costa-rica/transport/getting-around/bus
Visit Costa Rica http://www.visitcostarica.com	Constitution of Costa Rica http://www.costaricalaw.com/Constitutional-Law/costa-rica-constitution-in-english.html	Newspapers http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/costaric.htm
Costa Rica—Traveler Reviews on Trip Advisor http://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g291982-Costa_Rica-Vacations.html	Political Resources: Costa Rica http://www.politicalresources.net/costa.htm	La Nación http://www.nacion.com/
About Costa Rica http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costa_Rica		Tico Times http://www.ticotimes.net/

CONTACT NAMES & ADDRESSES: COSTA RICA

GENERAL UW-EAU CLAIRE & CISI CONTACT INFORMATION IS IN YOUR STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK.

COSTA RICA STUDY ABROAD

Maria Hernandez, Program Director

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Email: maria@costaricaabroadprograms.com

Kim Finco, Program Coordinator

Office Phone: 506-2268-2332

Cell: 506-8301-1885

Email: kim@costaricaabroadprograms.com

The School Address:

Costa Rica Study Abroad, S.A.

Calle Chaves, 500 metros norte del Colegio

San Isidro de Heredia

Costa Rica, AMERICA CENTRAL

P.O. Box 298-3017 San Isidro de Heredia

Costa Rica, 40601

U.S. CONSULATE in COSTA RICA

Calle 98 Vía 104

Pavas, San José

Costa Rica

Tel: (506) 2519-2000

Web: <https://cr.usembassy.gov/>

E-mail: consularsanjose@state.gov

For emergencies arising outside normal business hours, U.S. citizens may call (506) 2519-2280 or (506) 519-2279 and ask for the duty officer.

UW-EAU CLAIRE

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Courtney Brost

Study Abroad Coordinator

brostcn@uwec.edu

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105 Garfield Avenue

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Eau Claire, WI 54702

Phone: (715) 836-4411

Fax: (715) 836-4948

COSTA RICAN CONSULATE IN THE U.S.

Consulate General of Costa Rica

2112 S St. NW

Washington, DC 20008

Please print a copy of this sheet to leave with your emergency contact or family.

WHAT PAST PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID ABOUT THEIR TIME IN COSTA RICA

"It was everything I hoped it would be and more. It changed my life and I learned so much about other cultures, as well as the Spanish language and myself. I will never forget my time abroad." -Trey, Spring 2015

"My experience in Costa Rica has been life changing. I am so proud to be able to say that I am now bilingual! I have seen so many beautiful places--rain forests, beaches, crater lakes, waterfalls, mountains and so much more. My life has been changed for the better because of my new knowledge of a different culture. I now have a second home country: Costa Rica."
Ellie, Spring 2015

"I have gained so much confidence and I've learned so much about myself. This semester abroad is honestly one of the best decisions I have ever made. I'm so happy to have a family in another country. Although studying abroad seems like the scariest thing you can ever do, it's honestly the best thing. It's opened my eyes to a bigger world and other cultures."
-Jesse, Spring 2015

"My experience abroad was exciting, eye-opening, and life-changing. Learning about a new culture by being immersed in it is something I would recommend to anyone because it's changed my whole outlook on the world in three months." - Elora,
Spring 2015

"Overall, my experience abroad was unforgettable. I learned more about myself, and the world than I ever thought possible. This experience changed me for the better and I am so incredibly grateful." –Jena, Spring 2015

"Experiencing a different culture hands on is much more useful than classroom learning. I would recommend Costa Rica specifically because the staff and people involved with the program are so helpful and understanding. Also, this country is beautiful and the people are so nice, making the experience that much better." –Skylar, Spring 2015

"You are fully immersed in the culture here and if you aren't good at speaking Spanish, this program doesn't overwhelm you. It'll only help you grow."
Spring 2015 participant

"San Isidro de Heredia is a beautiful town, in fact, all of Costa Rica is beautiful. It is an immensely kind and accepting country, and I never felt as though I was being judged for saying something wrong, or not knowing how to say a certain word. I loved living with a host family and I feel as though living with a family helped make the experience what it was."
Spring 2015 participant

