

University of Wisconsin Eau Claire
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Study Abroad



**COSTA RICA
SUMMER 2017**

Program Guide

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CONGRATULATIONS on being accepted to the UW-Eau Claire program with Costa Rica Study Abroad, San Isidro de Heredia, 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
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 (SA) Handbook. The SA 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 SA Handbook, study abroad orientation, 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 email additional information throughout the semester. Please contact the Center for International Education (CIE) 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 future profession, desire to gain fluency in a second language, wish to expand personal and academic horizons, need for a change, 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 summer, UW-Eau Claire students are immersed in Spanish language and Latin American culture courses taught by instructors at Costa Rica Study Abroad (CRSA). You will live with host families to help you fully experience the local culture. Field trips and other cultural activities, such as visits to San José City, Heredia City, and Costa Rican cooking classes, will be included in the program costs.

The Location

Costa Rica Study Abroad, is a private language institute, and 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 summer program. It is recommended you wait until after orientation to book your flight since there will be time at orientation to talk with others on the program about flight options and exchanging contact information.

Arrival: Friday, May 26, by 7:30 pm.

Orientation: Saturday-Sunday, May 27-28

Classes begin: Monday, May 29

Classes ends: Thursday, July 20

Last Day of Homestay: Wednesday, July 26

You may plan to depart on July 21, or you may opt to stay with your host family until July 26 at no additional cost.

ACADEMICS

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

Program Prerequisites

To participate in this study abroad program, you must **successfully complete Spanish 202 prior to departure, be in good academic, conduct, and financial, standing, and have the minimum 2.3 GPA required.** You must maintain full-time enrollment in the Spring semester; CIE will check grades at the end of the spring semester. If you are on probation, we will need to check with CRSA to see if you will be allowed to participate. If you are suspended, you will not be allowed to participate in the program.

Registration in Costa Rica

You registered for classes by filling out the course selection sheet which is on your online study abroad account. **Please note that there are no registration changes allowed after arrival in Costa Rica.**

Credits and Course load

You will earn six credits on this program. Dropping below full-time status may result in **loss of financial aid and/or insurance coverage and must be approved in advance by the CIE.**

This is an intensive eight-week program. You will take two courses on this program and will have several hours of classes each day, in addition to homework in preparation for the next day's classes.

Classes

You will receive six credits for two of the following courses. Depending on your current level, Spanish credit will be granted for:

- Spanish 301 (3 credits)
- Spanish 302 (3 credits)
- Spanish 352 (3 credits)
- Spanish 405 (3 credits)
- Culture of Costa Rica (3 credits of Spanish upper division elective credit, GE III)

Classes will meet Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday. Wednesdays will be reserved for interaction and cultural activities in the local community. You will have opportunities for community service and you will also have academic assignments related to your classes that will require you to be out doing things in the community.

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 meaning, no curve is used. Short assignments

are given throughout the program, and longer papers, term projects, and/or final exams are required at the end. **The final exams are comprehensive and usually carry more weight than any other work during the semester in terms of the final grade.**

Note: 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

CRSA will send a grade report for your time abroad to UW-Eau Claire. **Grade reports typically arrive two to four weeks after the program ends.** Even though your grades may arrive prior to the end of the UW-Eau Claire summer session, grades from abroad cannot be posted until after on-campus grades have been added to students' records. Therefore, 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 summer session. Grades from abroad are generally posted within a week or two of the end of the session.

If you are a senior and are studying abroad for your last term, please note that the different timelines in grade reporting **may require you to delay your graduation from summer to fall.** The UW-Eau Claire Registrar's Office must receive grades within 42 days of the last day of the UW-Eau Claire term in order to confirm your graduation that term. This is a UW-Eau Claire requirement, and our partners abroad cannot change their usual timelines to accommodate it.

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 Languages Department 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.**

Costa Rican Academic System

Although you will not be taking courses at a university, it is important that you realize you are 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 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. You will also be relying on other resources found on the Internet.

Volunteering

Volunteering during study abroad is a wonderful way to get involved in the local community, make meaningful relationships, and improve your Spanish-language skills. While in Costa Rica, you may volunteer for two, four, or six hours a week. You will be introduced to the volunteer opportunities and be given the chance to complete a volunteer placement agreement during your second week in Costa Rica.

When considering volunteering during study abroad, it is important to note that it represents both time and commitment to the organization. It requires time on the part of the organization to plan projects for and supervise a volunteer, so please take your commitment seriously or some of the community partners may not be willing to host volunteers in the future. Also, volunteering abroad requires you to take initiative. The more you are willing to invest in the experience the more rewarding it will be!

Below you will find a list of possible areas in which you can volunteer during your time in Costa Rica:

- Collaborate in ecology projects (cleaning rivers, cleaning rural roads, maintaining green areas in schools, etc.)
- Teach English in schools or in a community center
- Assist in a school for children with learning disabilities and special needs
- Assist in an elderly home
- Assist at a wildlife rescue organization

Volunteer projects will be available based on current need in the community.

Service-Learning Requirement

If you need to fulfill your UW-Eau Claire service-learning requirement, successful completion of your volunteer assignment may fulfill part of it. You will complete the service-learning forms online once you have your volunteer assignment, before you begin your service. To do so, go to the following website: <http://www.uwec.edu/SL/students/index.htm>

Click on "Student Login" on the left side and log in as a UWEC user.

1. Click on "Start a Project" at the top menu

2. Find your Community Partner in the alpha listing (Costa Rica Study Abroad)
3. Click on "Supervisors" to locate your supervisor (choose Valeria Fernandez)
4. Click on "Create a Project" on that same line
5. Complete Part 1

Title:

Hours: 15, if you plan to complete half of the service-learning requirement

Begin & End Dates

Your UWEC username

Mentor username: Courtney Brost will be your UW-Eau Claire mentor. Her username: brostcn

6. Complete Part 2: You will need to discuss the questions below with Costa Rica Study Abroad staff and your on-site supervisor at your host organization before you can answer these questions.

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

- a. What will you do to meet the need?
- b. What issues related to the identified need will you explore or have you already explored (i.e., learning why there is a need, how the need is being met by the organization, or using your skills to suggest better ways to meet the need)?

2. Learning outcomes for this project.

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 (if you think the project could meet other liberal education learning outcomes, please contact Courtney to discuss before you complete the form)

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

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

5. Reflection Activity

a. For the reflection component of the project, you will need to submit a (minimum) two-page paper to Courtney, addressing 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?

b. 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.

MONEY MATTERS

Information about how payments are made, when they are due, and 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 - Summer webpage](#). Be sure you are looking at the correct term. Remember that the cost estimate includes what you pay to UW-Eau Claire, what you pay to Costa Rica Study

Abroad, and what you pay directly 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. Summer 2016 participants reported spending anywhere from \$50-\$700 additional dollars, with the average being around \$350. Keep in mind that you can spend as much money as you have, but you do not need to! Students who spend more time with their host families 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 and 10,000 colones bills. Past participants note that it can be hard to use 10,000 colones bills for small purchases, such as in cafes, in taxis, etc. The exchange rate as of Nov 22, 2016 was \$1 USD = 540 colones. You can find current exchange rates at <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>.

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 Oralte, 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

The water in San Isidro is potable (drinkable). However, if you are traveling outside of San Isidro and buying food from street vendors, and you are in an area where you are not sure that the water is potable, stick to breads or fruits that you peel yourself. Fruits that cannot be peeled, fruit juices diluted with water, raw vegetables, and salads that have not been washed with disinfected water should be avoided.

The general recommendation from the CDC for water is to drink bottled or boiled water any time you are outside of the San José area, where the water is treated. Brush your teeth with bottled or boiled water also. Carbonated 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 ("popote" in Spanish). By making sure that you are drinking uncontaminated water, you can reduce your exposure to many diseases such as infectious hepatitis, cholera, diarrhea and dysentery. Where water is contaminated, ice is also contaminated—you may wish to order drinks "sin hielo" (without ice).

When you are not in control of your water supply or cannot purchase bottled water, consider bringing a portable water purifier, available at most outdoor stores, and 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, particularly mosquito, 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 cure 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.)

Other Keys to Staying Healthy

Wash your hands frequently, always using soap.

If you are buying food from street vendors, stick to breads or fruits that you peel yourself. (The knives used might be dirty.) Fruits that cannot be peeled, fruit juices diluted with water, raw vegetables, and salads that have not been washed with disinfected water should be avoided.

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. Be aware you'll have to pay up front, 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 orientation; 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

Upon arrival in Costa Rica, we recommend 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 U.S. State Department Information for Costa Rica on our website (found under Current Participants, term/year of your program.)

If you are the victim of a crime 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.

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.

Visa

A visa is official permission to temporarily reside in another country and is granted by the government of that country. The CIE will post basic information about the current visa options for U.S. citizens for study in Costa Rica to the Learning Content section of your online study abroad account during the semester prior to departure. **However, it is your responsibility to keep up-to-date about student visa requirements for Costa Rica, and if required, to apply for and receive a visa from an Costa Rican consulate or embassy in a timely manner.** Please read the “Visa” section of your Study Abroad Handbook for more information about what you should do to keep up-to-date on visa requirements.

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 during the rainy season. The climate in May through July will be mostly sunny, warm, and humid in the mornings and afternoons, but with strong possibility of rain on most afternoons and in some mornings. It might turn cool/cold in the evenings because of the high altitude of San

Isidro of Heredia, the town where you will be living.

Packing Less is More

When packing your bags for your upcoming program in Costa Rica, please keep in mind that it is vital that you pack light, less stuff is easier to carry and less costly.

Students in the past have found that they have brought with them too many unnecessary items and too much clothing. Bringing along too many pairs of shoes, clothes for evening events, formal attire, etc. is not a good idea. Most of the clothes you will be wearing in Costa Rica will be casual: summer outfits, such as t-shirts and shorts, cargo pants, skirts and informal blouses.

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.

Gifts

You may want to pack some small items that you could use as gifts. For example, if you wish to bring gifts to donate at your volunteer project site, consider useful things such as markers, pens and pencils, children’s scissors, coloring books, flash cards, etc. It is suggested, but not obligatory, to offer a small gift for your host-family. A small memento from Wisconsin, like a UWEC mug, might be nice. If you are unsure what to bring for your host family, ask your peer adviser.

What to Pack

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

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

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, to the Juan Santamaria International Airport. **Be sure that your flight arrives on Friday, May 26 before 7:30 p.m. or you will not be met by program representatives.**

If you arrive after 7:30 PM, it is your responsibility to go to the hostel the group is staying in for orientation.

If you arrive earlier than May 26, it is your responsibility to get to the program site for orientation; you **will not** be picked up if you arrive early.

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!

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 7:30 p.m.

Expected: If you know that your flight arrives after 7:30 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, we recommend 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 [or cell phone], email, ages of family members) will be sent to you in late April or early May. You may want to 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 the summer. The entire family needs to adjust schedules and habits to accommodate a 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 provide room and board 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 to 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. 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 sometimes 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 forbid the use of the telephone, and all 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, 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 females 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, and 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.

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.

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 in the United States. Families typically purchase the food they will prepare each day. It's better not to help yourself to snacks, but politely ask 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. Your family may be hosting another student, and it puts them in an uncomfortable situation.

COMMUNICATION

Information on accessing/forwarding your UW-Eau Claire email 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 easy to Skype from Internet cafes, 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.

Email/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 café'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!!!

CULTURAL NOTES

Greetings and Addresses

Observe proper greeting and leaving 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 in the U.S. While buses and tourism agencies are usually very punctual and dependable, departure and returning hours might change due to unexpected circumstances. Traditionally, 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 in Costa Rica. People are generally well-educated; the buses are clean and new-looking, and 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.

U.S. 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 (known as a Maria)—if not, look for another taxi, as the rate could be set arbitrarily.

TRAVEL WHILE ABROAD

Program Excursions

The 2017 program will include **two program excursions** such as: a field trip to Samara Beach, a trip to the Irazu Volcano, or a visit to San Jose City and to Heredia City.

Please note the cost of these program excursions 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, and if you want to go back to visit an area, that is great, but you should plan to do so during a free weekend.

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 comments 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.

CONTACT NAMES & ADDRESSES

General UW-Eau Claire & CISI contact information is in your Study Abroad Handbook.

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

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We suggest that you copy this page and leave it with your
emergency contact and/or parents.

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/

WHAT PAST PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID ABOUT THEIR TIME IN COSTA RICA

"The experience I had while studying abroad will stay with be forever. I never thought I would be have been this close to my host family. Before I left the states, I was ready to come home. Yet, when I returned to the USA, I wanted to cry because I fell in love with my host family and Costa Rica. My host family was the best part of the trip. They treated me like a family member and always included me. I will be forever grateful for them." - Alexi Summer 2014

"My experience was wonderful. I love traveling and have studied abroad before, but this experience in Costa Rica has been my favorite to date. Everyone is so welcoming and makes you feel right at home and included. I couldn't have asked for a better experience, but it is what you make it. I wanted to enjoy my time and to have a close relationship with my family, so I did. I chose to brush off the things that could have frustrated me or given me negative thoughts and feelings towards my experience. Not everything is perfect, but I chose to focus on the things I liked and that has given me an experience I would never replace." - Emily, Summer 2014

"My time in Costa Rica was the best time of my life. I learned so much about the Costa Rican culture, Spanish, and about myself. I feel like a much stronger person from studying abroad. I hope everyone gets the opportunity I did to study abroad, because it was the best decision I could have made for my college career."
- Hannah, Summer 2013

"Truly life changing. The best thing I could have ever chosen to do!" - Mara, Summer 2013

"The food, the culture and the family were great. I made a real family there in 6 weeks and experiences I could never forget." - Paula, Summer 2013

"I learned so much from my professors in class but I think I learned the most at home. That was where my language was really put to the test. Even though sometimes it was hard, it was definitely worth it getting to become a part of their family and learn their culture and traditions. It was fun learning what things my family and I had in common. I loved this experience and would do it again." - Kelly, Summer 2013

"I never imagined that it would be easier leaving Wisconsin than it would be leaving my host country. After only 6 weeks, Costa Rica became my home. I looked forward to my conversations with my host family and free time to explore the country and culture. My only regret? That I chose the shorter program! I can't wait to visit Costa Rica again and I would encourage everyone to study abroad. This program proved to me that even if you aren't able to study abroad for an entire semester, a 6-week program can change your life forever." - Kate, Summer 2013

