

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN EAU CLAIRE

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Study Abroad



**COSTA RICA NURSING AND HEALTH
CARE PROFESSIONS
SUMMER 2017**

Program Guide

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CONGRATULATIONS on being accepted to the UW-Eau Claire (UWEC) Costa Rica-Nursing & Health Care Professions program with Costa Rica Study Abroad (CRSA). 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 (SA) Handbook. The SA Handbook has information that is valid for all UW-Eau Claire study abroad programs. This guide will provide you with information to assist you in your preparation for study abroad. It is designed to complement the study abroad orientation, the SA Handbook, and your individual pre-departure preparations.

Please realize that although this guide was written to help you better prepare for your time abroad, it is impossible for any single resource to answer all of your questions. Your peer adviser will email additional information throughout the semester. We also strongly encourage you to contact your peer adviser, the study abroad staff 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, 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 through the Costa Rica Nursing and Healthcare Professions program, UW-Eau Claire students are immersed in Spanish language and the Costa Rican medical system. You will take one intensive medical Spanish language course at an appropriate level, and one course about the Costa Rican medical system, taught in English, from instructors at Costa Rica Study Abroad (CRSA). Housing is with host families.

The Location

CRSA 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 an eight-week 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, June 2 by 7:30 pm

Orientation: Saturday-Sunday, June 3-4

Classes begin: Monday, June 5

Classes end: Friday, July 28

Last day of homestay: Thursday, August 3

You may plan to depart on July 29, or you may opt to stay with your host family until August 3 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 be in good academic, conduct, and financial standing and have a 2.3 GPA**. You must maintain full-time enrollment during spring semester; CIE will check grades at the end of spring semester. If you are on probation at that time, we will need to check with CRSA to see if you will be allowed to participate. If you have been suspended, you will not be allowed to participate in the program. This means that cancellation may happen days before your planned departure date.

Registration

The course selection sheet you filled out with your post-acceptance materials is your registration for this study abroad program. You do not need to do anything else.

Class Attendance

When studying abroad, you are required to follow the attendance policies of your program abroad. In general, you are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and field trips unless illness or other unavoidable circumstances make this impossible. Absences must be approved in advance by the instructor and may result in lower grades.

Credits and Course Load

All students are expected to take two classes (8 credits) on this program. Dropping either class would put you below full-time status and could result in loss of financial aid. Dropping a class **must be approved in advance by the CIE**. The credits you earn abroad are considered UW-Eau Claire resident credits and will count towards the total credits needed for graduation, and grades will be figured into your UW-Eau Claire GPA.

This is an intensive eight-week program. You will take two courses on this program and will have five to seven hours of classes each day, depending on the schedule for clinic visits and other healthcare observation. Additionally, there will be homework in preparation for the next day's classes.

Classes

You will receive five credits for a medical Spanish course. You signed a course selection sheet when you were accepted with information on the Spanish credit you will receive during the summer.

All students also take the three-credit *Introduction to the Costa Rican Medical System* (IDIS 155). Field trips are a required part of the Costa Rican Medical System course. You will be visiting different health facilities in rural and urban Costa Rica. These field trips should be viewed as **academic excursions.**

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, there is no curve. Short assignments are given throughout the class, 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 that **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

See additional information on transcripts in your Study Abroad Handbook.

CRSA will send a grade report for your time abroad to UW-Eau Claire. **Grades are not available until one or two months after the end of the term.** Due to this delay, you will initially receive a grade report with “NR” (not reported) for all courses. A revised transcript will be issued after the grades have arrived.

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 to 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 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.

MONEY MATTERS

Information about how payments are made, when they are due, withdrawal/refund deadlines, financial aid, scholarships, budgeting, and how 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 - Nursing 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 the Costa Rican institution, 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 \$120 to \$1,000 additional dollars, with the average being around \$700. 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, taxis, etc. The exchange rate as of November 22, 2016 was \$1 US = 540 colones. You can find current exchange rates at <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>.

Please note that you will get a poor exchange rate if you exchange dollars into Colones at a bank in the U.S. or at airport exchange facilities. Our partners in Costa Rica suggest that you travel with ~\$200 in small bills, \$20 or less, as you will be able to use those bills in Costa Rica until you get to an ATM.

SCHOLARSHIPS

In addition to the financial aid and scholarship information in your Study Abroad Handbook, there is a scholarship that specifically supports UW-Eau Claire nursing students:

Eau Claire Student Nurses Association Scholarships (Three @ \$400)

Three scholarships will be awarded annually. Students who are admitted to the nursing program at UW-Eau Claire will receive an email when the scholarship application is ready and available. The email will include the link to the online application forms located on the Foundation Scholarship website:

<https://scholarships.apps.uwec.edu/scholarships/174>

[0](#) The scholarship is generally awarded in April.

HEALTH ISSUES

Additional information about these issues, as well as about 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).

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 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, and always use 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

If you need health care while on the program, there are local medical facilities with different levels of service. The staff at CRSA or your host family will direct you to the appropriate one if you get sick. Be aware you'll have to pay up front, and then CISI insurance will reimburse you.

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, even in 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 the 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 Drug Use

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. **If you are discovered using drugs, you will be expelled from the program.**

Emergency Contacts

General emergency procedures are described in the Study Abroad Handbook, and the CRSA staff are available if difficulties arise. You received an emergency contact card at orientation; be sure to keep it with you at all times. The information is also on the *Contact Names & Addresses* page of this guide.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

General passport information is found 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 June 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.

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 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, casual 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.

When you go on visits to hospitals, clinics, and other medical settings, you will be expected to wear scrubs with white tennis shoes. Nursing students should have the UW-Eau Claire Nursing blue tops, but since not all of you are in the nursing program, any blue scrub top will work. Bottoms can be any color. If you do not have scrubs, you will need to buy some.

Bring clothing that is washable and does not wrinkle easily. Bring garments that can be worn interchangeably and which you can layer. Dark colors show travel dirt less quickly!

What to Pack

Your peer adviser will give you a suggested packing list at your April meeting.

Gifts

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.

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? You'll find all of the basic supplies you need in Costa Rica.

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 the Juan Santamaria International Airport in San José. **Be sure that your flight arrives on Friday, June 2 by 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 June 2, 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 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

The weekend after arrival, you will have an orientation to the program, as well as a general cultural orientation to Costa Rica.

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, telephone, email, ages of family members) will be sent to you in April or May. 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 participate at least partially for economic reasons. This is only logical, given the economic situation in Costa Rica and 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 their home for an extended period of time. The entire family needs to adjust its 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 sometime complain of ants and roaches. Often, this is because sweets or other food stuffs 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 their own cell phone and/or 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 free as possible. Hot water is not always guaranteed! If you can't figure out how to use the hot water, just ask!

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 poultry and red meats. 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.

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.

Checking In

Costa Rican parents are generally more protective, even of university-age students, than are 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.

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.

Visiting Your Host Family After the Program Ends

During their time in Costa Rica many students establish a strong relationship with their host families, and often stay in touch long after the program. Some students even will go back and visit following the program. Returning to visit your host family and friends after the program is a great way to keep your international experience alive! However, if you choose to return during the time when another UWEC group is in San Isidro de Heredia, please be respectful and do not interrupt the program. Also, please be aware that your host family may be hosting another student at that time, and you cannot expect to be able to stay at their home during your visit.

COMMUNICATION

Information on accessing/forwarding your UW-Eau Claire email address, which you need to check while abroad, along with general information on Skype and other communication tips, is in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Telephone Information

As mentioned previously, phone calls are very expensive in Costa Rica. Plan to use your own cell phone. If you find it necessary to make a call from your host family's phone, be sure to get their permission first, and **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.

In the words of a past participant: *“Placing telephone calls in Costa Rica can be a challenging and frustrating experience at times. When you pick up the phone to call someone here in the States, expect it not to work, and then you will not be disappointed. I believe there was only one or two times that it didn't work for me, but just keep in*

mind that the connection is very different down there.”

Computer Access/Email

CRSA will provide you with access to wireless Internet in San Isidro de Heredia from 8:00AM to 5:00PM. However, the use of Internet and wireless in school is limited to the lunch break, class recess, and at the end of classes. 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.

Keep in mind that Internet cafés in Costa Rica are not the same as in the U.S. 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.

Schedules

Along with the idea of time goes the idea of written schedules. Students who have studied in Costa Rica sometimes complained that itineraries for field trip are very loose. For example, if a written schedule is available at all, it most likely lists the time/location you will meet to begin the trip, and the general sights that you will see. There will be no times attached to the various sights. Try to understand that this is **not** lack of organization; it is a completely different cultural framework. In Costa Rican terms, it would be silly to say that you are

going to spend 60 minutes at a hospital, for example, because when you arrive, there could be an emergency or other happenings that take longer than that amount of time. The focus is on making the most of the present moment, rather than forcing the experience to fit a particular artificial timeframe.

"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. 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 discos or bars alone.

U.S. students who have studied in Costa Rica suggest that U.S. American women behave in a similar manner, even if it feels a little artificial. Acting the way you typically would in the U.S. may send out the wrong signals to "tico" men, you could be seen as an easy sexual conquest. You will most likely encounter this stereotype anyway, before people get to know you as a person, rather than as a U.S. American.

For women, avoiding certain social behaviors, such as going out for a pitcher of beer with the guys, hanging around men with steady girlfriends, or dating several men simultaneously, can pay off. **When people see you respecting their cultural norms, they are more likely to open up to you, and to invite you into their homes.** Even if you don't agree with these standards for women, you may get a better look at Costa Rican culture if you try to adhere to them.

"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.

Language

Students generally report that Costa Rican Spanish is fairly easy to understand. People speak 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 the formal address and is widely used, even among friends and family.

The Term "U.S. Americans"

You will note that we have used the term U.S., or U.S. American throughout this guide. Many other residents of the "Americas," both North and South, resent the fact that residents of the United States have appropriated the name of the continent(s) as their personal property. The term U.S. American is a more accurate description of U.S. citizens' place in the world.

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

Academic Fieldtrips

The 2017 program will include **academic field trips** intended to introduce you to a few of the several faces of the Costa Rican medical system. The purpose of these visits is two-fold: to enhance the use of the Spanish language in real settings and

to explore the Costa Rican health system and culture.

While in San Isidro de Heredia you will be widely exposed to the primary health care programs in Costa Rica. You will shadow health educators and nurses and will have the opportunity to volunteer and participate in outreach and promotional efforts of the clinic at schools. You will also become familiar with the structure & operation of the Costa Rican health system by attending lectures, by interviewing health workers, and by visiting a type B or regional hospital.

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 Berkeley & Lonely Planet receive good comments from past participants and are available at any major bookstore. These guides are written specifically for economy travelers. Christopher Baker's Costa Rica Handbook also has lots of good information.

CONTACT NAMES & ADDRESSES: COSTA RICA

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

CENTRAL AMERICA STUDY ABROAD

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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	Arts & Culture of Costa Rica http://www.centralamerica.com/cr/index.htm	Costa Rica Map http://www.costaricamap.com/
About Costa Rica http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costa_Rica	Spanish Language http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_language	Costa Rica—Traveler Reviews on Trip Advisor http://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g291982-Costa_Rica-Vacations.html
Visit Costa Rica http://www.visitcostarica.com	Political Resources: Costa Rica http://www.politicalresources.net/costa.htm	Newspapers http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/costaric.htm
Constitution of Costa Rica http://www.costaricalaw.com/Constitutional-Law/costa-rica-constitution-in-english.html		News Coverage <i>La Nación</i> http://www.nacion.com/ <i>Tico Times</i> http://www.ticotimes.net/

When we asked past Costa Rica Nursing & Health Care Professions students to sum up their experiences in Costa Rica, here is what they said:

“This is the perfect experience for nursing students. Since it is offered in the summer, a nursing major does not have to get behind in the program. The program directors are wonderful. It is a wonderful opportunity to bond with other nursing majors of all levels.” -Karen C.

“You learn so much about yourself, your friends, your own cultures and most importantly a different culture. You also have the opportunity to gain great experience for your nursing career.” -Claire J.

“I have learned a great deal of Spanish, since I had no previous Spanish language. The cultural experience is better than any internship that I could have worked at. I would definitely recommend this program to others. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity and I feel privileged to experience the Costa Rican culture.” -Jeanne D.

“Learning to roll with the punches was essential, but that really made it something special. Every day brought something new to learn, and another part of the culture to experience. No day was boring, whether I had a discussion with my host family or tried a new class at the gym. I am so thankful I took advantage of this great opportunity---I will never forget the memories and the friendships I made here in la Pura Vida!” -Jen D.

“In my application three of my goals were to learn about the Costa Rican culture, their healthcare system, and return a better Spanish speaker. I definitely accomplished all of those things - I learned about values and traditions from my host family, learned a ton about the health care system from class and clinic visits, and, because I spoke Spanish almost 24/7 I can honestly say my speaking has greatly improved! I also learned a lot about their way of life – ‘pura vida’ and ‘tranquilla.’ We are so uptight and ‘work’ in the states, but they are very relaxed and easy going. I think we need more of that here!”

