

Coming to Costa Rica

As always, the best advice is to pack less than you think you will need. Almost invariably, we bring more than we need. Also, one of the best purchases you can make before you leave is a Costa Rica travel guide.

These books are a good introduction to the culture, food, sights, sounds, and transportation of Costa Rica. Be sure to buy the latest edition, as things change quickly in Costa Rica. If you plan on traveling the country, a comfortable backpack is necessary.

Clothes for working in practicum sites and classes:

- For men, dressing for the schools is pretty straightforward. Look nice, but there is no need to overdo it. Wearing a collared short-sleeve shirt (e.g. polo shirt) with nice khaki pants or dress slacks and leather shoes are fine. When packing to dress for the practicum, imagine you are going to go golfing on a June afternoon with a chance of rain and you should be okay. Long sleeve shirts will be too warm. Leave your ties at home.

Clothes for outside of practicum sites and classes:

- It will be humid and warm almost every day in Costa Rica, so wearing short sleeves with shorts or jeans is normal. As a general rule of thumb, imagine what you normally wear in the summer and pack accordingly. As a side note, Costa Rica adults do not normally wear shorts. Additionally, a lot of time will be spent at the schools or in class, so you will not need as much casual clothes as you might think. Dark clothes are preferable, as they do not need to be washed as often. Your host family will do your laundry, but it is not appropriate to have them wash items such as jeans and t-shirts after every single use (naturally, this is not a problem with items such as underwear and socks though you are expected to wash these items). A pair of flip-flops or strapped "Chaco" sandals are suggested.
- If you plan on traveling around Costa Rica, your packing list largely depends on the things you enjoy doing. The weather becomes increasingly humid towards the shores, but can get quite cool in the highlands such as Monteverde. Don't forget your hat, bathing suit, a towel, water proof hiking boots, and hiking clothes if you enjoy such activities. A small, non-aerosol bug repellent is also helpful.
- A light, waterproof jacket and umbrella are an absolute must. It will rain on you, I guarantee it!
- Go light on the bling. Nice watches, necklaces, rings, etc. will be noticed by those around you who may want them. Leave them at home if you can, as you don't want to draw any more attention to yourself than you already will receive. Having a cheap watch is helpful.
- Don't forget a camera.
- When traveling keep a very watchful eye on all of your gear. Crime is relatively low, but petty theft happens.

Money

- If needed the program coordinator will take you to the bank the first day. In Costa Rica accept major American bank cards. Credit cards are also widely accepted, especially in tourist areas, but they will not always be accepted. It is a good idea to contact your bank and credit card company before you leave to inform them that you are traveling to Costa Rica and for how long. Otherwise, they may shut down your card for fear that it was stolen. Also, when traveling in Costa Rica remember that every town WILL NOT have an ATM so plan accordingly. Visa ATM and credit cards are the most widely accepted.

Calling Home and Calling Cards

- The most affordable way to call home or receive calls is to use an AT&T or MCI phone card. However, in order to use the card in Costa Rica, you must first dial the AT&T 800 number in Costa Rica and then dial the American 800 number and then your desired phone number. You can also buy calling Costa Rican calling cards, but they are more costly.
- You'll also want to purchase a "local" phone card to use in the pay phones once you are in Costa Rica. If you are going to be late or are traveling during the weekend, your host family will appreciate being informed of your schedule.

Costarican Cultural Immersion Program

www.unibe.ac.cr/ccip

Transportation

- While your host family may have a car, do not expect them to drive you to your destinations. The program provide you with private transportation to and from the practicum sites and classes. Taxis are also available, always ask them to use the meter (la maria), it is the law. Practice your Spanish with fellow bus riders or cab drivers. If you travel through the rest of the country, almost every bus leaves from San Jose. Look in your travel book to find which depot your desired bus leaves from.

Computers

- You may bring your laptop computer. And practicum sites will have internet access, as well in the classrooms.

Gifts

- You should plan on purchasing small gifts for each of the family members in the household that you will be staying in. There is no need to invest into anything extravagant, but something thoughtful is nice. If you are struggling with deciding what to purchase, remember the ages of those in the household and then try to buy something that is unique to either the city/state you hometown team for boys or inexpensive jewelry for girls. live in or to the United States in general.

**Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, it is merely a brief overview and recommendations. In a way, it is better not to have all of your questions answered before you leave. Half of the Spanish learning experience and adventure is communicating with Ticos and learning as you go along.