

Costarican Cultural Immersion Program

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The information below is from a girl who is from Costa Rica. She went through a doctoral school psychology program and was on an internship when she wrote this. She was asked a few questions about what is appropriate to wear, etc. This information might be interesting to you.

Do's and don'ts in Costa Rica

I must admit that in my country we tend to be very aware of people's clothing. And in the professional setting this becomes even more important, especially if you are a young professional. I think Khaki pants will be perfectly fine, with a nice top, you can certainly wear sleeveless blouses, but not tank tops (like the thin straps are much more informal). Sandals are appropriate, but big bulky sandals are not recommended. More like the nicer looking "girly" leather sandals. Dresses are certainly OK, as long as they are not too short. And your clothes should be ironed.

Big no-no's:

- Wear the same piece of clothing two days in a row (even if your khaki's are perfectly clean, people notice)
- Wear shorts, beach sandals (flip-flops), t-shirts, baseball hats, or shorts at the school (unless you are planning to participate in sports activities)
- Wear gym shoes (sneakers, tennis shoes) to work
- Go "bra-less" (sorry to be so straightforward, but it is a BIG no-no)
- I have not been in the professional setting there for almost 7 years, so many things may have changed. Just look around at your co-workers, and keep in mind the word "respect" when getting ready in the morning.

I, personally, recommend to wear some accessories (for example, wear a belt and earrings, perfume), if you are comfortable with that. I guess the idea behind it is that we feel it should show that one makes an effort to look presentable for the people you will work with during the day. It is both professional and respectful.

On the other hand, we are very used to have visitors in my country with different dress codes, so my guess is that people will be just excited to see you and work with you anyway, regardless of your dress :)

I do not think it will be that hot over there, especially if you are going to be in the central valley (it is hotter at the beaches), it is usually around 70 degrees. It will not be as Missouri in the summer time!

One more thing :

- Ticos kiss people on the cheek (just a little peck, mostly to the air). However, do not feel forced to kiss anyone that makes you feel uncomfortable. You can always.
- Guys at times say "piropos" as a recognition that you look good to women they do not know in the street. Some piropos are nice, just ignore them.
- Ticos have a tendency to want to feed anyone that comes through the doors as a way of socializing.
- You do not need to tip at restaurants, or taxis, or hairdressers, there is a "service fee" included in the price already.

The books that I have are just a regular overview of the different things in my country, they are made for tourists, so I guess they have the same information than your travel books. I hope I am not scaring you or anything. I cannot tell you how excited I am about this program, I am actually talking to other psychs here to see if we can participate in it in the future. I hope this information is useful for you. Thanks!!

Gabriela Arias

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