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SAFETY GUIDELINES

Here and throughout the world, enjoy a safer holiday by following these simple rules:

- Both Coronado's and Jacó down town areas and main streets are safe to walk around during the day time but like almost any tourist destination one must be more alert and aware at night.
- Jacó is a very popular tourist destination and students should watch over their belongings such as cameras, backpacks, bikes and wallets.
- Decide your destination in advance and have a planned route of travel.
- Always be alert and aware of what is going on around you.
- If your vehicle is bumped from behind, do not stop on the roadway or side road. Drive to the nearest public area and call for police assistance.
If someone in suspicious attitude approaches your vehicle at a red light or stop sign, blare the horn.
- Do not pull over for flashing headlights. An emergency or police vehicle is the only one authorized to turn on red or blue flashing lights.
- If you become lost, try to find a public place, like a service station, to read your map or ask for directions. don't show yourself nervous.
- If you are told that something is wrong with your vehicle, do not stop immediately. Drive to the nearest service station or to another well lighted public area.
- Keep doors locked and windows shut up when driving, and mainly when the vehicle is parked.
- Goods and valuables should be kept in the trunk, locked glove compartment, or out of sight whenever traveling or leaving the vehicle parked.
- Always park in well lit areas.
- Check the interior of your vehicle and surrounding areas before getting on your vehicle.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- If using an automatic cashier, be sure the area is well lit. Count your money inside your vehicle with the windows shut up.
- Do not leave the keys in your vehicle or the motor on when using the automatic cashier or in a public telephone.
- If you suspect that you are being followed, go to the nearest well lit public area and call the police.
- If you must carry a purse or back pack, hold it in front of you close to your body. Be sure it is securely closed.
- Just in case, if you are threatened by a hostile individual, do not resist. Give the person what is asked for, your belongings are not worth your life or serious injury. In case of emergency call the number 911 on any telephone.
- Every body must pay the \$26 exit tax fee before they can leave CR. To save time pay this at Banco de Costa Rica, a state bank, before you get to the airport.

ACADEMIA TICA CORONADO AND JACÓ TRIP TIPS

INFORMATION FOR EMERGENCY CASES

The following emergency phone numbers are to be used in the following cases:

- To report changes during your flight to Costa Rica.
If unforeseen changes to your flight occur that will result in a different date or time of arrival.
- You can't find the Academia Tica person at the airport
- You can't find your host family
- You can't find the school

ACADEMIA TICA CORONADO EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

1. Eduardo Solano, school airport driver, cell +506-845-9602, anytime – only Spanish
2. Ana Mercedes Rodríguez, director, home +506-283-9773, after 6pm – German and English.
3. Elza Quiros, Accommodations, cell +506-399-3688 after 5 pm - English
4. Academia Tica Coronado, tel +506-2290013, fax +506-292-7136, only Monday to Friday from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm local time – German, English and Spanish.

ACADEMIA TICA JACÓ EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Same as above plus, Academia Tica Jacó, tel +506-643-4225, fax +506-643-4226, only Monday to Friday from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm local time – English and Spanish.

AT THE COSTA RICAN AIRPORT

Look for the person with the Academia Tica sign. Give them a chance to find you. There are now two exits from the International wing. It is possible that you won't see the Academia Tica person immediately among the other drivers that wait for passengers at the airport. Be patient because he could be just delayed in traffic and on his way to pick you up.

Once you are sure that no one showed up then start calling the emergency phone numbers.

HOW TO CALL COLLECT

You may call collect from any public phone by dialing 110.

You may also try to borrow a cell phone from the tour agents that wait at the exit of the international wing.

Please be aware of the following:

- Agents or taxi drivers that lend you their cell phone will try to make you their client.

AIRPORT TAXI SERVICE

Taxis serving San José's airport are convenient and readily available at all hours. The taxi ride from the airport to the school or most host families takes

about 40 minutes and cost from US\$25 to \$30. This can be paid either in US\$ or colones. You must negotiate the fare to Coronado before you get in the car. Only get in an airport taxi if you are completely sure that no representative from Academia Tica is waiting for you and you know to get to the host family.

- Airport taxi drivers are aggressive in their pursuit for clients and some might tell you that they are the ones sent to pick you up. Make sure that they have an Academia Tica sign with your name on it.

TRAVELING MONEY

- We recommend to bring your credit card, VISA is accepted nation wide.
- It is a good idea to bring at least \$75 in small bills for traveling expenses, taxis, food, phone calls, etc.

EMERGENCY HOTELS

Academia Tica does not have any relationship with the following hotels but can recommend them:

Hotel Aranjuez, San José, tel, +506-256-1825 fax +506-223-3528

Hotel Don Carlos, San José, tel +506-221-6707 fax +506-258-1152

FREE AIRPORT TRANSFER for Academia Tica Coronado

Academia Tica Coronado students get a FREE one way airport transfer.

If you don't show up at the airport at the agreed date and time you will lose your free transfer. Additional transfers will run at the student's expense at the rate defined by the school for that period. Airport taxi fares run from \$25 to \$30 for a one way service to the Coronado area.

Other transfers can be arranged directly with the school administration.

ACADEMIA TICA BANK ACCOUNT INFORMATION

(FOR WIRE TRANSFERS)

Diálogo - Academia Tica S.A.

BANCO NACIONAL DE COSTA RICA

(Swift Code BN CR CR SJ)

Agencia de Coronado, San José, Costa Rica

Account No.: 20002-053-001721-0

PAYMENTS AT THE SCHOOL

Acceptable payment methods directly at the school are US dollars, US traveler checks or Costa Rican currency. We do not accept credit cards or personal checks. Sorry.

ADDRESSING SYSTEM

There are few street signs and street numbers to go by in Costa Rican cities and towns. People here use familiar reference points to give directions. An address is given by indicating the distance in meters and direction to the

north, south, east or west from a recognized reference point or place. Sometimes the important building or place has been removed but people remember where it was and keep using it!!!

AIR TRAVEL

Flying is one of the best ways to get around Costa Rica. Because the country is quite small, flights are short and not too expensive. The domestic airlines of Costa Rica are Sansa (www.flysansa.com), which offers a free shuttle bus from its downtown office to airport, and Travelair (www.travelair-costarica.com). Sansa operates from San José's Juan Santamaría International Airport, while Travelair operates from Tobías Bolaños Airport in Pavas, 4 miles (6.4km) from San José.

AIRPORT EXIT TAX

All visitors must pay an exit tax of US\$26 at the airport before they leave the country. This can be paid in dollars or colones. This can be paid directly at the airport but it is better to pay it at any branch of the Banco de Costa Rica or Banco Crédito Agrícola a few days before departure. It is required to bring your passport to pay this tax.

ATM's or ATH (a toda hora)

While ATM's are still mostly found at bank offices and major shopping centers in and around San José, they are beginning to pop up at major tourist destination around the country. Think of your ATM card as a backup measure, since machines are not nearly as readily available or dependable in Costa Rica as you might expect, and you may encounter compatibility problems. So it's always a good idea to carry some cash with you.

BUS TRAVEL

This is by far the most economical way to get around Costa Rica. Buses are inexpensive and relatively well maintained, and they go nearly everywhere. There are three types:

Local buses are the cheapest and slowest; they stop frequently and are generally a bit dilapidated.

Express buses run between San José and most beach towns and major cities; they sometimes operate only on weekends and holidays. Luxury buses and minibuses drive to destinations frequented by foreign travelers.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks are usually open Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm.

Public offices are open Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm (many close for an hour at lunch). Stores are generally open Monday to Saturday from 9:00am to 6:00pm (some close for an hour at lunch). Stores in modern malls generally stay open until 8:00am to 9:00pm and don't close for lunch. Most bars are open until 1:00 or 2:00am.

CAR RENTAL

Renting a car in Costa Rica is no idle proposition. The roads are riddled with potholes, most rural intersections are unmarked. But still renting a car is still your best option for independent exploring. Four-wheel-drives are particularly useful in the rainy season (May to November) and for navigating the bumpy, poorly paved roads year-round. Be forewarned, rentals easily identifiable to thieves and frequently targeted. Transit police also seem to target tourist. Never pay money directly to a police officer that stops you for any traffic violation. Before driving off with a rental car, be sure that you inspect the exterior and point out to the rental-company representative every tiny scratch, dent, tear or any other damage. Some car-rental companies will claim that you owe payment for minor dings and dents the company finds when you return the car. Also, if you get into an accident, be sure that the rental company doesn't try to bill you for a higher amount than the deductible on your rental contract. Thousands of tourist rent cars here every year and the large majority of them encounter no problems.

CHECK-IN TIME AT THE SCHOOL

Students should come to school at 7:30 a.m. on the first day for a placement exam.

COSTA RICA GENERAL INFORMATION

In the United States or Canada, you can get a basic packet of information on Costa Rica by contacting the Costa Rica Tourist Board (ICT or Instituto Costarricense de Turismo) at 800/343-6332. Much of the same information is available at its website

www.tourism-costarica.com

CURRENCY

The COLON is the Costa Rican monetary unit. Its relative value to the us dollar is determined by the market and changes daily. In early 2004, it was approximately 430 colones to the American dollar.

Us dollars are accepted almost everywhere in capital city of San José and all mayor cities around the country. It is best to bring money in the form of travelers' checks (U.S. dollars). Bring some small bills to get by during the first days of your trip. Personal checks are most likely not accepted in stores but some banks might. Major credit cards are accepted in most large stores in the main cities.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit Cards are invaluable when traveling, and they are becoming widely accepted in Costa Rica (primarily Visa then American Express, Master Card). They are safe way to carry money and provide a convenient record of all your expenses.

Since credit-card purchase are dependent upon phone verifications, some hotels and restaurants in more remote destination do not accept them. Moreover, many add on a 5% to 10% surcharge for credit-card payments. Always check in advance if you are heading to more remote corner of Costa

Rica. Also note that many U.S banks (including Citibank) are beginning to charge an additional 2% surcharge for transactions in foreign currency; ask your credit-card company about its policy before you leave home.

CREDIT CARD SAFETY

Don't give your credit card number to strangers. There has been a recent increase of credit card fraud. Make sure there are no extra blank vouchers when paying with credit card. Cancel your card immediately if lost or stolen.

DRESSING COSTA RICAN STYLE

Costa Ricans are very aware of world trends in fashion but the easy going weather they are blessed with has left a definite mark in their clothing style.

No matter what time of the year you visit this country always bring and use wear lightweight clothing. Have a windbreaker and an umbrella handy but also be ready to take your light sweater off. Jeans and Cotton short sleeve shirts are common among men and jeans or skirts and small tops for women. At night a light jacket or sweater is a good idea too. For special occasions such as parties, weddings men could wear a tie and women a formal dress.

Toiletries and Drugstore items can be found in most pharmacies.

DRIVER LICENSE USE

Costa Rican transit law allows you to drive for 3 months with a valid driver's license issued in your own country. Always carry a copy of the main pages of your passport. Leave the original at home safe.

DRUG LAWS

Drug Laws in Costa Rica are strict, so stay away from marijuana and cocaine. Many prescription drugs are sold over the counter here, but often the names are different from those in the United States and Europe. It's always best to have a prescription from a Doctor.

ENTERTAINMENT AND NIGHT LIFE

San Jose is a very cosmopolitan city; here you can find theaters, movies, water parks, casinos, specialty shops, cities outside the Central Valley offer private tour companies, and National Parks. Nightlife in San Jose is active with a variety of places to eat and dance.

EMBASSIES/CONSULATES IN SAN JOSE

United States Embassy, in front Centro Comercial, on the road to Pavas (506/220-3939).

Canadian Consulate: Oficentro Ejecutivo la Sabana, Edificio 5(506/296-4149).

British Embassy: Paseo Colón between Calles 38 and 40(506/258-2025)

EMERGENCIAS

In case of emergency, dial 911 (which should have an English-speaking operator); for an ambulance call 128; to report fire call 118; if 911 doesn't

work, you can contact the police at 506/222-1365 or 506/221-5337 and hopefully they can find someone who speaks English.

FILM

Most types of film are available, as are developing services.

FOOD IN COSTA RICA

Typical breakfast and dinner meal schedule at a Costa Rican home

Some homes may vary this schedule to fit work schedules.

Breakfast It varies with family schedules, starting from 6:00 a.m.

Dinner It varies with family schedules, starting from 6:00 p.m.

Food Items you may find in a Costa Rican breakfast: Coffee, milk, fruit drinks, black or herbal tea, oats, white bread toast with butter, bananas, papaya, eggs, cheese, sour cream, ham, "gallo pinto" (rice and black beans mixed with fresh spices). Food items you may find in a Costa Rican dinner: Rice, black beans, garbanzo beans, beef, pork, spaghetti, coffee, black or herbal tea, fruit drinks: mango, cas, lemon, carambola, papaya, melon, water melon, salads, avocados, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumber, onion, garlic, carrots, yucca, cheese, sandwiches, soups, beef stews, mashed potatoes.

GIFT FOR THE HOST FAMILY

It is not necessary to bring presents to the host family however if you prefer to do so a little souvenir a bottle of wine, or chocolates would be fine.

HEALTH AND WATER

Water is safe to drink in most areas of this country. No shots are necessary to visit Costa Rica. Medical facilities are numerous and dependable. There are many private doctors available, many do speak English with practices in San José.

HOLIDAYS

Government offices and banks are closed on official holidays, transportation services are reduced and stores and markets may also close. There is no public transportation on Holy Thursday or Good Friday.

Official Holidays in Costa Rica:

January 1: New Year's Day

Thursday and Good Friday of Easter Week.

April 11: Juan Santamaría's Day

May 1: Labor Day

July 25: Annexation of the province of Guanacaste

August 2: Virgin of Los Angeles's Day

August 15: Mother's Day

September 15: Independence Day

October 12: Discovery of América/ Día de la Raza

December 24 and 25: Christmas

December 31: New Year's Eve

School is closed the last 2 weeks of the year

HOME ADDRESSES

The school will provide the addresses and telephone numbers of the host family in advance so that students know where he/she is going. Students who do not want to go directly to their host families should come with their luggage to the school on the first day of class. Their families will meet them here after classes and take them home.

HOMESTAY AND TRANSFER

Host families are ready to pick up students at the airport at any time day or night. If a member from the family can't make it then a member of the school will pick the student. Our accommodation packages goes from Sunday night to Saturday (6 nights). Extra nights can be requested.

INTERNET ACCESS

Staying connected on the road is getting easier. Internet cafes have popped up at most major tourist destination. Many hotels allow guest to send and receive e-mail. It's best to set up a free Web based mail account with someone like Hotmail, Yahoo, Netscape, etc, before you leave for Costa Rica, since you are most likely to have only Web (and not POP) access. Rates run between \$1 and \$4 per hour.

INTERNATIONAL MAIL

Regular mail may take from 8-15 days to get to and from Europe or the US. There is however mail delivery services like DHL that operate in Costa Rica. You can send mail or post cards from the school.

LAUNDRY

Laundromats are few and far between in Costa Rica, more common are hotel laundry services, which can sometimes be expensive.

LIQUOR LAWS

Alcoholic beverages are sold every day of the week throughout the year, with the exception of the 2 days before Easter and the 2 days before and after a presidential election. The legal drinking age is 18, though it's almost never enforced.

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

There is a wide network of buses that run all over the country. The service is not first class but fares are low and are dependable. Taxis are also everywhere. They can be found near the main bus stops. Taxi fares are around \$1.5 per mile. Travel by air within the country is adequate and inexpensive.

STREET CRIME

Crime rate is low in Costa Rica. Most of the reports are of the petty type. Visitors need to be careful with purses, cameras, and backpacks, especially on buses and in crowded areas. Do not leave valuables visible in a parked car.

SUGGESTED ITEMS TO BRING

We recommend bringing along some warm clothing like blue jeans, a jacket, windbreaker and sweater (temperatures may fall to 16 C°, after 6 p.m. in the Great Metropolitan Area), sunglasses, hiking shoes, swimming suit, towel. At least one formal shirt for man or blouse for women for an occasional formal activity. Notebooks, a pen, a pencil, an eraser, a pencil sharpener, Spanish/your language dictionary.

TIPPING IS NOT A CITY IN CHINA

A 10% service charge is included in the bill in most restaurants in Costa Rica, so no additional tipping is necessary. Taxi drivers are usually not tipped, but remind them to use the “maria” if they don’t turn it on. The “maria” is the taxi fare meter.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

With so many more ATMs popping up in every corner of the globe, traveler's checks seem less necessary these days. But if you prefer the security they offer and don't mind showing identification every time you want to cash one, traveler's checks might still be for you. Banks charge a fee if you cash a traveler into US dollars, a smaller fee if you ask for colones.

ENTRY VISA

Citizens from the USA and most Western European countries and Japan get an automatic 90-day permit to stay in Costa Rica, extensions are possible too. Citizens from other countries please check visa regulations with the Costa Rican consulate or embassy for your area. For a complete list of Costa Rican consulates or embassies in your area please visit.

<http://www.intnet.co.cr/costarica/gobierno/embajadas/embajadas.html>

Students that plan to stay more than 90 days must plan to go to Nicaragua or Panama for 3 days to renew their visa. They will get another 90 days when they re-enter CR.

VOLTAGE

Costa Rica uses the same type of electrical voltage that is used in the US. 110 AC (60 cycles) volts for residential, schools, etc and 220 volts for heavy industrial use.

However, three-pronged outlets can be scarce, so it's helpful to bring along an adapter.

WEATHER

Costa Rica is blessed with great weather conditions. There is a summer that runs from December to April with higher temperatures and a rainy or green season from May to November. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Average temperature for San José is around 22 to 24 C. At the coast temperatures are higher and are more humid in the Atlantic than the Pacific coast. Sometimes it can get as low as 16o C at night in the Central Valley. For more information visit <http://www.imn.ac.cr/educa/clima/LIBRO.html>

HANDY ITEMS IN COSTA RICA

All the following items can be purchased here but you will save time if you bring them, this is not a complete list because each person is different and so are the needs.

light water proof jacket

light hiking boot as water proof as possible

sun glasses, sun tan lotion and sun block

bathing suit, a hat

backpack, tennis shoes

towel

mosquito repellent can be found here

a small alarm clock will come in handy in some cases

basic school supplies

camera

Spanish - your language dictionary

US traveler checks and us dollars in cash

credit card - (VISA and MASTERCARD are now accepted in school and are important to bring)

Note that you must have a round trip ticket and a valid passport to be admitted in the country.