

SAN JOSÉ

SITE-  
SPECIFIC  
GUIDE



ACADEMIC  
STUDIES  
ABROAD

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# Pre-Departure

Please see our Pre-Departure Guide for All Programs on our website for additional important pre-departure information!

Please add the important numbers to your phone

<p>ASA Office in Boston, MA Academic Studies Abroad 72 River Park Street, Suite 104 Needham, MA 02494 Tel: 617-327-9388 24-hour Emergency Cell: 857-366-6821 Email: <a href="mailto:hello@academicstudies.com">hello@academicstudies.com</a> Web: <a href="http://www.academicstudies.com">www.academicstudies.com</a></p>	<p><b>Universidad Veritas Contact List</b></p> <p>Sonia Gamboa, Housing, Logistics, and Excursions Coordinator <a href="mailto:sogamboa@veritas.cr">sogamboa@veritas.cr</a></p> <p>Pamela Badilla, Academic &amp; Internships Coordinator, Student Affairs <a href="mailto:pbadilla@veritas.cr">pbadilla@veritas.cr</a> Cell Phone: +506 8911 9571</p> <p>If you save this number exactly as above and have Whatsapp, you can text/call for free if your phone is connected to WiFi or data</p> <p>Alejandra Barahona Castro, Executive Director LCI Education Study Abroad <a href="mailto:abarahona@lcieducation.com">abarahona@lcieducation.com</a></p>
<p><b>U.S. Embassy in San José</b> Calle 98 Via 104, Pavas San José, Costa Rica 506-2519-2000 Hours of Operation: M-F 8:00 am - 4:30 pm</p>	<p><b>Additional Emergency Numbers</b> (Local numbers, as dialed in Costa Rica)</p> <p>Police 117 Emergency 911 Fire 118</p>

In an emergency, please contact Universidad de Veritas immediately at **+506 8795 3821**. It is of utmost importance that you notify Veritas staff of any problems, issues, or concerns that you encounter while you're abroad.

011 = International Dialing Code

506 = Costa Rica Country Code

# International Dialing Instructions



- **Calling from U.S. to Costa Rica**

- First dial 011 - the US exit code
- Next dial 506 - the country code for Costa Rica
- Finally, dial the local number - 8 digits

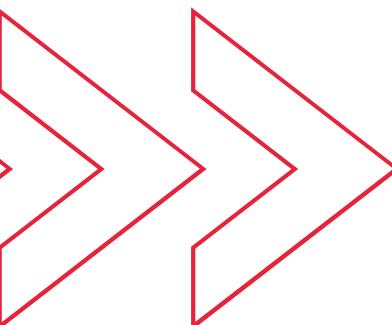
- **Calling within Costa Rica**

- You should be able to get any number by dialing +506 and the number
- If that does not work, simply dial the 8 digits

- If you don't plan to get a local SIM and plan to use your U.S. phone number, check with your carrier and inquire what they charge for international plans and if you would be roaming while in Costa Rica.

- **Calling from Costa Rica to U.S.**

- Dial 001 + area code and phone number



# Passport & Visa

All students must have a passport that is valid for at least 6 months beyond the day you plan to return to the U.S.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A U.S. PASSPORT, PLEASE NOTIFY ASA IMMEDIATELY!

Non-U.S. citizens may have a different visa process than described below, that requires steps to be taken in the U.S. or your home country before you arrive in Costa Rica.

What should I do if I lose my passport?

Contact the local police, the U.S. Embassy, and your Site Director immediately. Having a photocopy of your passport on hand will make it MUCH easier to have it replaced.

## STEP: Safe Traveler Enrollment Program

STEP registration is MANDATORY to complete before departure. This free service, offered by the US Department of State, enables the DOS to quickly contact US citizens abroad during emergencies, such as natural disaster, civil unrest, or a family emergency. By registering, you also get real time updates about safety, security, health, and weather in country. Click this link to complete your STEP registration before departure: <https://mytravel.state.gov/s/step>

## Visas

**If your program is less than 180 days -Summer and Semester: No visa is required!**

You must have your passport stamped upon your first entry into Costa Rica (e.g. San Jose airport). This will document your entry into the country. Check the stamp to make sure the entry date is easily legible!

## Entry Requirements

- A valid passport or travel document. Passports and travel documents will only be accepted if they can be read electronically in line with the guidelines established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and must be valid for the period set forth in these guidelines.
- Proof of economic solvency, with a minimum of US\$100.00 (one hundred US dollars) per month or partial month of legal stay in the country.
- Return ticket to the country of origin or plan of onward travel that includes the next destination.
- No impediment to entering Costa Rican territory.

## Departure Tax

No matter how long you are in Costa Rica, all visitors/students are required to pay a \$29 Departure Tax. Please check the following link to find out if your Departure Tax is included by your airline or if you will have to pay the tax at SJO airport <https://www.sjoairport.com/information/?lang=en>

## U.S. Driver's License

You should plan to bring your U.S. Driver's License to serve as your everyday ID. Students have reported that they do get carded to get into bars/clubs. You should NOT use your Passport as your day to day ID. Make a copy of the front and back of your Driver's License and store a digital copy in the cloud in case it gets lost or stolen.

# Budgeting for Study Abroad

The COLON is the official currency of Costa Rica and is abbreviated with this sign: ₡

- Bills come in denominations of: 1000, 2000, 5000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000
- Coins come in denominations of: 5, 10, 25, 50, 100, 500
- If you are traveling to rural areas of Costa Rica, always carry colons in cash because credit cards may not be accepted!

Exchange rates fluctuate, so check [XE](#) for today's exchange rate.

## How much money should I bring?

US\$150-200 per week of your stay

Please note that these are general guidelines based on what past students have reported spending. Some students spend less and others more. The figures do not allow for traveling every weekend, eating out a lot, or shopping every day.

## What expenses should I budget for?

*Please note: Housing, medical insurance, and all other ASA services are not included during the break between semesters or terms.*

\* = Accounted for in weekly money recommendation above.

1. **Round-trip airfare**
2. **Books and materials for your classes\*** Little to no cost, most materials are digital
3. **Local transportation\*** US\$15-35/week if traveling frequently in Uber. Local transportation includes getting around town during your free time, getting to and from where your group is meeting to depart for an excursion or academic field trip, and getting home afterwards. Most students are able to walk to class.
4. **Cell phone Budget** US\$15-30/week if using a lot of data; WiFi
5. **Spending money/Personal expenses** US\$850/semester - While many students get by comfortably with the recommended minimum of US\$850, other former students have reported spending as much as US\$2500 during a three-month semester program. Their additional expenses included: weekend trips, dinners out, entertainment, shopping (new clothes), souvenirs, dining out, travel, haircuts, toothpaste, brand-name beauty supplies, etc. and other expenses not related to the program. Consider your spending habits and needs and plan ahead.
6. **Meals on excursions** (Accounted for in weekly recommendation above)
7. **Transportation back to the airport if departing outside of the official end date of the program** Budget US\$45
8. **Have at least \$1,000 in savings for emergencies**

Please refer to the *Departure Dates* page under *Helpful Info* on our website to be sure you book your flight to arrive within the window for airport pickup.

# Arrival

What should I do when I get off the plane at San José (SJO) airport?

## 01 Passport Control/Immigration

After you de-plane, you will go through Passport Control (also called Immigration). Follow the instructions in the "Passport and Visa" section above!

## 02 Baggage Claim

After Passport Control and Customs, follow signs to baggage claim. Delayed baggage must be reported to your airline's lost luggage counter BEFORE exiting the baggage claim area.

## 03 Meet Pick Up Staff

After claiming your bags, exit into the airport lobby and look for sign that says "**Universidad Veritas**" Sonia Gamboa or another Veritas representative will be waiting for you in the airport lobby and will take you to your program housing. NOTE: They cannot meet you in baggage claim!

### HELPFUL TIPS

Please have lost luggage delivered directly to your local address (e.g. your host family's address OR apartment address). ASA will email you your housing assignment (including the address) approximately 2 weeks before your program start date. Write your local address on your Last-Minute Checklist and pack it in your carry-on, and save the address to your phone's Notes.

If my flight is delayed, will you still pick me up at the airport?

If you will not be arriving as scheduled, it is YOUR responsibility to notify the emergency contact person indicated on your Last-Minute Checklist. They will let you know if you will still be picked up at the airport. We will make every effort to pick you up.

### Address for delivery of delayed luggage:

If you go to the baggage claim and find your bags don't appear, you will need to file a claim at your airline's lost luggage counter BEFORE you leave the baggage hall. **DO NOT exit into the airport lobby until you have filed your claim**, because they will not let you back in for security reasons and your airline will not automatically file a claim for you.

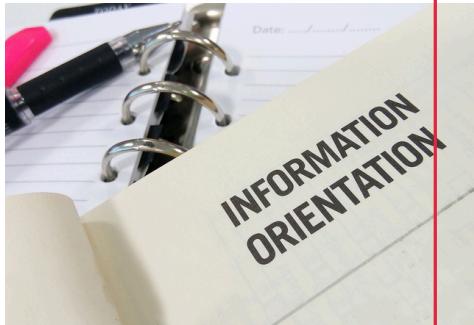
TAKE THE ADDRESS OF YOUR HOST FAMILY WITH YOU so that you'll be able to tell the airline where to send your luggage when it reappears. We will send you this information prior to your departure.

# Academics

**Universidad Veritas**  
**1 Km al Oeste de Casa Presidencial**  
**San José, 10105, Costa Rica**

Universidad Veritas

[Website](#)



## All Orientations Mandatory

[Click here to view the general Academic Calendar for your upcoming program](#) (which includes dates of any breaks).



## Pura Vida

The term “Pura Vida” has been present in Costa Rica’s vocabulary for over 50 years. Its English translation means “pure life” or “simple life”, however it is more than just a phrase, it is a way of life.



## Life at Veritas

Strategically located in the heart of the city, check out [Life at Veritas](#) before arrival and discover the spots to hangout and the activities offered.

A detailed Calendar of Events, including orientation and excursion dates & locations, will be emailed to you about 2 weeks before your program starts. Calendar is subject to change.

# Academics

## History

The LCI VERITAS University was established in 1976 as one of the first private higher education alternatives in Costa Rica. Initially as Collegium Veritas and since 1994 as VERITAS University, the institution established itself as a leader in private education in the country. Over the years, the vision evolved, and in 2000 VERITAS set out to become the first university specialized in Art, Design and Architecture in Costa Rica, betting on creative thinking and related disciplines.

In 2018, VERITAS took a crucial step by joining LCI Education, becoming a global institution with programs in technology, business and design. Strategically located in San José, VERITAS assumed the LCI acronym in 2023, embracing a global mission and vision that prepares students as citizens of the world.

Today, LCI VERITAS is one of the most prestigious universities in Costa Rica, focused on the personal and professional growth of students, building a bright and global future for all.

## Grades

**You must check with your home institution to ensure you understand:**

- The minimum grade you need to earn to receive transfer credit. Typically you need to earn a C or C+, but this can vary by institution. Check with your home institution to ensure you understand their requirements!
- Will your grades impact your GPA? Every institution handles this differently! Some institutions transfer in study abroad grades and it impacts your gpa. Some transfer in the grades and it doesn't impact your gpa. Others transfer in study abroad grades as pass/fail. Be sure you understand how your institution handles this.

**You must check with your host institution or ASA Site Director upon arrival to ensure you understand:**

- The deadline to change or drop classes. Classes dropped after your host institution's add/drop deadline will appear on your final transcript with a failing grade.
- What is your host institution's attendance policy? Absences from class will affect your grade and can result in a failing grade. Many institutions only allow a couple of absences a semester and only for valid reasons such as medical. Travel or family/friend visit is NOT ever an excused absence.

### Universidad Veritas International Programs Grading System

A+ = 97 - 100	A = 93 - 96	A- = 90 - 92
B+ = 87 - 89	B = 83 - 86	B- = 80 - 82
C+ = 77 - 79	C = 75 - 76	NP = below 75 (No Pass)
W = Withdrawn	P = Pass	SP = Sufficiency Pass

# Everyday Life

## San José

San José, the capital city of Costa Rica, is a city of 1,300,000 inhabitants (about one third of the country's population), with an area of 4,959 km<sup>2</sup> and an altitude of 1,125 meters (3,691 feet). It is a cosmopolitan city with many cultural and recreational activities, cinemas, shopping malls, museums and so on. The city is small enough to cover on foot, and walking is an option against the traffic jams downtown. San José is located in Costa Rica's Central Plateau (Meseta Central), a high altitude plain right in the middle of the national territory, and it is surrounded by the neighboring cities of Heredia, Alajuela, and Cartago. It is also surrounded by beautiful mountains and volcanoes (Irazú, Poás, and Barva), and it is only one hour and a half away from the Pacific coast, and about three hours from the Atlantic coast by car. The urban transportation system is quite efficient, and you can take a bus to just about any wherein the country. Fares are pretty inexpensive.

## Local Transportation & Free University Shuttle

There are buses and taxis throughout the city, so you will have no problem finding transportation. In Costa Rica, not all taxis have meters, so you may have to negotiate the fare before you get in. Uber is also available.

Universidad Veritas provides a FREE shuttle service for international students Monday through Friday during semester and summer terms. The shuttle is designed to bring students back and forth from the housing area to campus and is scheduled around the Veritas class schedule. Pick-up and drop-off times enable students to arrive to campus in time for classes, as well as return back to the housing area after classes. Several routes are made throughout the day that coordinate with the university class schedules. Simply show your Veritas ID card when you board the bus!

## Health Tips

No immunizations are required to enter Costa Rica. However, we recommend you to get some kind of flu vaccine before leaving the US, as most people easily catch bad colds and the flu during the rainy season. Also, Costa Rica has suffered from sporadic outbreaks of dengue fever in recent years, especially in coastal areas. Dengue is transmitted by mosquito bite, and as of May 14, 2024, the only dengue vaccine approved for us in the United States is Dengvaxia. Speak to your physician to see if obtaining the vaccine is a good idea for you. Some precautions to avoid exposure include, but are not limited to: wearing appropriate clothing to cover one's body and using mosquito repellent to diminish the risk of contracting the disease. Also, if you intend to travel on your own to the Atlantic and North Atlantic region of Costa Rica (Limón, Tortuguero, Zona Norte), it is best to take some precautions. Malaria pills are hard to get there, so it would be OK if you wish to bring some along.

## Safety Tips

Generally speaking, Costa Rican cities are no more dangerous than US cities. However, "gringos" (and "gringas") are often seen as easy prey for pickpockets and con-artists. Petty crime is rampant at certain hours and in certain places in San José. Do not carry wads of cash or wear flashy jewelry to the market for instance. Avoid being alone anywhere at night. Keep your passport and your return ticket in a safe place at your homestay. Always carry your daypack in the front rather than in the back. It looks silly, but you'll see that everyone does it because it is much easier to keep your stuff away from petty thieves and bag-slashers. If you take those simple precautions, chances are your trip will not be marred by any unpleasant experience of that kind.

## Living with a Costa Rican Host Family

**ASA will email you your housing assignment approximately 2 weeks before your program start date.**

As a college student, the transition to living with a family again may be challenging at the beginning. Most likely your Costa Rican family, especially your host mother, will want to do a lot to help you. Try to integrate into the family as much as possible, as this is the best way to learn about the culture, language and customs of a country!

For the sake of courtesy, try to keep your room neat and advise your family when you will be staying out very late or staying at a friend's house. It is typical for college students to go out and "carretear" (party) on the weekends until late, so just keep your family advised of your plans. Your family will worry about you...so keep them informed!

- All students must abide by the ASA Code of Conduct that they signed prior to departure. Violating the Code of Conduct may lead to expulsion from your housing and/or from the ASA program. Any student removed from ASA housing will be responsible for finding their own housing and will receive no refund.
- Overnight guests are NOT allowed under any circumstance. Do not bring over guests of any kind without permission. Your host family will be upset if they find out you have brought guests over while they're not home.
- Drug use and alcohol abuse are strictly prohibited and may lead to you being removed from your housing and/or the program. Being drunk is considered abuse of alcohol.
- Always let your host family know that you appreciate everything they do for you! An occasional gift (flowers, dessert, etc.) is always appreciated.
- Ask before using the house phone. Outgoing calls are probably not allowed, but incoming calls may be.
- If you're going to miss a meal, let your family know ahead of time so they won't go to the trouble of making one for you!
- Let your family know if you'll be staying out late or spending the night elsewhere, so they won't worry. If you're traveling, let your host family know if you're leaving and when you plan to return.
- You won't have a curfew, but you must be quiet and courteous when returning home late at night.
- Do not take food from the kitchen or refrigerator without permission.
- You will receive ONE set of keys. It is forbidden to make copies of these keys. Be careful not to lose them! If you lose your keys, you will be required to change the locks and issue brand new keys for everyone, at YOUR expense.
- Out of respect for your host's home, please keep your room tidy and remember it is a home, not a hotel.

## Packing Advice

We advise you to pack light and avoid dragging around excess baggage or overloaded suitcases. It is best to carry a change of clothes and essential toiletries in your carry-on bag in case your luggage gets lost or delayed. Similarly, try to distribute the contents of the two checked pieces evenly. For example, pack your underwear in two bags so you will be prepared in case one bag is lost. When you arrive in Costa Rica, it will be the rainy season in San José. Although the daily afternoon rain during the rainy season can be frustrating, if you are prepared for the weather, you'll be dry, warm, and able to enjoy the gorgeous flowers that abound in San José during the rainy season. Don't let this news get you down—mornings are usually sunny and warm, and visits to the beach and other parts of the country will be sunny, hot, and humid! What does the rainy season mean for you? Two things: 1. it will rain for a couple hours every afternoon, fairly regularly, although it will sometimes rain in the mornings as well, and 2. carry an umbrella everywhere!

**Clothing:** Bring light clothes for the day and a sweater or light jacket for the evenings. Long sleeves and pants are recommended to protect against the sun and insects in the tropics. Bring clothes that you can layer and that you don't care about wearing out, since frequent washing and extensive traveling will take a toll on your clothes. Clothes that are light in weight and easily foldable are the best. You may also want to bring a semi-formal outfit or any outfit(s) you can dress up, in case you get to go to some formal occasion.

**Shoes:** You will need at least two pairs of walking shoes for the city--especially when the rains start, as one pair of shoes is likely to get wet every day, so you can alternate shoes. If you have hiking boots, bring them for the field trips in the program or your individual travel. You need to carry at least two pairs of shoes, one for hiking--which will get wet and muddy--and one pair to wear at the lodge or hotel. Bring sandals for your trips to the beach and some dressy shoes to go with more formal outfits. (Sandals are not allowed for walking or hiking in natural areas, such as National Parks, for security reasons).

### Other Suggestions:

- Umbrella
- Backpack (for school and traveling on weekends)
- Other bag/purse that zips and has a cross-body strap to deter theft
- A beach towel (or you can purchase once abroad)

## Tipping

Tipping is optional in Costa Rica, but it's appreciated and can be a polite way to show appreciation for good service. The standard tip is 10%, but some say that any amount is appreciated because there's no minimum. Tipping may be included in the bill, so it's a good idea to check.

## Weather

The climate in Costa Rica is tropical, with two seasons per year--the dry season (verano), running from December through April, and the rainy season (invierno), May through November. The temperature varies according to altitude. It ranges from 30°C(90° F) on the coasts to near freezing at the highest elevations, like Mount Chirripó, where is not unusual to have morning frost and sheets of ice on the lakes. However, the average temperature in San José is approximately 75° F (24°C) all year round.

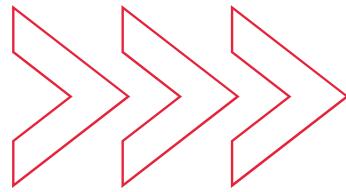
In general, there will be sunny, warm mornings and cooler, rainy afternoons. Bring light clothes for the day and a sweater or light jacket for the evenings, as well as windbreakers and an umbrella. You may need warmer clothing if you travel to places at higher altitudes. The weather on both coasts and the lowland plains extending towards the Caribbean is rather hot and humid all year round.

## Costa Rican Holidays

January 1 - New Year's Day  
March 19 - St. Joseph's Day  
Floating - Maundy Thursday  
Floating - Good Friday  
Floating April - Battle of Rivas  
May 1 - Labor Day  
Floating June/July - Annexation of Guanacaste  
August 15 - Mother's Day  
September 15 - Independence Day  
December 25 - Christmas Day



# Staying In Touch



## Cell Phones

For information about cell phones abroad, please see the [ASA PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE FOR ALL PROGRAMS](#) on our website.

## Time Difference

What is the time difference between Costa Rica and U.S. Timezones?

Pacific	Mountain	Central	Eastern
-2 hours	-1 hour	Same	+1 hour

For date and time around the world, to help schedule meetings, sunrise and sunset, use the [Time and Date website](#).

## Laptop and Wi-Fi

### Should I bring a laptop?

Yes! All on-campus accommodation rooms and campus buildings have free Wi-Fi. You will also have free internet access in your program housing.

### What is the voltage and what kind of outlets does Costa Rica have?

The power supply is 110 volts, using the standard North America 2 prong outlet. However, electrical outlets are not always grounded. Be careful when plugging something in barefoot. Also, because they are not grounded, they do not have a space for the third prong that some appliances require. For this, you will need an adaptor to go from a grounded North American plug to an ungrounded North American plug. These can be purchased online at Amazon or at any store like Walmart in the US or at hardware stores--ferreterías--in San José, too. If you're traveling with a laptop, a surge protector is also a nice thing to have with you to protect your electronics as blackouts are common.

### What can I do to keep my laptop safe while I'm in San José?

- Keep thieves at bay by carrying your laptop in a case that doesn't immediately identify it as a computer.
- If possible, travel with an extra battery and, if staying in a hostel, call ahead of time to make sure it has data ports before bringing your laptop to the hostel. Pack a pad-lock in case the hostel has a locker.
- Use a surge protector to protect it from power surges and black outs while it's plugged in at a hotel or hostel.