



Living in
COSTA RICA

THE VERTO EXPERIENCE
LOCATION GUIDE



Living in **COSTA RICA**

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Life in *Costa Rica!*

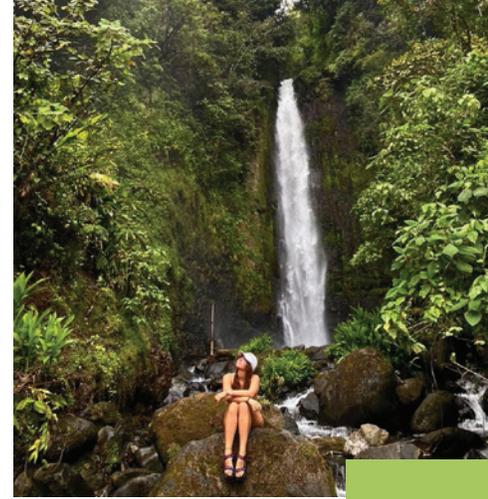


Life in Costa Rica is “Pura Vida.” Costa Ricans are known as “ticos”, and for ticos the term Pura Vida, which literally translates to “Pure Life,” is a lifestyle and a state of mind. It encapsulates the Tico attitude of living life to the fullest and without any stress. It can mean ‘hello,’ ‘goodbye,’ ‘see you later,’ ‘how are you,’ ‘I’m doing well,’ ‘thank you,’ and more!

You are not in Costa Rica if you don’t hear the expression Pura Vida, and feel the impact of this positive mindset in the famously warm Tico culture.



What will *Costa Rica* be like?



Despite being a small country, Costa Rica is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, containing about 5% of the world's biodiversity. The lush natural environment can be experienced all throughout the country and is easily accessible. In Costa Rica there are many National Parks, Protected Areas, *and at least 290 volcanoes!*



Costa Rica is a very safe destination. Unlike other countries in Central America, Costa Rica enjoys a very stable political climate and economic development, providing a tranquil setting for locals and visitors. It is one of the few countries in the world with no army! Instead of investing money in an army, Costa Rica invests those resources in environmental protection, a social health system, and public education.

Verto Education participants will be living in Turrialba. This is a small town in the mountains between the Central Valley and the Caribbean coast. Turrialba is only two hours away from the capital city of San Jose. There's public transportation available every day of the week, and there are also private transportation services like taxis, Ubers, and shuttle companies that can take you to and from San Jose to Turrialba or vice versa.

Participants on the Turrialba campus will be constantly surrounded by nature. The campus itself is full of wildlife, particularly in the pond and forests that surround the property. There are many different types of birds, frogs, mammals, and reptiles that you can see just by taking a walk to the cafeteria!

When you're not in class or on excursions, you can look forward to activities on campus including volleyball, soccer, and basketball pickup games, movie nights, board game competitions, talent shows, clubs and more. *Continued on the next page.*



What will Costa Rica be like? *Cont.*

As it is a small rural town, Turrialba is not known for its nightlife. However, you'll have the chance to experience a nightlife like you've probably never enjoyed before: with epic stargazing, community activities, and night exploration to spot the nocturnal animals that are always around the pond and the forests.

Turrialba is known for its rurality, most of the people work on farms, where coffee, sugar cane, cacao, and other crops are grown. There are many opportunities for outdoor activities such as chasing waterfalls, going on hikes, visiting the Turrialba Volcano National Park (one of the few active volcanoes in Costa Rica!) and more.

The food in Costa Rica is always fresh and normally locally grown. Participants will have a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as rice, beans, and protein (fish, pork, beef, chicken). The cafeteria staff tries to mix the traditional Costa Rican food with international food such as occasional sushi, Mexican, hamburgers, and other international dishes!

Languages: *Spanish and English*

Costa Rica's first and official language is Spanish. You will have tons of opportunities to practice your Spanish in class, around campus, and during excursions! We encourage you to practice every chance you get! No worries if you don't speak Spanish, most Costa Ricans speak at least basic English and even those who don't are used to communicating with tourists as best they can non-verbally.



Your Experiential Classroom



While you are here, you will be immersed in the local environment –and use it as your classroom! Imagine studying environmental science from the top of a volcano or learning about world history while interacting with an indigenous community!

You will visit sites not known to the average tourist and will have the opportunity to participate in activities that will engage you in vital and contemporary issues such as multiculturalism, immigration, and identity. Take every chance to open your mind to new people, new ideas, and new cultures!

Getting Around in Costa Rica



Public buses are the most popular way to get around, in addition to private options such as private taxis, shuttle services, and Ubers. Your Student Life Coordinators can provide guidance if you wish to do any independent travel.



Packing & Weather



It is important to take the weather into consideration when packing. In Costa Rica the weather keeps you on your toes as it rains often! That being said, when it's not raining it can be quite sunny and hot, so please bring clothing that suits both rain and sun.

You will receive a packing list in your Student Portal. Here are some additional pointers:

- **Don't pack more than you can carry.** You may have heard this before, but it becomes a reality when you arrive and need to carry your suitcases.
- **Be selective in what you pack.** The more you pack, the less personal space you will have in your room.
- **Pack good walking shoes.** You'll be grateful after a day of exploring volcanoes, waterfalls, coffee farms and more!
- **An umbrella or raincoat are recommended!** If you do bring a rain jacket, bring a light one. Costa Ricans tend to prefer umbrellas over rain jackets because even if it rains heavily sometimes, the temperature is often still warm.



SIM Cards

In Costa Rica there are three main cell phone service providers: Kolbi, Movistar, and Claro. Any of these options can be easily found at stores, supermarkets, and even at the airport. As soon as you get off the plane you will find in the baggage claim area a Claro desk where you can purchase your pre-paid line and add some credit to it. If you can wait, it's better to get Kolbi since it offers the best phone reception on campus. The cost of each SIM Card should be no more than \$5 USD and you could add \$20 USD of credit to set up an internet & calling plan.

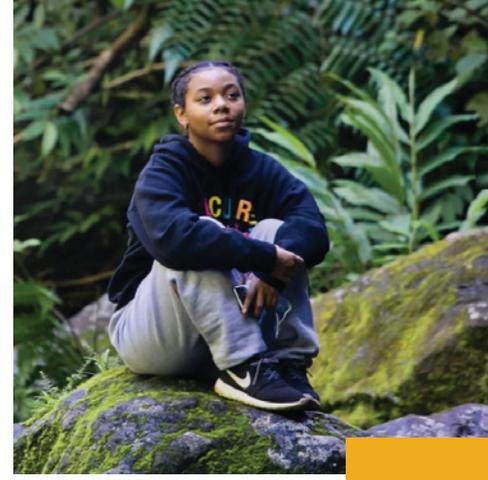
If none of the SIM Card providers are open at the airport, you can also get one at the Movistar store near campus, you just need to bring your passport.

Once you have activated your SIM and have gotten an internet plan, you can add credit to it at any store that displays a logo of your SIM Card provider.

You MUST make sure to contact your cell phone provider before departure to unlock your phone and ensure that it can take other international SIM Cards.



Money in Costa Rica



The local currency in Costa Rica is called Colones (CRC). Most of the stores in Costa Rica accept payments in USD, although the change you receive will be in Colones. If participants need or want to exchange USD for Colones we recommend to exchange your USD at an official bank or withdraw colones from the ATM either at the airport or at the many ATMs there are in Turrialba town. We even have an ATM on campus where participants can withdraw USD or Colones.

Please note that for every ATM transaction the banks will charge you a \$3 to \$5 fee (sometimes even higher). So you don't want to withdraw small amounts because of the fees, but you also don't want to carry big amounts of cash either. We recommend withdrawing at the campus ATM once you have gone through orientation and have a better understanding of how much cash you need on a regular basis. You don't need any Colones for the arrival day since meals, transportation and accommodation are covered by Verto.

A lot of stores and restaurants accept credit cards, but many do not. In case you do want to use a credit card, we recommend that you inform your bank of your travels in order to avoid them locking your card.



Arrival Day

The Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO) is a very small airport with only 14 gates, and only one way out, so you won't get lost!

As soon as you land, you can follow the instructions (or follow the crowd) to make your way to customs (no longer than a 5 minutes walk), once in customs the officer will request you to show your passport. You will be entering via a Tourist Visa, so it's important to describe your reason for visit as 'tourism/travel' and not 'study.' You will also need to provide your destination address, so please be sure to print out the address of Verto's Study Center which will be provided during your pre-departure orientation.

The customs agent will stamp your passport and wish you a warm "Welcome to Costa Rica!" Then you'll go to claim your luggage in one of the 6 carousels at the airport. Once you have gotten your luggage you can get a SIM Card if you want and then continue through the last security scan check.



Arrival Day *Cont.*

Our staff will greet you at the airport, with pre-arranged transport to your accommodation. You'll learn more about this pick-up process during orientation.

When you exit the airport you will notice a lot of taxi drivers trying to get your attention and it may feel a bit overwhelming! Not to fret though, just say “No, gracias” and focus on finding the Verto staff with a Verto sign and wearing a Verto T-shirt. If you wear your Verto T-shirt that day, it will make it even easier for the staff to find you at the arrival hall!





If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to reach out to your Student Onboarding Advisor.

*We can't wait to welcome you to **Costa Rica!***



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