

USING YOUR PHONE IN COSTA RICA

Important Pre-Departure Phone Decisions

During your time in Costa Rica, you will be **required to have an operating smartphone that can make/receive calls, send/receive text messages, and that has a data plan**. This is important so that Verto Education is able to contact you in the event of an emergency. This is mandatory – as outlined in the [Cell Phone Requirements Policy](#) – and is in the interest of your safety and well-being while abroad.

PLEASE NOTE:

If you plan on using your current phone, **your phone MUST be unlocked by your current cell phone provider prior to arriving abroad**. Unlocking your phone in Costa Rica can be time-consuming and, in some cases, impossible – this is **best done well in advance of your departure**. *If you do not unlock your phone prior to arrival, you will be required to purchase a second smartphone for use abroad.*

Here are your phone plan options for Costa Rica:

Option 1:

RECOMMENDED - Prepaid Local SIM Card

With a prepaid local SIM card you will get your own Costa Rican phone number for texting and calling, and you can connect on apps like iMessage, Facetime, and the internet. Your old number will still work on your phone for contacting friends and family back home via iMessage, Whatsapp, or other messaging platforms.

Steps to obtain a prepaid Costa Rican SIM card:

1. **Your phone MUST be unlocked** prior to departure to be able to use a new SIM card.
2. Once in Costa Rica, **your Care Team will help you purchase** a prepaid SIM card and a package which you can top up as needed with a local provider. *Note: Your passport is required to open a phone provider plan in Costa Rica, so don't forget it when you go to the phone provider store!*
3. We recommend Kolbi or Claro for a pay-as-you-go plan.
 - a. For example, with Kolbi you can buy a prepaid SIM card for ₡1000 CRC (~\$1.5 USD) and it includes ₡1000 CRC (~\$1.5 USD) credit. You can use it until you run out of data and easily recharge at the store on campus or at many shops in town.

Option 2:

International Phone Plan

Although not recommended due to the high cost, you may choose to purchase an international phone plan with your current at-home phone provider prior to your departure to Costa Rica. This option allows you to keep your current phone number. You must ensure that your plan will have both data and calls/texts available internationally.

Option 3:

Purchase a Cheap Costa Rican Smartphone and SIM

If you'd prefer to avoid the risk of losing or damaging your phone from home, you may purchase an inexpensive smartphone and SIM card in Costa Rica. This plan must include data so that we can communicate with you in case of an emergency.

Once in Turrialba, there are several stores that offer smartphones, the cheapest are the ones of the Blu brand with 32GB internal memory for ₡70,000 CRC (~\$105 USD). The best known stores are Halmar Telecomunicaciones, Royal Store, and M&N. You cannot purchase a phone online, so you must visit the stores to make the purchase.

Temporary Connection:

For your arrival at the SJO airport, there is a free and open Wi-Fi network to immediately share with your family that you arrived safely to Costa Rica.

If you wish to wait until you're oriented on campus to purchase your SIM card, but want to stay connected in the meantime, you can connect to our campus Wi-Fi. There are wireless networks in all buildings.

To clarify, this is not a permanent solution. Not all the places you visit will have Wi-Fi networks, nor will it be possible during excursions. Costa Rica is surrounded by mountains and students will pass through remote places where there is no Wi-Fi. Relying solely on Wi-Fi networks does not allow Verto to contact you in the event of an emergency, and vice-versa.

IMPORTANT: It is wise to make sure you have comprehensive insurance for your phone in case it gets broken, lost, or stolen.

You must give your cell number to Verto staff during the first few days in Turrialba and always keep your data switched on so that you can be contacted in an emergency.