

Arrival Guide

Spanish

San Isidro, Costa Rica

Spring 2025

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1 Introduction

Welcome as a student with Kulturstudier!

We hope you are excited about the upcoming semester. Our local staff in San Isidro will do their best to help you adapt to your new life upon arrival. However, a successful journey always begins at home.

This guide aims to provide you with essential information about life in San Isidro and help you prepare to make the most of your semester abroad. For details on academic preparations, please refer to the study guide.

We urge you to read this arrival guide carefully, to download this PDF on your computer, and print it to keep with you while in Costa Rica.

If you have any further questions, contact us at mail@kulturstudier.no or by phone at +47 22 35 80 22.

2 Important information

Make sure to save this information and pass it on to your emergency contacts.

2.1. Local staff contact information

Manager in San Isidro: Raquel Bolaños. Phone/ WhatsApp: +506 897 30 660.

E-mail: raquel@kulturstudier.no

Administrative assistant: Andrés Valverde Camacho. Phone/Whatsapp:

+506 881 58 411. E-mail: andres@kulturstudier.no

Health and housekeeping manager: Jesús García. Phone/Whatsapp: +506 701 76 350.

Academic program coordinator: Mauricio Sánchez. Phone +506 843 52 626.

WhatsApp: +47 458 01 266. E-mail: mauricio@kulturstudier.org

Field trip coordinator: Allan Corrales. Phone/ Whatsapp: +49 157 547 57 427. E-mail: dantasagrada@gmail.com

UISIL Spanish language academic coordinator: Yilliam Valverde Camacho.

Phone/Whatsapp: +506 873 84 143. E-mail: uil.profe.ele@gmail.com

2.2. Your postal address in San Isidro

Hotel Zima / ("*your name*"),

McDonalds 200m norte, 100m este.

11901 Perez Zeledon Centro, San José. Costa Rica.

Street names are not commonly used in Costa Rica. Often, the address is an explanation of where your house is in relation to some monument/well known place. You may use Hotel Zima as your address at the migration counter upon arrival at the airport.

2.3. Medical help

Upon arrival, we will provide a list of doctors and clinics we recommend.

2.4. Ethical conduct

We have a zero-tolerance policy for harassment or bullying. We expect students and staff to treat each other with respect and to avoid offensive language in their communication with each other. Sexual harassment is unacceptable, both in the case of harassment of fellow students and from our staff towards students. All Kulturstudier staff and teachers are informed that any sexual attention towards students is strictly prohibited. If you experience sexual harassment from Kulturstudier staff or lecturers, we urge you to report this to alarm@kulturstudier.org. All reports will be treated confidentially.

3 Preparation: getting ready

3.1. Be prepared to take responsibility

Kulturstudier is an organization run by academics, and we consider the academic aspect of your stay our primary responsibility. We see our students as responsible adults and believe that each student should take responsibility for creating a good life for themselves in San Isidro.

For instance, if your luggage does not arrive with you, you must contact the airline yourself. If you need to see a doctor, you should go by yourself or with a roommate. If you wish to travel during the weekends, you must find information about bus schedules yourself. We expect you to act in the same manner you would if you were traveling independently. Nevertheless, our local staff serve as a safety net. If you encounter problems or something serious occurs, you can always ask them for help.

You must also be prepared to take responsibility for your studies. Studying with Kulturstudier is fundamentally the same as studying at any university; what you gain from it depends on what you put into it. You can fail your studies and learn nothing, or you can be academically inspired and discover what you want to do for the rest of your life. As a student at UISIL, you must follow university rules. Read more in the study guide.

3.2. Be prepared to step outside your comfort zone

You will be part of a group of Scandinavian students, which provides a sense of safety in a new situation. It is easy to only spend time with your fellow Scandinavians instead of stepping out of your comfort zone to get to know the locals. However, if you wish to truly experience Costa Rica, you must be adventurous and make an effort to get to know the locals and their culture.

3.3. Packing

3.3.1. Clothing

The climate in Costa Rica is tropical, and can get very hot. We recommend that you bring t-shirts, light cotton pants, and long-sleeved light sweaters for the evening. Costa Rica has a range of microclimates. On the Pacific side, where San Isidro is located, the rainy season runs from May to November, and the dry season is from December to April. For the Autumn semester, in particular, you should bring a light rain jacket and proper shoes. Regardless of the season, also bring rubber boots and a rain jacket for the overnight field trip, as there might be rain in the southern part of Costa Rica, especially in Longo Mai, even in spring. Bring appropriate clothing and shoes if you wish to go on hikes. You do not need to bring bed linen or regular towels, but you may want to bring a beach towel. You should bring an umbrella.

3.3.2. Toiletries

You can buy most pharmaceuticals and cosmetics in San Isidro. Pack some painkillers and digestion relief medication you are familiar with. Bring any prescription medications you need. You will want to buy some form of mosquito repellent. You can buy different creams and sprays, as well as plugs that you plug into your electric outputs. Apply repellent cream every evening and wear long trousers and long sleeve shirts to avoid bites. If you plan to take trips to the inland or the Caribbean, we recommend bringing a mosquito net, which can be bought in San Isidro. You can buy shampoo, deodorant, soap, and other toiletries in San Isidro. You can also find shaving equipment, tampons, pads, and similar items in most shops. We recommend bringing reef-safe sunscreen (avoid those containing oxybenzone and octinoxate) from home, as the quality of sunscreen available in Costa Rica may vary.

3.3.3. Study supplies

Paper, pens, staplers, tape etc. can be bought in San Isidro. Bring your laptop and your books.

4 Your first week: settling in

4.1. Arriving in Costa Rica

Please note that you may be asked for proof of yellow fever vaccination upon arrival if you are coming from or have passed through countries with yellow fever risks, such as Panama and other Latin American countries on [this list](#).

If you arrive with the joint departure with Kilroy, we offer airport pickup. We can help arrange airport pick-up if you do not arrive with the joint group. Please write to costarica@kulturstudier.no for assistance with transportation. A taxi from the airport to San Isidro costs around 250 EUR (about 145 km/approx. 4 hour drive). Note that if your flight arrives after midnight or is very delayed the price may increase. While there might be other transport services offering lower prices, we cannot guarantee the safety and quality of these drivers.

If you decide to stay the night in San José and take the public bus (MUSOC) to San Isidro the following day, the cost of the bus is around 9 EUR. Take a taxi to the MUSOC bus station. The MUSOC bus starts running early in the morning and operates until around 5 PM, with departures once per hour. If you cannot make it to the MUSOC station, TRACOPA buses are another option. Please note that San Isidro de El General is often referred to as Pérez Zeledón or simply Pérez. Be aware that there is more than one San Isidro in Costa Rica, so ensure you are traveling to the correct destination.

As soon as you arrive in Costa Rica, we request that you register your stay with your country's embassy if you have not already done so prior to departure. Register your travel with your Ministry of Foreign Affairs in [Norway](#) / [Sweden](#) / [Denmark](#).

4.2. Visa

To get a visa on arrival, you must document that you have a return ticket out of Costa Rica within the 6 months of the visa validity period. You can read more about the visa process on [your page](#).

4.3. Buy a SIM-card

Most students get a Costa Rican SIM card and cell phone number, which is both cheap and practical. Remember to ask the clerk to activate the SIM card at the store. You will need to buy prepaid minutes and internet at kiosks or via apps such as the Kölbi app. We recommend that all students coordinate and buy SIM cards from the same phone company, as this makes it cheaper to call each other. WhatsApp is the most commonly used app for communication in Costa Rica, much more than traditional text messages and phone calls. If you have an old phone that still works, bring it as a backup in case your primary phone gets lost or stolen. You can put your home country SIM card in the backup phone to use services like BankID.

4.4. Withdraw cash

The currency in Costa Rica is the CRC (Costa Rican Colón). 1 EUR = 550 CRC (approx.). In big supermarkets, you can usually pay by card, while small stores often only accept cash. Therefore, it is a good idea to withdraw cash. In the center of San Isidro or Quepos, you can find several ATMs where you can withdraw both CRC and USD. In tourist locations, both USD and CRC are widely accepted, but CRC is the most commonly used currency, accepted everywhere. If you travel to rural areas, please be aware that there might not be any ATMs available. We recommend carrying small bills, as many places may not have change for larger denominations.

4.5. Information meeting

An information meeting will be held before the first lecture. At the meeting, we will go through important practical information with regards to the houses, the study center, transportation, social activities, and cultural etiquette. There will be plenty of time for

questions. The time and location of the meeting will be announced in the Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

4.6. Communicating with Kulturstudier

4.6.1. Student representatives

During the first week, we will ask the students to elect representatives who will meet with Kulturstudier staff every other week. It is their job to be an intermediary between students and staff and to notify the staff of any problems. For specific occasions or trips, separate committees may be formed. We would like to clarify that Kulturstudier is not able to make changes to UISIL's rules or the academic program. However, we can work to improve the well-being of students in areas such as housing, lunch, and logistics. Please note that former student representatives from other Kulturstudier programs are not eligible to occupy the role again during the program in Costa Rica.

4.6.2. E-mail, Facebook and WhatsApp group.

Check your e-mail and the Facebook and WhatsApp groups frequently to stay up to date about the academic programme and free time activities. Please use e-mail to contact staff, and not social media channels, regarding urgent matters.

4.6.3. Compulsory Tuesday meetings

Starting the first week, Tuesday after lunch all students and staff gather for a weekly meeting. The purpose is to share information and to discuss problems and opportunities. These meetings are compulsory. If you for some reason cannot attend, you are responsible for obtaining the information from fellow students.

4.6.4. Suggestion box

At the study center you will find a suggestion box where you can submit your suggestions and comments. We appreciate suggestions from students during the semester. It is important to us that suggestions and grievances are communicated to us while there is still time to make changes, so please do not hesitate to voice any concerns. This includes issues with the academic program, housing, food, welfare and other aspects of the program.

4.6.5. Complaints

If you have spoken with our local staff about issues or used the suggestion box but still feel that your concerns have not been appropriately resolved, you are welcome to file a complaint by contacting Kulturstudier in Oslo in accordance with specifications given [here](#), preferably in time to make us able to act on your issues

4.7. Academic schedule

The academic program for the semester can be found in the study guide. Spanish Lessons and Lectures are held at [UISIL's San Isidro campus](#). Classes usually start at 9 AM. The academic week lasts from Monday through Thursday. Occasionally you may have academic activities on Fridays as well.

We will provide a schedule document that includes dates, times, venues, and important deadlines for lectures, seminars, and assignments. Our goal is to offer predictability. However, some changes are inevitable; lecturers may get sick and unforeseen incidents may occur. Any changes to the academic schedule will be communicated via e-mail or in the WhatsApp group. You should check your email, WhatsApp, and the Facebook page daily, preferably before breakfast.

5 Health and food

5.1. Health: staying well in Costa Rica

If you are insured with Europeiske, you have access to counselling for health issues by phone at +47 21 49 24 01. Check with other insurance providers what options they have for counseling if you suffer health issues.

Roommates have a special responsibility to look out for and help each other if someone gets ill. If you or your roommate is too sick to attend a lecture or seminar, inform the team before breakfast. It is inevitable that some students will get sick during the semester. You will most likely be affected by an upset stomach at some point during your stay. At the pharmacy, you can buy electrolyte powder, which can help. Preventative measures include washing your hands often and being careful with uncooked/raw foods. However, try not to let anxiety prevent you from exploring and enjoying new foods.

In Costa Rica's tropical climate, it is important to stay hydrated—aim to drink at least 3 liters of water daily. Fresh juice is another great way to maintain hydration. If you feel weak and unwell, dehydration is the most likely cause. Tap water is safe to drink, but we recommend bottled water, at least for the first weeks of your stay.

While rare, there are cases of Dengue Fever in Central America. This is a tropical disease caused by a virus transmitted through mosquito bites. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, headache, eye pain, rashes, and muscle aches. The virus often spreads more during the rainy season and usually affects the local population. There is no vaccine to prevent Dengue Fever, but you can protect yourself by using mosquito repellent and nets. Mosquitos are most active during sunrise and sunset, so it is crucial to apply mosquito repellent and/or wear long-sleeved clothes during these times. If you believe you may have contracted Dengue Fever, you should see a doctor right away. Malaria is generally not considered a problem in Costa Rica. It is common practice for clinics and doctors to require patients to pay for their consultation or

hospitalization upfront, and then file a claim with the insurance company for reimbursement. You will need a doctor's note and receipts to obtain a reimbursement. In any serious cases, your insurance company will need to be informed about your condition so they can have their own doctors consult on the treatment plans.

If you struggle with mental health difficulties, please consult your doctor before departure and inform the staff beforehand if there is anything we should be aware of. Read more on [your page](#).

5.2. Food

Lunch is included Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Lunch is served in the student cafeteria at UISIL's campus. We can provide options for dietary needs such as celiac disease or lactose intolerance. Vegan and vegetarian options will be provided. Please notify us of your dietary needs in the arrival form before departure. While breakfast and dinner are not included in your stay, there are plenty of restaurants in San Isidro. Cooking at home is a cheaper option. Costa Rica has a splendid culinary tradition. If someone invites you to dinner, you should accept, as the best Costa Rican food is often served at home!

During the Homestay period, breakfast is included. You can decide if you want to join your host family for other meals. The cost of an extra meal (lunch/dinner) is 3000 CRC (about 6 EUR).

6 Accommodation

During your stay in Costa Rica, you will live in houses with other students for 11 weeks and with Costa Rican families in homestays for 5 weeks (unless you have opted out of the homestay program). For the homestay program, we cooperate with the local organization ASOFEQUE. Prior to departure, we will publish a document with an overview of the student groups' rotation plan. The detailed housing list, containing information about the homestay period and the allocation of each student, will be provided the week before the program starts. The accommodation provided by Kulturstudier varies from semester to semester according to availability. Rooms vary in size, furnishing and appeal. Read more on [your page](#).

6.1. Student houses

For the weeks you are not staying in homestays, you will stay in houses located close to UISIL's campus, where your classes will take place, and downtown San Isidro. You will share a room with 1-3 other students. The houses are equipped with kitchens, common areas, and washing machines. Please note that these machines usually wash with cold water, and detergents in Costa Rica are stronger than what you might be used to. Be prepared to wash delicate clothes by hand, or consider not bringing your most delicate or valuable clothing items to Costa Rica. Especially during the rainy season, you will need to plan according to the hours of sunlight available to dry your clothes efficiently. The houses will be cleaned weekly and towels and bed linen will likewise be changed once a week. The houses are equipped with water jars.

Do not flush toilet paper. Costa Rica's small and antiquated septic systems cannot accommodate discarded toilet paper without clogging. Do not take hot water for granted. A large percentage of homes in Costa Rica do not have hot water. Please consider the environment and limit your showers to 5 minutes. Be prepared to see more insects, such as cockroaches and ants, than you are used to in Scandinavia. Avoid leaving food out, as this will only exacerbate the problem.

6.1.1. Electricity and wi-fi connection

Electricity in Costa Rica is 120 volts. We advise you to bring a high-quality adapter. The electricity can be quite unstable, especially during the rainy season, so you should not leave your computer charging longer than necessary. There is Wi-Fi connection in the student houses, and Wi-Fi is also available at the UISIL campus. However, please note that the internet connection may be slower and more frequently disrupted than what you are used to. We cannot promise reliable internet access. In rural areas and smaller towns, Wi-Fi is not as common, and in some isolated areas, there is no internet access at all.

6.1.2. Mold

Mold is a common problem in the tropics. Clothes, books, shoes, and other items can easily get damaged if they are kept in closed compartments, such as in your suitcase, a drawer, or a closed cabinet, for many days. Mold can be prevented by ensuring proper ventilation. Keep windows, drawers, closets, and doors open as much as possible when you are at home. Keeping the fan on can also help. It is recommended to turn your laptop on at least once daily to dry out any humidity. Remember that mold is expected, and people in Costa Rica are knowledgeable about dealing with it. Importantly, the mold in Costa Rica is different from the invasive mold you may be accustomed to in Scandinavia.

6.1.3. Safety and house rules

You will notice that most house designs are boxy, with the houses situated directly next to one another and enclosed by cement walls and iron bars for safety purposes. It is important to always close the doors and gate. Keep your keys easily accessible when the doors are locked, so that you can quickly leave the house in case of an emergency. While living in student houses you must follow the house rules listed below.

House rules

1. Cleanliness and responsibility

All students are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of shared spaces, including the kitchen, bathrooms, and living rooms. Personal belongings should be stored properly to ensure that common areas remain orderly.

2. Noise control and respect for quiet hours

All students must maintain a peaceful environment conducive to study and rest. Students must respect their neighbors and observe quiet hours in accordance with local laws.

3. Safety first

For the safety of all residents, students must follow the security protocol, which include locking doors and informing staff of any safety concerns. Furthermore, individuals who are not Kulturstudier students are not permitted to visit the student houses.

4. Substance use

The use of drugs is strictly prohibited. Alcohol consumption must be conducted responsibly. Excessive drinking that endangers your own safety, or the safety of others, is not permitted.

5. Respectful behavior and non-discrimination

All students must treat their housemates with respect and dignity. Discrimination based on identity, race, sexual orientation etc. is strictly prohibited. So is physical or verbal violence, intimidation, and threats. Sexual harassment, bullying, or any actions that compromise the well-being of others will not be tolerated.

6.2. Homestays

ASOFEQUE (Asociación Femenina Quebradas) is responsible for the homestay program. ASOFEQUE is a women's organization focused on circular and solidarity economy. They also administer the lodging facilities of the FUDEBIOL reforestation project. The homestay period includes one night at the lodging facility. Living in a homestay provides a unique experience that offers both benefits and presents some challenges. Please note that while most students stay five weeks in homestays (this

is included in your stay), it is possible to live with a Costa Rican family for the entire stay. If you are staying with a host family for the entire study period, you must pay for your stay and extra meals monthly. Talk to your host family to set a date for the payments.

6.2.1. Benefits

Staying with a local family will truly immerse you in Costa Rican culture. Homestay programs offer an authentic intercultural experience, providing opportunities to develop a deeper knowledge, skills, and understanding of the local way of life. In most cases, you will spend evenings and free time with your host family, allowing you to experience local cuisine, events, and places that most tourists are unaware of. Your host family is there to look after you, much like your family at home. Being fully immersed in the language is one of the best ways to learn a new language, and there is no better way to do this than with a homestay. Living with a host family will require you to converse in the native language of your host country, allowing you to improve your Spanish skills daily.

6.2.2. Challenges

Communication might be the biggest challenge while living with host families. Remember that communication includes non-verbal language as well. You will live with host families alongside other students. Speaking in your native language when with your host family might seem impolite. Remember to be aware of any preconceptions you might have about Latin American culture and question them. Keeping an open mind can help you understand the people around you better. Be prepared to be open-minded about cuisine that may be unfamiliar to you. Costa Rican cuisine is nutritionally well-rounded, cooked from scratch, and loaded with local fruits and vegetables. The most common dish is Casado, which consists of rice and beans served with different side dishes.

You will encounter some family members with progressive views and some with more conservative attitudes. You are also likely to encounter what may seem like very traditional gender roles compared to Scandinavian norms. Generally, family members do not change clothes in front of each other. Some families might find it impolite if students wear nightgowns or underwear in shared spaces. Many Costa Ricans are

religious, predominantly Catholic, and practice their beliefs actively in their daily lives. Attitudes towards LGBTQ+/queer people are changing rapidly in Costa Rica. Still, you might be confronted with homophobic jokes during your stay.

Kulturstudier is available to help with any problems that cannot be solved within the family, such as uncomfortable situations or internal conflict that may affect the wellbeing of the students. Any episode of domestic, verbal or sexual harassment or violence within the family or against the student will not be tolerated. The rules listed below must be followed in order to ensure that both students and host families have a positive experience.

Homestay rules

- Always act in a respectful manner towards your host family members.
- If you have any type of food allergy or dietary restrictions, please communicate this ahead of time.
- Pay the extra meals consumed before leaving the homestay.

- Shower daily. This is important due to the hot and humid climate. Still, do not waste water and limit your showers to 5 minutes.
- Maintain order in your room and common areas.
- Deliver dirty clothes every 2 to 3 days to be washed.
- Bring your own toiletries (toothpaste, shampoo, razors etc.)
- Deposit toilet paper in trash bins (home drains tend to have paper plugs).

- The use of alcohol, cigarettes or drugs in the homestay is strictly forbidden.
- Do not bring bath towels from the house to the beach.
- Request house keys and take good care of them.
- When arriving at the house late at night, enter without making noise.
- Arrive home before midnight.

7 Living in San Isidro, Costa Rica

7.1. Etiquette

Patience is a virtue in Costa Rica, where the concept of efficiency is very different from what you might be used to at home. For instance, timing is flexible—“five minutes” often means twenty. Flexibility is another important virtue since it can be challenging to plan things precisely and make everything predictable. Understanding and respecting cultural differences will help you build positive relationships and navigate your new environment more smoothly.

You will encounter different views on suitable clothing compared to what you are used to. To maintain a respectful relationship with the local population, it is important to consider what might be deemed inappropriate. As a general rule, the more you try to dress and behave according to local customs, the more respect and less unwanted attention you will receive. At UISIL’s campuses, the general custom is to wear pants or skirts that cover the knees and tops that cover your shoulders, although this is not a strict requirement. We advise you to observe how Costa Ricans dress and adapt to their norms.

As foreigners, you are likely to receive a lot of attention. Women may receive significant attention from men. Interactions between men and women in Costa Rica can be different from what you are accustomed to in Scandinavia. You cannot be everyone’s friend, but do try to be polite and greet people back. If you are receiving unwanted attention, simply walk away and continue as if you know where you are going (even if you do not). Unfortunately, machismo—male chauvinism, sexism, and misogyny—is very present in Costa Rican culture. If you are being harassed and feel unsafe, do your best to find a safe location and report the harassment to local authorities. Sexual harassment is illegal in Costa Rica. Please also inform Kulturstudier staff so we can provide you with the necessary support.

7.2. Culture shock

To stay in a foreign country for a long time is usually a wonderful experience, but you should also expect to experience some difficulties during your stay. Many students go through phases of feeling very happy, followed by times when they suddenly feel sad and irritable. This phenomenon is common enough to have a name: culture shock. Culture shock is often divided into three phases:

1. **The tourist phase:** initially, everything new is exciting and fascinating. You are likely to feel happy and energetic as you explore your surroundings.
2. **The sentencing/reaction phase:** as the novelty wears off, you may start to experience frustration, homesickness, and irritability. Everyday challenges, such as language barriers and cultural differences, may become more difficult to deal with.
3. **Reorientation phase:** you begin to develop routines and feel more comfortable navigating cultural differences. Eventually, you find a balance and start to appreciate your new life more fully.

7.3. Activities in your free time

The cost of living is slightly higher in coastal areas of Costa Rica compared to inland regions. At tourist restaurants, you can expect to pay between 5 500-8 500 CRC (10-15 EUR) for a meal, while at local places in town, prices can be as low as 3 800 CRC (7 EUR). In San Isidro, the cost of living is approximately 20% cheaper compared to the coastal areas.

Costa Rica offers plenty of opportunities for outdoor activities such as surfing, paragliding, and rafting. The mountains around San Isidro provide excellent hiking opportunities. Costa Rica is home to a wealth of wildlife and is one of the most biodiverse places on earth, containing around 5% of the world's biodiversity. There are many national parks you can explore to experience this rich diversity firsthand.

If you are interested in leisure activities such as Costa Rican cooking classes, yoga, sports activities, or volunteering, local staff can assist you in finding opportunities.

We encourage you to plan and carry out some of your own activities, as this is the best way to become familiar with Costa Rican culture. We always schedule at least one long weekend off, allowing you to explore Costa Rica on your own or with fellow students and local friends. If you go on overnight trips, you must notify the manager.

7.4. Transportation and traffic

Transportation in Costa Rica is generally not as efficient as in Scandinavia. However, public transportation works well if you are traveling to popular tourist destinations and major areas, although it may require a bit of patience. You can also take taxis or use Uber, which are more efficient but slightly more expensive. Bus tickets for local public buses cost around 1-2 EUR, while taxis cost approximately 2500 CRC from the city center to campus. If you use Uber or other private transportation, we recommend that you send your live location to your host family or a close friend. Some bus stops do not have signs, so it is helpful to ask locals where the bus stops are located. There is no efficient app or website that covers all buses in the country, though some services offer a trustworthy schedule online.

7.5. Illegal drug use

We do not accept that our students use illegal drugs. Students who use illegal drugs will be expelled and told to leave our premises. The use and possession of illegal drugs is a serious criminal offense in Costa Rica, and the penalties are harsh for those caught in possession of illegal substances. The Costa Rican government is particularly strict with tourists, and some Westerners serve long sentences after being charged with possession of illegal substances. Someone may offer you cannabis claiming that the police do not care. This is not true.

Local people as well as the authorities pay particular attention to what Kulturstudier students do. The police are very helpful towards our students and staff when we need their assistance, and maintaining our good reputation is important for our good relationship with local authorities. Breaking the law would be very damaging to Kulturstudier's work in San Isidro and could threaten our very existence in Costa Rica. Please keep in mind that while you may be comfortable taking the risk, breaking the

law will affect others besides yourself. Our local staff will suffer consequences for your actions.

7.6. Tipping and bargaining

Many restaurants operate with an automatic 10% service charge. In tourist areas, you will find that tipping is more common than in other parts of Costa Rica. Tipping is not mandatory, but you may give a small tip if you are satisfied with your service. Please note that bargaining is not common practice in Costa Rica.

7.7. Personal Safety

In general, it is safe to walk around San Isidro on your own during the daytime. However, always watch your belongings and stay attentive. As a foreigner, people may assume that you have more money, so avoid bringing too much cash and valuables when leaving the house. Regardless of your gender, you should not walk alone at night. Always take a taxi instead of walking home after dark, and try to go in groups of two or more. Never accept drinks from strangers, and always take good care of your drinks, as cases of "date rape" drugs have been known to occur in Costa Rica, just as in Scandinavia. Never take a ride with someone who has been drinking. If you are caught drunk driving or taking a ride with someone who has been drinking, this can lead to expulsion from the program.

Avoid leaving valuable items out in plain sight in your home. Additionally, never trespass on private property, as it can be dangerous. People often keep dogs to protect their houses. You should not carry your passport with you all the time, but always keep a copy of the photo page in your wallet and have a picture of it on your phone. It is also a good idea to scan important documents, such as your passport, insurance papers, and flight tickets, and email these to yourself so that you always have access to them if needed. When you travel on overnight trips, bring your passport, as most hotels require it at check-in. It is also necessary in case you get stopped by the police.

8 After your stay

8.1. Returning home: reverse culture shock

Having lived abroad for months, you may experience a reverse culture shock when returning home. After finally having become familiar with life in the foreign country, the way of living in your home country may suddenly seem strange. Everyday life might feel different, and you may find that you have acquired a new way of looking at things. You are not the same person you were when you left, and it may take some time to integrate your new experiences—and possibly a changed outlook—into life back home. Sharing your new experiences with family and friends who have not gone through the same journey can be challenging. They may not fully understand what you have been through, which can make it difficult to communicate your feelings.

Experiencing a different culture and adapting to a new way of life can greatly benefit you in your studies and life moving forward. Consider how you can keep parts of Costa Rican culture and everyday life with you as you transition back to your habits at home. It can also be useful to stay in touch with your fellow students to share experiences and discuss the challenges of living at home and abroad.

8.2. Honor your commitments

Please remember to fulfill your promises to local people who have helped you in your daily life or as research respondents in group work. It is easy to promise to send photographs or a copy of your group paper, but just as easy to forget to do so. Make sure to deliver what you have promised. It costs you little but can bring great joy to your Costa Rican contacts.

8.3. Evaluation

At the end of the semester, you will receive an extensive evaluation form where you can give us your feedback and help us improve. We greatly appreciate your responses.

**We wish you the best of luck with your studies – get ready
for a life-changing semester!**

Questions?

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