The Costa Rica Spring Break program is offered by International Academic Programs (IAP) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This IAP Program Handbook supplements the IAP Study Abroad Handbook and provides you with the most up-to-date information and advice available at the time of printing. Changes may occur before your departure or while you are abroad.

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Contact Information

ON-SITE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Your primary contacts will be:

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Tecnologico de Costa Rica  
Apdo. Postal 159-7050  
Cartago, Costa Rica

UW-MADISON INFORMATION

International Academic Programs (IAP)  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
106 Red Gym, 716 Langdon Street  
Madison, WI 53706  
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Kate Hamoonga  
IAP Study Abroad Advisor  
(608) 265 6296  
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EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In case of an emergency, call the main IAP number (608) 265 6329 between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday; after-hours or on weekends call the IAP staff on call at (608) 516 9440.

EMBASSY REGISTRATION

All program participants who are U.S. citizens must register at the U.S. Embassy before departure as this will help in case of a lost passport or other mishap. You can register on-line at https://travelregistration.state.gov. If you are not a U.S. citizen, register at your home country’s embassy or consulate. Use the ITCR address when completing your registration.

U.S. Embassy in San Jose  
Calle 98 Vía 104  
Pavas, San Jose  
Costa Rica  
TEL: +506 2519 2000 or +506 2220 3127  
Web: http://costarica.usembassy.gov/  
Location: In Front of Centro Comercial del Oeste Pavas, Costa Rica.
Program Dates

2015 SPRING BREAK
March 28 – April 5 (see detailed daily schedule below)

Preparation Before Leaving

IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

Passport: A passport is needed to travel to Costa Rica and a copy of this passport is an application requirement. If you do not already have a passport, please contact your study abroad advisor immediately. Passport information and application forms can be found on the U.S. State Department website http://travel.state.gov/passport/. If you already have your passport, make sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the length of your stay abroad.

MY STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM ACCEPTANCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Accepting a spot on your program
Upon acceptance into the program, you will receive an email inviting you to log into your My Study Abroad account where you will find information about accepting a spot on your program and a program cost sheet. The program cost sheet includes specific program cost information (total program fee, a payment schedule, estimated additional expenses, payment policies, etc.) You will need to fill out acceptance forms and pay a $100 deposit to confirm your space on the program.

Financial Aid
UW-Madison students are only able to utilize financial aid for IAP study abroad programs that are four weeks or longer in duration.

Billing
The UW-Madison Bursar Office will send you an e-bill for the term you are studying abroad. This bill will most likely go out in mid-February with a due date of mid-March.

HANDLING MONEY ABROAD

The official currency of Costa Rica is the Colon (CRC). The exchange rate is roughly $1 USD to 490 colones.

Budget: The only thing you will need to budget for during your program is spending money. All food, excursion fees and housing is included in your program fee. Please also be prepared to pay a $26 exit tax when you are flying out of Liberia airport. You will need to have this money in US dollars. Have a back-up plan to get additional funds in the case of an emergency.

ATM/Debit cards: It’s increasingly easy to find cajeros automáticos (ATMs) in Costa Rica, even in the smallest towns. The Visa Plus network is the standard, but machines on the Cirrus network, which accepts most foreign ATM cards, can be found in larger cities and tourist towns. The airport in Costa Rica is the best place to withdraw your spending money. Inform your financial institution of your expected
time abroad so they do not stop processing any of your ATM/debit card transactions due to belief that your card has been stolen. Also confirm with your bank any fees that you will be charged for withdrawing money internationally.

Safety with Money
Use the same precautions with money abroad that you would when traveling in any large city in the United States. Be aware of pickpockets in crowded areas and on public transportation. Carry your money and other documents in a money pouch worn inside your clothing. Use the same precautions you take at home when using an ATM; keep your pin number separate from your ATM/debit card and use machines inside banks or other buildings. Maintain a copy of all credit card numbers and any PIN numbers in a safe place, and do not carry these with you at any time. Leave a copy of these documents with your Financial Representative in the United States.

PACKING
- Important documents (passport, emergency contact information, insurance card, ATM card, money, etc.) should be in your carry-on luggage. Also, make sure that you make a copy of important documents and leave them with a friend or family member back home to access in the case of an emergency.
- Take enough prescription medication to last the duration of the program. Keep prescription medication in their original packaging and carry a letter/prescription from your doctor explaining your condition and use of medication. Prescriptions should be packed in your carry-on luggage.
- Leisure clothes (jeans, casual shoes, long shorts, tshirts etc.)
- Jacket or fleece
- Swimsuit
- Water drinking bottle
- Photos/memorabilia from home (to share with host family)
- Diarrhea medicine
- Sunblock, hat and sunglasses for protection from harmful effects of UV sun rays.
- Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Camera
- Small flashlight
- Pocket knife (if you have one)
- Sleep sack, sleeping pad or bed sheets (if you prefer to use your own – the beds will have sheets)
- Valuable items, expensive jewelry, and items that cannot be replaced should be left at home.

Electronics
It is recommended that you only bring a camera with you and no other electronic items. You should bring an electrical converter if you need to recharge camera batteries. It is best to bring a number of charged batteries since electricity may not be entirely reliable.
Travel and Arrival

Bus to/from Chicago
You will be traveling on a bus from Madison to Chicago O’Hare airport with other program participants. This bus will depart from the Memorial Union early on Saturday March 28. The time will be communicated over email. If, for some reason, you do not want to travel on this bus, please talk with your study abroad advisor. The bus will also pick you up from O’Hare Airport on April 5 and bring you back to the Memorial Union.

Flight
From Chicago, you are required to take the American Airlines flight with other program participants. Even though you might be able to find a cheaper ticket on your own, because of the short duration of the program and the tight itinerary, unfortunately there is not an option to take a different flight. This ticket will be paid for by IAP on your behalf.

- American 1342H               28MAR                 Chicago/Miami                    500A  900A
- American 2364H               28MAR                 Miami/San Jose                  950A 1052A
- American 1032H               05APR                 Liberia/Dallas                  200P  714P
- American 2339H               05APR                 Dallas/Chicago                   835P 1107P

Keep in mind that there is a fee for checking a bag internationally. If you wish to avoid the fee, check the airline website for carry on limits.

Arrival
Upon arrival, you will be picked up at the San Jose airport and transported to San Carlos.

The Academic Program

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM
You will be hosted by the Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (ITCR) in San Carlos. The class will visit with growers, cooperatives and marketers involved in organic and sustainable agriculture in two ecologically distinct regions of Costa Rica, San Carlos (humid) and Guanacaste (dry).

DAILY SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES
To be determined. Handbook will be updated when the schedule is finalized.

REGISTRATION AND CREDIT
You will receive 1 credit of LACIS 440 for the study abroad component of the course. This credit will be posted by IAP to your official transcript. You should register on your own for the classroom component of LACIS 440 for 1 credit.

GRADING
You will be graded on your written and oral presentation. More information provided in the class syllabus.
COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is in Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama and has a population of 4,509,290. The country is slightly smaller than West Virginia. Costa Rica is both tropical and subtropical with a dry season from December to April and a rainy season from May to November. While the country has only about 0.1% of the world’s landmass, it contains 5% of the world’s biodiversity. Historically, Costa Rica has generally enjoyed greater peace and more consistent political stability compared with many of its fellow Latin American nations.

HOUSING

During the first few days of the program, you will stay in dormitories of the Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (ITCR) located in San Carlos, Costa Rica. The dorms are located on-campus, which is a gated community with a security guard. Students are housed in double rooms and share a bathroom facility on their floor. Kitchen facilities are not provided in the dorm. You will eat at local cafeterias and restaurants on and near the ICTR campus.

In the remaining five days of the program, you will stay with host families in the village of Sardinal de Carrillo in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. Keep in mind that because of the tight daily itinerary and short duration of the program, there won’t be a significant amount of time for culture sharing and bonding with your host family. This may at times make the homestay experience feel slightly artificial. Living with a host family is meant to give you a glimpse of Costa Rican rural life, and a contrasting living situation from a university dormitory. The families understand that you will only be with them for a few days and have offered to welcome you into their home for this time. The RDs will be staying at a house within approximately 2-3 blocks from all homestay families. These homestay families are selected by James Nienhuis, who personally knows the families and has visited their homes.

More information about specific host families, selection process etc. can be found on the class website.

Homestay Expectations

1. Show sensitivity to Costa Rican culture, values, ideas and family norms regarding hours, manners, customs, dress and religion.
2. Be willing to learn about a different culture and language.
3. Arrive at your homestay before dark (7:00pm) every evening. It is not always safe to be out after dark.
4. Use your program facilitators as your main resource persons if issues arise in your placement.
5. Keep personal possessions in your backpack/suitcase when you are away from the house so that they are out of sight of family members.

HEALTH

It is recommended that you read through the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for travel to Costa Rica http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/costa-rica.aspx as well as meet with your
doctor or a travel doctor prior to departure. Your doctor or health-care provider will determine what you will need, depending on factors such as your health and immunization history, areas of the country you will be visiting, and planned activities.

The group will be moving from a cold and dry winter climate to a hot and wet tropical environment. This often affects allergies. Diseases from food and water are the leading cause of illness in travelers. Follow these tips for safe eating and drinking:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel (with at least 60% alcohol).
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes.
- Do not eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Make sure food is fully cooked.
- Avoid dairy products, unless you know they have been pasteurized.

Diseases from food and water often cause vomiting and diarrhea. Make sure to bring diarrhea medicine with you so that you can treat mild cases yourself.

**Alcohol and drug use**
Cross-cultural differences exist in the consumption of alcohol. Often, rules about the acceptability of alcohol use in certain situations or contexts are very different than in the United States. Excessive drinking can impact your health during the program, impair judgment, lead to risk or harm to yourself or others and have an effect on your academic performance.

Penalties for use or possession of illegal drugs can include jail terms, hard labor, and even the death penalty. Neither the U.S. Embassy nor the program offices are able to exercise effective pressure to moderate these penalties. If you are arrested, you are subject to the host country’s laws and neither the UW-Madison’s IAP office nor the U.S. Embassy can protect you from the local legal consequences. While on an IAP study abroad program, you are responsible for obeying all local laws. If IAP learns that program participants are using drugs or breaking other local laws, participants will be confronted and may be asked to leave the program.

**SAFETY**
IAP is dedicated to maintaining the personal safety and security for each of our study abroad participants. We remain in close contact with program staff and work with them in case of an emergency. You are encouraged to contact your IAP Study Abroad Advisor if you are concerned about your safety or welfare while abroad.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to exercise the same level of caution they would in major cities or tourist areas throughout the world. Local law enforcement agencies have limited capabilities and may not act according to U.S. standards. Travelers should minimize driving at night, especially outside urban areas. Americans should walk or exercise with a companion, bearing in mind that crowded tourist attractions and resort areas popular with foreign tourists are common venues for criminal activities. Travelers
should ignore any verbal harassment, and avoid carrying passports, large amounts of cash, jewelry or expensive photographic equipment. A common scam involves one person dropping change in a crowded area, such as on a bus. When the victim tries to assist, a wallet or other item is taken.

**CISI INSURANCE**

Health insurance is included in your program fees and is provided by Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). CISI insurance will cover you while traveling to other countries and provides medical evacuation and repatriation benefits. Still, it is important to arrange for continuation of your regular health insurance coverage while you are studying abroad.

More information about this policy can be found in your MyStudyAbroad account.

**COMMUNICATION**

**Telephone:** When making calls, keep in mind time zone differences [www.timeanddate.com/worldclock](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock).

To make an international call to the United States from Costa Rica, dial “001” followed by the appropriate U.S. area code and local number. To call internationally from the United States, dial “011”, the Costa Rica country code (506) and the phone number. The number 2 preceeds each land line phone number and the number 8 preceeds each cell phone number. Other country and city codes can be found online [www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/dialing.html](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/dialing.html). Some of above steps can vary if you are using a calling card.

**WEBSITES OF INTEREST**

International Academic Programs (IAP) at UW-Madison:  
[www.studyabroad.wisc.edu](http://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu)

General Orientation Information:  
[www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/index.html](http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/index.html)  
(includes topics such as culture shock, international travel, etc.)  

U.S. State Department:  
[travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)

U.S. State Department Students Abroad site:  
[http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov/](http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov/)

Center for Disease Control:  
[www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/)

Current Exchange Rates:  

Costa Rica Tourist Website:  
[http://www.tourism.co.cr/](http://www.tourism.co.cr/)