

SAMARA BEACH SPANISH LANGUAGE HOMESTAY AND STUDY

COSTA RICA

destination **FACTSHEET**

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TOP 5 THINGS TO KNOW

1

Homestay houses are basic but comfortable. Homes do not have hot water and/or air-conditioning. You will be provided with a fan in your room.

2

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included daily: If you are a vegetarian, the family can accommodate a basic vegetarian diet (rice, beans, vegetables, fruit, eggs, pasta, etc). However, if you are vegan, gluten intolerant, celiac, eat only organic foods or have any other special food needs, you should expect to buy whatever additional food you require, as the family budget only allows for standard meal preparation

3

Classes have a maximum of 6 students. Students are taught in air-conditioned classrooms or outside in the shade.

4

Costa Rica is very eco-friendly so best to re-use plastic bottles! Do not drink unfiltered water or buy food from street vendors. You will have a water bottle that you can refill at school.

5

Visit a local travel doctor or your primary care physician with your itinerary to get the best personalized medical advice on any vaccinations or special medication needed for the program.



ACIS TRIP SERVICES

Departure

Departure of this program must be on a Sunday.

Rooming

In most cases, there will be 2 students per family. However, during peak season, in order to ensure that there are no other students in the house with ACIS students, we may need to place up to 4 ACIS students in each house, with no more than 2 students in the same room. The bathroom will be shared. Group Leaders may have a private room but we can't guarantee that they'll be the only student in the house (depends on the season).

Meals

All meals will be taken with your host families. Students need to advise host families of special dietary needs on arrival. Families can accommodate vegetarian requests. If you have told us about these ahead of time, we will have alerted the host family about this, but a reminder is helpful.

Be careful of food from street side vendors and open markets and unpurified water. Avoid unpurified ice, unpasteurized milk and milk products and uncooked vegetables in non-ACIS sponsored restaurants.





Purified water is provided by the family for limited use. Away from home, buy the readily available bottles of water to carry. It is not acceptable to fill up the empty bottles from the family's supply. The water served in the families is purified, usually by boiling or by adding a water purifying agent. It is not bottled, but it is safe water for students to drink. **Costa Rica is very eco-friendly so best to re-use plastic bottles! You can refill your bottles at school.**



Meals will not be included for adults opting to stay in a hotel rather than with a family.

Tour Manager

Please note that Spanish Language Homestay Programs do not include a Full-time Tour Manager. Your group will be met at the airport by an English-speaking representative who will assist with the transfer from the airport to your accommodations and for your return trip to the airport. ACIS will provide detailed instructions including information about your transfer assistant approximately 1-2 weeks before departure.

GENERAL INFORMATION/TRAVEL TIPS

<p>Flights</p> 	<p>Flights to Costa Rica are normally day flights. When you arrive into Liberia airport you will have approximately a two hour transfer to Samara.</p>
<p>Passport Requirements</p> 	<p>Passports ARE required for all passengers traveling to Costa Rica and must be valid for at least 90 days after returning to the USA. Visas are not required for US citizens traveling to Costa Rica. Non-US citizens should check with the Costa Rican Embassy for any specific Visa requirements. In such cases, the passenger will be responsible for obtaining their own Visa.</p>
<p>Parental Consent (if necessary)</p> 	<p>Parental consent is not required for travel to Costa Rica</p>
<p>Electrical outlets</p> 	<p>Costa Rica uses 110-volt, 60 cycle electricity, same as the US. Plugs are typically the 2-pronged flat type so US travelers will not typically need a converter or adapter.</p>

<p>Time Difference</p> 	<p>Costa Rica is one hour or two hours behind Eastern Standard Time, they do not change with Daylight Saving Time.</p>
<p>Luggage Restrictions</p> 	<p>Checked Luggage Please be advised that all airlines are now charging passengers a fee for their first checked bag. Please check with your confirmed airline prior to departure for the most up to date baggage policy so you are prepared. As an alternative you may want to consider packing lightly with a carry-on bag.</p> <p>Airport portorage is NOT included in the program fee.</p>



WHAT TO PACK

We advise you to bring comfortable, casual, breathable clothes to Costa Rica.

- ✓ **Basic Medical Supplies** such as anti-diarrhea medicine, aspirins, band-aids.
- ✓ **Beach Towel and Bathing Suit** for beach time.
- ✓ **Thin shower towel** for easy air drying.
- ✓ **Binoculars** for viewing the wildlife. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the monkeys and the birds in the trees.
- ✓ **Games.** It's a good idea to have games like chess, checkers, backgammon or playing cards for those relaxing evenings.
- ✓ **Hat** to block the sun during long days of hiking.
- ✓ **Insect Repellent** with DEET (diethyl-metatoluamide). The tropical climate of Costa Rica tends to result in more insects than you may be accustomed to.
- ✓ **Jacket/Lightweight Raincoat**
- ✓ **Long Pants** as guides often request that passengers wear long pants during walks through the various National Parks and Forests or for optional horseback riding.
- ✓ **Plastic Bags** for wet bathing suits/clothes.
- ✓ **Small Flashlight** for walking in the evening.
- ✓ **Small Suitcase & Carry-On.** Because the tour buses used are "micro-buses", smaller than the tour buses we are familiar with, you need to pack as lightly as possible. Microbuses have a maximum capacity of 21 passengers and cannot handle large suitcases.
- ✓ **Shorts/T-Shirts.** With the weather being so hot and after hiking trails, you may need a change of clothing.

- ✓ **Sunscreen.** The sun is very strong and protection should be worn when necessary.
- ✓ **Two Pairs Of Walking Shoes/Sneakers** for hiking and in case one pair is wet. Also, be sure they have good grip since some of the walks are inclined and slippery. Waterproof shoes, such as tevas or reefs can be very useful.
- ✓ **Umbrella/Raingear.** It can rain every day in Costa Rica, even if only for brief periods, especially in Monteverde. May through October is considered to be the wetter season.
- ✓ **Lock.** You can bring things to school and leave things in the lockers provided but you will need your own lock



HEALTHCARE

We suggest you visit a local travel doctor or your primary care physician with your itinerary to get the best **personalized** medical advice on any vaccinations or special medication needed for the program.

You may check with the Department of Health and Human Services for specific health concerns when traveling:
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

Most Costa Rican food and water are sanitary, but in rural areas, you run a mild risk of intestinal ailments. Use common sense and watch what you eat -- avoid ice, uncooked food, and unpasteurized milk (including milk products), and drink bottled water. Mild cases of traveler's diarrhea may respond to Imodium (known generically as loperamide) or Pepto-Bismol (not as strong), both of which can be purchased over the counter.

Perfume, aftershave, and other lotions may attract mosquitoes. Poisonous snakes, scorpions, and other pests pose a small (overrated) threat.

Medical situations:

In the event of a medical emergency where medical expenses and/or insurance is involved in Costa Rica, the passenger must pay the expenses directly and mail receipts to our Boston office for reimbursement. Deductible amounts according to the type of insurance purchased will apply.



SAFETY AND SECURITY

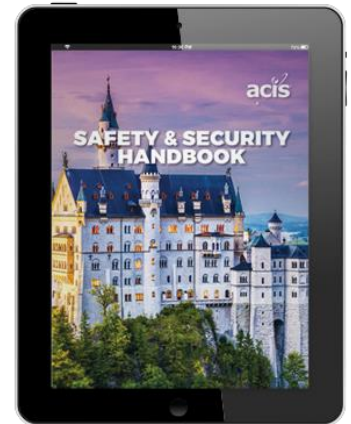
Should you have any issues at all during your trip, please call ACIS and we will rectify the problem immediately. It is vital that you notify us as soon as you experience a problem as we can resolve issues very quickly on the spot before it adversely affects your trip.

ACIS Emergency number 617-450-5678

Although Samara is protected by a reef you should always be careful when swimming in the ocean. **Watch out for riptides.** Wherever there are waves, ask the locals if it's safe to swim; if you're uncertain, don't go in deeper than your waist. If caught in a rip current, swim parallel to the beach until you're well out of it, then swim back to shore.

To avoid being a target for pick pockets, dress conservatively, act respectfully in churches and leave flashy or expensive jewelry at home. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer than handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets. One of the safest places (against pick-pockets) is to carry valuables in a pouch or money belt hidden under your clothing.

We do not recommend walking on the beach late at night.



OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Classes

Classes are in groups of 6, held for 4 hours daily. Classes will alternate between the morning and afternoon to allow for activities. Phone cards can be purchased at the school and group leaders/students have internet access at the language school.

School: Sámara Beach Language School Intercultura is a mid-sized Spanish language school established to offer all the advantages of an intensive Spanish language program at a beautiful Pacific Costa Rican beach campus.

Phones/Internet

There is a WiFi area on the Campus and some families may have limited WiFi. The school has two computers for students to use for free (with a 20 minute maximum time in high peak periods). Wireless Internet access is now available for \$5 a week (or \$15 a month). At the moment there are 4 Internet Cafes in Sámara all within a 10 minute walk from the school. Prices vary from 1,000 to 1,500 colones an hour (about \$1.80 to \$2.75 an hour with today's exchange rate).

Excursions

Although the homestay/language programs have set classes, the remainder of the time is not entirely structured. The school will offer free time suggested activities between classes.

The language school may rearrange activities on the trip so excursions may be organized on different days than our itinerary specifies.

Because the language schools handle most of the arrangements on these trips, ACIS is unable to substitute excursions or change the itinerary schedule

In Samara Beach, all tours are arranged by the school. There are no classes during Holy week (the week before Easter).



HOMESTAY INFORMATION

Samara Beach language school has been chosen for their outstanding reputation and high academic standards. Your program includes a homestay with a local family. All families have been carefully screened and are constantly evaluated by the school. The accommodations are modest and simple but friendly and comfortable. Depending on availability, students typically have shared rooms and shared bathrooms. In many locations, the host families live within walking or biking distance of the school (see location-specific info for details).

Should you have any issues at all with the school and/or any of the homestay families, please call ACIS and we will rectify the problem immediately. It is vital that you notify us as soon as you experience a problem as we can resolve issues very quickly on the spot before it adversely affects your program.

ACIS Boston Office 617-236-2051 (10am – 6pm Eastern standard time). If you call this number after hours, it will automatically be forwarded to our answering service/duty officer.

ACIS Emergency number 617-450-5678

Group Leaders and adult passengers may request to stay in a hotel rather than with a family at an additional cost. Since many of the meals are typically provided by the families, some meals will not be included with the hotel option.

On programs in Samara Beach, Costa Rica water is not heated but lukewarm due to the tropical climate. In many parts of Latin America, **plumbing requires that toilet paper be thrown in the wastebasket, not in the toilet.** This is a common practice in these areas.

Linens for your bed will be provided but you must bring a towel for the shower and something for the beach. You may want to purchase a towel or sarong in Samara as it is a great souvenir.

Your host family will keep your room and the bathroom clean. However, as a courtesy, ACIS asks that you keep your bedroom tidy. You will be provided with a house key if necessary, and can come and go as you please.

Remember that every family is different, and human personalities are involved. Usually friendly, enthusiastic flexible students tend to create a friendly and positive atmosphere. In these cases your family will probably include you more in the family's social activities and outings. If you are not happy with the family, please discuss this with your group leader and local school staff. Your family experience is important, and you should feel very comfortable. Please show your family consideration and courtesy. Participating host families are chosen for their friendliness and helpfulness. They receive a fee and are supposed to provide what has been agreed upon, but they enjoy having foreign students.