

What to Bring – Costa Rica Semester Abroad

SAMPLE PACKING LIST

When packing, think about the total weight of your bag. Many airlines have a per-person bag limit as well as a limit to the weight of each piece of checked luggage.

Based on Experience, this is what we are suggesting:

1. Larger duffle bag or backpack to use as a checked bag. (We find that duffle bags and backpacks are easier to maneuver in Costa Rica than a square or rectangular piece of luggage.)
2. Backpack, mostly for hiking. Something like a large book-bag should suffice; around 35-50 liters. A lot of people prefer a pack with an [internal frame](#). (I generally like to use a waterproof bag. I have experimented with a few and have had a bag called the [Animas](#) made by a company called Watershed that has lasted for years.)
3. Small daypack (Waterproof is always better and book-bag size.)
4. [A small waterproof](#) drawstring cinch-sack backpack with thin string like straps. (They sell a few of these types of bags at the Outdoor Gear Exchange)

When packing to travel to Costa Rica, you will likely be able to place bags 3 and 4 in bag 1, so when you show up at the airport, you can check bag 1 and get on the plane with bag 2. We can talk more about packing issues/questions in class.

General

- ☐ Passport with two printed copies of your passport stashed in separate places in your travel bags
- ☐ Take a digital picture of your passport, driver's license (if you have one), and or other important documents or items (ex. credit card or debit card). Keep a copy of this image on your camera or phone and also email a copy to yourself and a family member or emergency contact person you trust.
- ☐ Your UVM SOS Card (these will be distributed)
- ☐ Two cell phones (*IMPORTANT: [see below for section on cell phones](#)*)
- ☐ Electronic copy and printed copy of your airline itinerary
- ☐ Printed copy of taxi instructions (to be distributed at a later date)
- ☐ Pack any prescriptions in their original containers
- ☐ **Spending Money** –First, do not worry about changing money in the airport or when you first arrive in Costa Rica. Everyone gladly accepts dollars and the exchange rates here in the U.S. and at the airport are terrible. We suggest you show up with your credit card, ATM Card, and around \$200.00 USD in Cash. This way you can take out additional cash

when needed. Stuff you will want cash for is random snacks, certain meals you have on your own (we will talk about this in our pre-trip class sessions), souvenirs, random excursions you would like to take on your own, etc. We are guessing extremely frugal individuals might be able to get through the semester with \$400 USD in spending money, but anticipating most students will end up spending more on these items. It is sort of like living on campus: if you want to spend money, you will have opportunities, but if you want to be frugal, there are usually also opportunities. I am estimating some students will go through \$2000 in spending money through the semester (those going out to dinner on their own a lot, taking multiple side trips, etc), but it will be closer to \$800-\$1000 for most.

- ☐ Bring your ATM and Credit Card if you have one. Since cash machines and CC machines can sometimes be glitchy in Costa Rica, it pays to bring any and all credit and ATM cards you have available. This way you have a lot of options in case of an emergency. You probably want to carry one card with you and stash the other card in a secret spot - this is also nice in case you lose one card.

Clothing

For clothing, they also have stores down in Costa Rica. My guess is you should be able to find pretty much any basic type of clothing you forget or need extra of in Costa Rica. Myself, I will go down with most everything on the list below. But do plan on buying a few extra t-shirts and tank tops while in Costa Rica.

*** While traveling during the first three weeks, you will have opportunities to do laundry. While on the Osa, you will have access to hand washing facilities (the way many locals wash) and there are a few local community members that offer a very reasonably priced laundry service. I generally use this service.*

- ☐ 1-2 sundresses (if you like to wear sundresses)
- ☐ 1-2 lightweight long-sleeved shirts
- ☐ 1-2 lightweight pair of long pants
- ☐ 1-2 pairs of jeans
- ☐ 4-5 pairs shorts
- ☐ 4 T-shirts
- ☐ 1-2 short sleeve collared shirts
- ☐ 3-5 T-Shirts/tank tops (some people prefer athletic clothing rather than cotton)
- ☐ swimsuits (2)
- ☐ underwear (8-12)
- ☐ pairs of socks (8)
- ☐ lightweight raincoat/ poncho (1)

- ☐ fleece or sweatshirt (1)
- ☐ cap/ hat (It's a tropical sun) (1)
- ☐ hiking boots (Lightweight hiking shoes are okay. Dave has a strong personal preference for waterproof hiking boots, like Vasque Sundowners.)
- ☐ sneakers/ running shoes
- ☐ sports sandals (i.e. Tevas or Chacos. These are great for river crossing on our big hike and hiking on the beach. Do not rely on cheap flip-flops. They provide little grip and tend to break.)
- ☐ sunglasses (It's a tropical sun. It can be very intense.)
- ☐ laundry bag
- ☐ bandana
- ☐ beach towel

Toiletries/First Aid/Etc.

You likely do not need to travel with a four month supply of each of the items below. Items like soap, ibuprofen, shampoo, toothpaste, etc, are readily available in Costa Rica.

- ☐ mosquito net ([This](#) is a model I like. You can also find inexpensive nets in Costa Rica that work well.)
- ☐ prescription medications (In prescription bottles. Do not forget medicines recommended by the travel clinic.)
- ☐ Aspirin/ Tylenol/ ibuprofen
- ☐ decongestants and cold/ allergy medicines
- ☐ rash creams, talcum powder (very helpful), etc (It is very hot and humid, rashes are common.)
- ☐ tampons, pads, or menstrual cup
- ☐ Pepto Bismol/ Imodium A-D
- ☐ Beano (If you have a hard time digesting beans.)
- ☐ soap/ shampoo
- ☐ deodorant (Unscented helps reduce insect attacks.)
- ☐ toothbrush and toothpaste
- ☐ band-aids
- ☐ sunscreen (VERY IMPORTANT)
- ☐ insect repellent/ bug spray
- ☐ water bottles (2)
- ☐ camera (With film or digital storage cards.)
- ☐ 3 good quality flashlights with extra batteries (VERY IMPORTANT - make sure it's a good quality flashlight. I will be bringing a VERY BRIGHT headlamp, a waterproof

bright but compact handheld flashlight, and a small waterproof flashlight that can be kept on a keychain.)

- ☐ 1 ultraviolet flashlight (This is optional, but handy when looking out for scorpions and night hiking. I tried it for the first time last year and it was sort of cool.)
- ☐ Chargers - phone, laptop, iPad, Kindle, etc.
- ☐ binoculars (Very optional, but folks often say, “Oh, I wish I had brought my binoculars.”)
- ☐ fun readings and books (We can provide you with some readings about Costa Rica before we go down.)
- ☐ watch/ travel alarm
- ☐ 1 multi-tool or Swiss army type knife if you have one (Do not pack in your carry on.)

Optional:

- ☐ If you have a hobby, bring hobby supplies like playing cards, a frisbee, volleyball.
- ☐ I am going to bring a travel guitar, you may bring something similar. I am sort of guessing (hoping) someone will show up with a ukulele.
- ☐ Bluetooth travel speakers
- ☐ Travel hammock - [ENO](#) is a great option

Cell Phones in Costa Rica

We would like you to have two cell phones/ smartphones with you in Costa Rica. This will include your phone from home & a local phone on Costa Rica's ICE network. The provider is Kolbi. We will bring you to get a chip/ plan/ phone number during the first week and set you up. If you have a dual sim phone, you will only need one phone.

- 1) **Your phone from home:** Please bring your phone from home. When connected to Wi-Fi networks, you will be able to use all the same email features you have on your phone in the United States as you will in Costa Rica (Messenger, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Skype, etc). This will be good to have for all sorts of communication reasons. Unless you have an amazing international calling plan or just want to spend a lot of money on phone calls and text messages, I am guessing you will not want to use this phone for standard phone calls and text messages in Costa Rica. But in case of an emergency, we think it is very important that people have this phone with them.
- 2) We will **require you to have a local phone** in Costa Rica. The cost for this will include around \$10.00 for a local SIM Card (which provides you with a local phone number). And of course, the cost of a phone. You will have a few choices related to a phone. You can purchase a phone in Costa Rica, but honestly the phones down there are a little (or a lot) more expensive than a phone in the United States. With that in mind, here are our suggestions:
 - a. Purchase an unlocked phone here in the states and bring that phone with you to Costa Rica. Walmart sells unlocked smartphones for under \$100.00. An advantage to this is you have a new phone and also since phones are expensive in Costa Rica, you will likely meet people in Costa Rica that will want to buy the phone from you before you leave the country. For the price you paid for it in the states or even more (especially for iPhones!).
 - b. Another option would be to find an old used phone. Make sure it is unlocked and bring that down with you. I am guessing if you put an announcement on FB, most of you would encounter a friend or family member with a phone they are willing to donate 😊.

When we get to Costa Rica, almost every convenience and electronic store sells the Kolbi SIM cards you will want for the Osa. We will go to a store as a class and help you find one for the phone you bring down.

If you have any questions about the packing list, feel free to reach out to [Dave](#) or [Claire](#).

Happy packing!