



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Contact info available at the IO.

faculty/college	Geoscience
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Global Sustainability Science

destination city & country	San José, Costa Rica
name university abroad	Universidad de Costa Rica
start date	3 / 08 / 2023 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	6 / 12 / 2023 (dd/mm/yyyy) (these are the official university dates but I arrived earlier and left later)

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	The application process went quite smoothly. I had applied for Australia in the first round. The only thing I had to prepare (mainly) was the motivation letter. I did not get accepted. Therefore, in the second round I saw Costa Rica was still an option and it seemed as the most appealing option for me. For UU, I didn't require proof of language because I am Spanish, and I was allowed to show the same motivation letter I wrote for Australia. The University of Costa Rica (UCR) on the other hand, did request a certificate proof of language skills. I gave the language certificate I obtained in middle school, and I had to rewrite a motivation letter in Spanish and about their university.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	Although they did mention that they were quite busy and could take long to reply, communication always went quite smoothly, and they were very helpful.
academic preparation	Not required.
language preparation	I did not require language preparation because I have a Spanish nationality. Otherwise, I believe they do ask for B1 level at least.
finances	Preparation finances mostly consisted of the flight tickets (usually very expensive so I recommend booking them in advance and also flexible, in my case, I ended up changing the return date), the housing deposit and visa (you are lucky that from September 2023 onwards, the tourist visa is 180 days, therefore, you no longer need to go through all the paperwork and costs of getting a visa permit if you are staying for one semester).

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	I was enrolled to the faculty of Biology. The UCR is well known for their biology courses in particular because of the nature of the country. We went on several trips to nature parks (night included) to have a look at the



diversity of the nature and more. We had to pay additional costs for these trips, but the prices were fair, and we were given discounts for being part of the uni.

I also took some art courses (pottery mainly), which I really recommend. UU did not give me the credits for them because they weren't related to my study, nevertheless, I was still allowed to do them. Because they were part of the university, you didn't have to pay additional costs. It's a great opportunity if you love art and you can't afford it sometimes 😊.

My schedule was okay, my earliest class started at 9 am and the latest ended at 8 pm (luckily on different days). However, I did have some friends that started class at 7 am and others finished at 10 pm. The study there is only split in two semesters, rather than 4 periods, so the first few weeks, even month, is okay study wise. You will notice the study-load much more by the end of the semester. From the start, however, I really learnt to manage my time properly so that I'd be able to travel every weekend and leave the studying for the weekdays. That worked well for me, but it meant the whole week would be very busy.

academic quality of education activities

All the classes I took there were small sized. Maximum 20 students, even in the lecture rooms. I really appreciated the students-teacher relationship that this atmosphere created. Student participation was higher and most teacher knew each student by their name. We even had a shared WhatsApp group with the teacher for each class and you could also reach your teacher on a private WhatsApp.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I felt very welcome by the university abroad. We had a WhatsApp group with the exchange coordinator where we could freely ask any questions.

transfer of credits

I am currently in the process of doing this. Although the University of Costa Rica (UCR) tells the students that they are in charge of sending their grades to their respective universities, UU did not accept grades if they were not coming from an official at the UCR. When I kindly asked the UCR to send them for me, they had no problem in doing this. They are now in the process of approval by the UU.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The third of August there was a mandatory Zoom call for all exchange students discussing all the visa and university procedures, here we also had to introduce ourselves to the other exchange students. That same day in the afternoon we had an optional integration session with some activities for all the new exchange students. I really recommend going to this. It is how I met most of the friends I made.

accommodation

I really recommend Stolas coliving accommodations. There was a very good student environment there. I stayed in Stolas gardens, a shared apartment with 3 exchange students and we had 9 other exchange students as our neighbours.

leisure & culture

As I mentioned, whenever possible, we travelled during the weekends, there was always a beach, waterfall, volcano, or mountain we could go to. A lot of hiking and swimming. Take advantage of the good temperature/weather. I went in the rainy season, which meant it would rain nearly every day after noon, however, we were always very lucky with the weather during the weekends, and because the country has so many different microclimates, there is always somewhere where it is not raining, or it is raining the least.



Overall, we didn't find the rain an inconvenience. Even if we were at the beach having a fun time and it started raining so much, it would just make it more fun 😊.

Farmers markets are on Saturdays in San José. There are also some interesting museums (general culture and art) in the city centre. There are some good cafeterias at/around the university campus where you can eat for cheap, I occasionally had lunch there with friends after class.

suggestions/tips

Travel every weekend if you can. I met many exchange students that were always willing to travel with me and we rented a van or took the bus to go visit a new place every time. The city is not very beautiful nor welcoming as is the rest of the country. Explore the country! I never knew a country so small could be so full of so many beautiful places, both at the coast and at the mountains. I travelled nearly every weekend and didn't manage to see it all. It's also okay to stay home for the weekend. If you do, I really recommend going to the farmer markets.

They scare you a lot with the safety and security of the country, especially in San Jose, and I mean a lot! I was aware that safety in Latin America does not have the best reputation and I had to be careful, but I wasn't expecting all the warnings I received. I understand and advise for you to be cautious, but it is completely fine, and I felt completely safe. From all the people I met there, nothing happened to them nor to me. It is advised that you are careful with your belongings (as is everywhere), to use an Uber at night to move around (good thing they are waaaay cheaper than here), and you will be fine.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Definitely!!!! I got to meet amazing people with the same excitement to travel as I did, ending up in beautiful places. I had a great time, and I would recommend it to anyone! It's Pura Vida!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

It is also important that you have patience. Specially if it is your first time so far from home you might find some challenges adapting to a new country (and a new time zone), but with time I hope you will learn to love it as much as I did and will even want to stay!



UU Study Abroad Report Form

	Contact info available at the IO
faculty/college	REBO
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Economics & Business economics

destination city & country	San José, Costa Rica
name university abroad	Universidad de Costa Rica
start date	14 / 03 / 2023
end date	10 / 07 / 2023

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	
	In my case, the application process was a bit chaotic, for example I didn't receive the mail I was selected to study at the UCR.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	
	The UU always reacted to me and did the best they could in the problems I experienced with my exchange
academic preparation	
	I already had enough credits for my bachelor, so I just chose the courses which attracted me the most, but it doesn't matter if I pass or fail the classes.
language preparation	
	I learned Spanish in high school, in Spain and I followed some courses in Spanish at the university. I would highly recommend to only go to a country where they speak Spanish if your Spanish level is high.
finances	
	I didn't receive any money from the government (except from the public transportation gift). As Costa Rica is a really expensive country, the same or even above the price-level in the Netherlands, I would only go if you are sure you have enough money. In total I used 4000 euros of my savings accounts in 5 months, and I had an inflow of 600 euros a month (+123 euros public transportation). I did travel a lot though so if you travel less, it would be for sure lower

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	
	Between the UU and the UCR are quite some communication problems, as after giving me the place at the UCR, they told me there was no agreement signed between the two universities, leading to quite some insecurities about my exchange. As far as I know the agreement is still not signed today the day and I really hope this will not lead to more problems, but I doubt it.
academic quality of education activities	
	The education system is a lot different in Costa Rica than in the Netherlands, here there is a lot more focus on group work and there are a lot more assignments to do.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	



Generally, I am positive about the support at the UCR. They always responded really fast and were reachable by WhatsApp.

transfer of credits

I don't know yet, I still have exams. The UCR told me they will send the transcript the first week of August. As I have some trouble with my process at the UCR, because of the missing assignment, I really hope they stick to this deadline either way.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The orientation program was 1 or 2 days online and after 1 day on location. I think the orientation program was quite short and I didn't get the chance to meet every one of the exchange.

accommodation

I stayed at Stolas Coliving, they own a couple of houses close to the UCR and create a really nice community. My best friends were mainly my housemates and some exchange students. But my house definitely made my exchange so much better :)

leisure & culture

As the university is quite demanding, I didn't really have the chance to skip a lot of classes. But as I planned to only have classes on Tuesday and Wednesday, I still had the opportunity to travel a lot. The culture is really different than in Europa which I can't really explain that well, and in San Jose as in Costa Rica, there are enough things you can do. For example, you can go skating, to the movies, eating out, going out etc. in San Jose and as the public transportation is organized well, going to other places in Costa Rica is also relatively easy.

suggestions/tips

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

I really liked the university and the country in general. Costa Rica is such a beautiful country with so much to see, especially the nature is breath-taking. But as I already mentioned, San Jose is not beautiful at all and not that safe, so that is something you should really take into account.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Just be really aware that central America is sosososo different than Europa. Of course, I knew this before going, but especially for girls, it is not safe to go outside alone or with small group after 18.00, which I didn't expect at all. I heard Costa Rica was one of the safest countries in central America, but in my 5 months here, the situation has worsened a lot. So if you are a guy, this applies way less to you but for girls just be really aware of the different safety situation.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	University College Utrecht
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Liberal Arts and Sciences

destination city & country	San José, Costa Rica
name university abroad	Universidad de Costa Rica
start date	12 / 02 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	17 / 07 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application process for me was quite long and complicated. First I had to apply through UCU, then through the UU and finally directly to the Universidad de Costa Rica. Early on I heard from the UU that I had been selected to go to Costa Rica, but I heard quite late from the host university that I had officially been accepted there. I would recommend starting on time with the documents you need for the visa, since there are many and it takes time and money to get all of it together.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The support at Utrecht University was good, however they had sent me some contradictory information in the beginning about the selection process.

academic preparation

I did not do any academic preparation.

language preparation

I did not really do any language preparation other than watch some Spanish movies and talk to some Spanish speaking friends in Spanish, but I already had a decent level of Spanish before coming to Costa Rica so it was not that necessary.

finances

Costa Rica is quite an expensive country compared to other countries in the region. Prices are similar to those in the Netherlands, but the rent here is cheaper (in student residences) and so is public transport. The visa costs are high, even though it is quite likely that you will never actually receive your visa (I have not, and am almost leaving Costa Rica).

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

The classes here are once a week and are 3 hours long. They require you to have courses that amount to 12 credits in the system here, which means taking 4 courses. I found that there is a lot more work in groups here than what I normally have in the Netherlands. What is nice is that the courses are generally a bit more practical than I was used to, and some groups organize fieldtrips which allow you to get to know more of the country.

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality depends on which courses you take and professor you have. In two of my courses, I experienced the academic quality as quite low, the other two courses I took were around the same quality as



my studies in the Netherlands. I have noticed that it depends very much on the professor you get and does not depend necessarily on the faculty you are in (I took two courses in the Social Sciences faculty and two in the School of Economics here).

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

There is an international office who you will be regularly in contact with. The people there are very nice and helpful. In general, in my experience, they reply quickly to e-mails. They also help you out with questions about your visa application.

transfer of credits

As of now my credits have not been transferred yet. To transfer your grades, you will have to pay a small amount to the Universidad de Costa Rica.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The orientation programme consisted of a session of one day, in which we got practical information about the university and about the visa procedure. It was also a way to get to know the other exchange students.

accommodation

I lived in a student house (Casa Banana) and had a great time with my housemates. It cost me \$250 per month, and it is located at about 15 minutes' walk from the university. I would recommend staying here, because you live with a mix of international people, as well as Ticos.

leisure & culture

Costa Rica is a country full of incredible nature. San José (the capital city) does not offer that much, so I would recommend to make the most of the weekends when you can and travel around the country.

suggestions/tips

Definitely travel around a lot during the weekends and explore the country and its' nature: don't stay in San José all the time. Also, don't expect people or procedures to be on time, here everyone and everything is always late, so you learn to wait and have more patience. Besides that, be sure to ask local people for tips about places to see or places to eat/drink, they know the best spots to check out!

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Yes, I would recommend going to Costa Rica on exchange, because it is an amazing country to get to know (beautiful nature) and the Ticos are very polite and helpful. When you arrive, you will notice it is a country full of paradoxes and there is a lot of influence from the United States. You will learn a lot about life in Latin-America and more specifically Central-America, and for me it has been a very valuable and fun experience.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Enjoy your time!