



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!



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Social Sciences
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Cultural Anthropology

Destination city & country	San José, Costa Rica
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Universidad de Costa Rica
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	3-2-2017
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	4-8-2017

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The communication with the UU went smooth and I got a lot of support getting my required documents together, even though sometimes I got the information late. However the communication with the UCR, the University of Costa Rica, didn't go as simple. I got a lot of contradicting e-mails about my level of spanish and what I had to do to improve it. My final admission letter came rather late which made the stresslevel raise to gather everything for my Student Visa. But in the end, I arrived and everything was ok.

Counselling/support at home university:

It was smooth, but sometimes the information was slowly communicated. I, for example, knew that I wanted to study abroad in Costa Rica a little less than a year before applying. That is why I took a year extra to study. However, the e-mail in which I was informed of all the documents I had to collect to send my application to Costa Rica came five days before te deadline, and consisted of 10 documents of which some needed autographs from professors. So since this procedure is being repeated every year, I think the information can be given earlier to the student who wants to apply.

Academic preparation:

I didn't do any other academic preparation other than following my courses of Anthropology at my own university in Utrecht. I think this has been sufficient.

Language preparation:

This has been my struggle from the start. My idea of wanting to go to Costa Rica started while my spanish level was below zero. So that is why I took a year extra to do a Spanish minor in UU, which I didn't finish – due to unimportant reasons. I did one week of spanish course in Spain during the



summer vacation, but for the University of Costa Rica, this wasn't sufficient. This is why I had to do a Spanish course a month before the classes would start, to get my diploma of the level of Spanish that was needed to be able to enter the University. This program was on my own costs, but it was really worth it. I feel like I learned a lot during that month, especially since I lived in the country where they spoke the language. Thus I was being forced to practice, which worked way more productive for me than the minor in the Netherlands. But I was glad that I already had a basic knowledge of Spanish when I came to Costa Rica.

Finances:

The prices in Costa Rica aren't that different from those in the Netherlands. I pay less for my room, so that balances the fact that I don't have a job here. The food is kind of the same price, the public transport is cheaper (way cheaper, and the buses inside of the campus are free). But what I didn't expect were all the costs for the documents needed for the Visa that I will probably not get in time, I will be gone when they complete the process. But the documents ask a lot of time, stress and money. Unfortunately it is a necessity. Considering life as a student, it is not that expensive. The food in the University is rather cheap and good and if you go to the market on Sunday you will save some money by buying your fruits and vegetables from the local farmers.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

The university here obliges you to choose at least 12 study points, which is approximately four courses. Since I don't need the points that I earn here, I chose four, but only followed three courses, so that I could focus myself more on those courses, which took more effort for me to do due to the language barrier. Every course has one class per week of three hours (at least in anthropology).

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The content is of really good quality, but the courses are very differently organised and your knowledge is tested differently. Instead of having lectures and workgroups, you just have one class per week of three hours in which the two are combined, kind of like high school. They normally don't use visual support like powerpoints. Almost all the tests, or projects are in groups, and I didn't have to write any essay on my own.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

The office that helps the exchange students with all their questions is really nice, and helpful, but slow. Something I've learned here is that institutions always work way slower than in the Netherlands, so you should have to learn how to have patience. It tends to work faster if you pass by the office, instead of writing e-mails, because the communication doesn't go as smoothly through written notes.

Transfer of credits:

The transfer of credits will be arranged later than the deadline to hand in this form. I did have to pay a small amount of money to get the transcription of records, that the University of Costa Rica is going to send to the UU.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:



The welcome programme was really nice and well organised. We started off with all the exchange students together and had a whole programme in which the tico (local) mentors showed us the places to eat, or hang out. Every Wednesday there is 'exchange night' in a bar nearby the university to hang out with the other people of the programme and the mentors.

Accommodation:

You could stay at a host family, but since this is really expensive, I wouldn't recommend it. Also, as a student I wanted to be free and don't really have a schedule, so adapting to the timetable of a family is not the way you would want to fill in your student life. I chose to live in a student home, of which there are many and they are a lot cheaper (A family host is \$700, a student home is around \$300, to \$350). But if you do choose to live in a student home, don't go to Casa Mundo. I stayed in Casa Mundo and there are a lot of problems with the landlord, mostly financially. He lies, manipulates and just takes no care of the ones renting his rooms at all. I don't recommend it by any means. Other houses you could try to contact are: Casa Banana, Stolas, Casa Selva, Fi Casa...

Leisure/culture:

Everyone here is really polite. This results in meeting a lot of nice people, who have become my friends, I hope for life. But it also does result in a very specific cultural difference, because Ticos would rather not say anything than say no. So this results in people not showing up at meetings without saying anything. Also there is something well known as 'tico time', which basically means that everyone is always late. Other than that people are willing to help a lot and are very very friendly.

Suggestions/tips:

Get a local simcard (I heard 'claro' and 'kolbi' are the best. I had movistar which was all right, but not the best). Eat at Neshuma, a vegetarian restaurant, it will make your stay here so happy, trust me. Go to 'Yoguis' when you don't want to cook and want to eat cheap, local dishes. They're open 24/7. Don't go live at casa mundo, but I already mentioned that above. Try choosing classes on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, so you have long weekends to go on a lot of trips (really really recommend you doing that).

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yes, I definitely would. I have had the time of my life, even though sometimes I had to struggle with the institutions or the 'tico time'. I think those cultural differences are part of staying abroad. The friends I have made here, I made for life. The country, coast, mountains, are beautiful. I have been living in paradise and got to know the country in a way you would never be able to when you would only travel there. I have felt safe, knowing that I have local friends who would help me out. It felt like a home away from home. I think the culture shock will come when I return to Holland.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Enjoy, live the Pura Vida.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Geesteswetenschappen
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
name degree programme	Liberal Arts and Sciences
destination city & country	San José, Costa Rica
name host institution and/or company/organization	Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR)
purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	18 / 07 / 2012
return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	15 / 01 / 2013

Preparation

exchange/placement application process

For the application process I was obliged to collect a lot of documents, among which a motivation letter, a letter of recommendation and transcripts of my notes. I wrote my motivation letter in Spanish and had an interview with a professor of Spanish of the UU to determine my level of Spanish.

counselling/support at home university

The International Office was really helpful in the preparation, they would quickly answer my questions by mail and prepared an information meeting, where we met students who had previously been to Costa Rica. Also, my study adviser was very enthusiastic and helpful when I asked him to approve my application and study plan.

academic preparation

We were obliged to choose courses from a course catalogue of a previous year to apply at the UCR, this really was just a formal thing, for the courses would change later and we would choose different courses in the beginning of the semester in Costa Rica.

language preparation

I tried to improve my level of Spanish in the months before I left by self study. In the beginning it was quite difficult, for academic languages is significantly different than Spanish in daily life. But the best way to learn it was just to do it, attend classes, read literature and write papers.

Finances

I hadn't expected Costa Rica to be expensive. The temporary visa I had to apply for in the Netherlands was also quite expensive; I think the whole procedure cost around a hundred euros.

study/placement abroad period



study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
After two introduction days with a lot of practical information on the university, we received a course catalogue in order to choose the courses we would like to follow. On some given days you could pass by the offices of some study advisers of the different study areas to talk about your study program and get the courses approved. The stupid thing was that the catalogue consisted solely of course names, nothing on the content! This you could sometimes ask to the study advisers, but it was really difficult to get to know the content of the courses. After two weeks of classes, you would be able to change courses if you didn't like them or had another reason. I really thought it was difficult to choose courses for these reasons, especially for the academic level and activities in courses differed a lot!
academic quality of education/placement activities
The academic level of the classes really depended on the study area and courses you followed. Some were really really easy and boring, others were more interesting and had a high academic level with writing papers and essays. Also, some faculties (geography, biology, earth science, even some courses of social sciences) had really nice trips and practical activities in the whole country, which is really interesting as well!
counselling/support at host institution/organisation
The international office in Costa Rica was quite helpful. The only big problem was the visa procedure, which was so complex and difficult. We were required to collect a lot of official documents, which were all quite expensive (maybe the whole process cost 200 euros more in Costa Rica?). Then, the process would begin and take a long long time. I got my visa in November and it was valid until the 15 of December! Also, to get the student card took a long time and I expect the transfer of my credits to take a long time too. But that is really a cultural thing, pura vida, everything takes a long long time there. But the people working on the office were really nice and helpful and always answering emails fast.
transfer of credits
I haven't received my credits yet.
student life
welcome/orientation programme
There was a quite nice introduction programme on the university. Two days of practical issues (visa, housing, matriculation of courses, campus and building of the UCR) and also some nice cultural activities (dancing class, theatre). If you inscribed before, you also got to know your mentor on these introduction days, a tico student who would help you with all kind of things. In total there were like 80 international students from 25 countries, a really interesting mix!
Accommodation
When I came to Costa Rica, I first went to a hostel in Los yoses, close to the university area. From there I looked for rooms. There are a lot of notes on the campus, with people looking for room mates. I also looked on the internet (encuentra24 is a good website!). I went to see about 5 places before I choose to move into an apartment which I shared with 1 costarican girl. She was really nice to me and I so much enjoyed living with a costarican girl, for the cultural experiences was great! I payed about 260 dollars a month, which is a normal price I think. I say some cheaper places, but small, dark rooms. There are also a lot of places that are more expensive. I live about 15 minutes walking from the UCR, which was quite close. I would recommend you not to look for a place in the centre of San José, for it is quite far from the UCR and around the campus are some nice bars aswell. Good neighbourhoods are San Pedro, Lourdes, some parts of Sabanilla, los Yoses.
leisure/culture
There are some cheap sport and art classes offered by the university, I never checked them out, but heard they



are nice. I did yoga in a place close to the campus, Yoga Mandir, which is a nice place with good people. Also, there are sport installations of the UCR where you can go running and there is a swimming pool.

There are also a lot of movies screened on the campus, like a free cinema with a lot of national movies as well.

suggestions/tips

Conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

I would really recommend it. Although the academic level of some of my courses wasn't really high, I learned a lot of just talking with classmates and friends. I spend a lot of time with Costa Rican friends and not so much with the group of international students, which was really helpful and beautiful in understanding the culture and people and habits. Try to look behind the tropical nature and the surfer's beaches, Costa Rica is a country full of paradoxes and has always struggled with the harsh influences of modernity. Although San José isn't the most beautiful capital of central America, on the streets happens a lot and it is the place where you see how the real tico live!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Beware that Costa Rica isn't a cheap country and that a semester abroad will be quite expensive. The visa procedure was complex and expensive, housing, grocery shopping, restaurants, busses will be cheaper, but overall prices are similar to the Dutch prices.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Roosevelt Academy
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
name degree programme	University College, Bachelor in Social Science
destination city & country	San Jose, Costa Rica
name host institution and/or company/organization	Universidad de Costa Rica
purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	18 / 07 / 2012
return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	22 / 12 / 2012

preparation

exchange/placement application process

Going on exchange requires quite some preparation, especially since I am studying on Roosevelt Academy, which means that I had to apply to go on exchange first at Roosevelt Academy and afterwards at Utrecht University. My advise therefore to everyone who wants to go on exchange, start early with your preparations! There are always little things that do not go as planned or a teacher of whom you need a signature is absent for example.

The application process more specifically for UCR is reasonably clear, you will be informed about all the papers you need and as long as you hand them in on time you'll be fine. Don't stress to much about this, because it is Costa Rica and there they often take things a little less serious as we would do in The Netherlands. The only thing you need to take into account is that you need to have a sufficient level of Spanish before you will be accepted at UCR. Therefore you and Spanish teacher need to fill out this 'language requirement form', on the basis of which UCR decides whether they want you to come a month in advance and take another language course. However, sometimes it is not completely clear whether you need to take this course or not. A friend of mine that I met on exchange lived in Argentina for 2 years but had to take that course, while I did not. Probably because she never really took any Spanish grammar courses etc. So as you will experience with going to Costa Rica, things do often not go as expected. This can make it fun but can also be annoying.

Therefore I also want to inform the students considering to go to UCR that you should really take the very extensive migration procedure into account. Already in the Netherlands you need to arrange a lot of documents and once you're there you have to go through a very elaborate procedure, which can cause a lot of trouble if you don't do what they ask you to. Unfortunately this can happen quite easily because the entire procedure is very unclear and the International Office at UCR doesn't completely know what you need to do either. Therefore also make sure that



<p>when you enter the country to get a 90-day visa which you need to change into a student visa. The migration at the airport is quite corrupt and can give you easily 30 of even 10 days. This means that you need to arrange all the paper work within that amount of days otherwise you'll need to leave the country, come back on a tourist visa and then pay \$200,- to change your tourist visa in a student visa again. The latter is needed because UCR is a public university and otherwise won't transfer your credits to your Dutch University. Once you get your student visa you'll have to pay another \$100,- to migration. So take into account that the entire migration process will cost you quite some time and money.</p>
<p>counselling/support at home university</p>
<p>In May there will be an information session where you can talk to students who have already been to the country you're going to and meet fellow students that are going together with you. This can be very useful.</p>
<p>academic preparation</p>
<p>Make sure you're GPA is sufficiently high and that your Spanish level is around a B1/B2.</p>
<p>language preparation</p>
<p>As said, your level should be high enough and maybe start reading some extra books, watch series etc. This will be useful during the first weeks of your exchange in which everything is new and you have to go through that migration procedure. However, because you don't really have another option you will learn Spanish soon enough.</p>
<p>finances</p>
<p>As said, the migration procedure is more expensive then you might expect. The same accounts for living in Costa Rica. Renting a room will cost around \$200,- to \$250,- a month. Grocery shopping is about the same as here in The Netherlands, but public transportation and mobile phone use are much cheaper for example. Taking a bus anywhere in San José will cost you about 360 colones, which is about €0.35. Your monthly phone expenses will be around €10,- at the most. Other expenses depend for example on whether you want to travel much and how you want to travel. If you go to more touristic places you can spend a lot of money, however, staying in a hostel for example costs about \$10 a night, so that does not have to cost a lot of money.</p>
<p>study/placement abroad period</p>
<p>study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)</p>
<p>Choosing courses is another interesting thing at UCR. In your intro week you'll get a list with all the available courses from which you can choose. However, as an exchange student you'll only be provided with the course names. This makes it a bit more difficult to find the right courses. Luckily you'll have about two weeks to go to the courses and check them out. So you can just sign up for a bunch of interesting courses and then drop them again afterwards.</p>
<p>academic quality of education/placement activities</p>
<p>The academic quality depends greatly on the faculty you go to. I took courses in the faculty of Social Science (politics, law, history etc.) and I found the level a bit lower as in the Netherlands. In the beginning the fact that everything was in Spanish and the different system will make up for it, but more towards the end of the semester you'll see that you don't have to spend that much time on your schoolwork. However, I this gives you more time to go travelling for example. From other exchange students in other faculties I heard that the academic quality there was higher, for example in the science, biology and geography departments.</p>
<p>counselling/support at host institution/organisation</p>
<p>The international office at UCR consist of a very new team and therefore they did not have that much experience yet with the entire migration procedure. Therefore, I found that they have not been so very helpful. Often they did not knew what I needed to do either and only after asking them a lot of questions and really pressuring them I was able to speak to a person with a higher function. Moreover, one of my teachers started his career at UCR with working for the International Office and he told me that they used to help the students much more, for example in</p>



<p>searching for housing etc. If you ever need something from the International Office, make sure you know exactly what you need to know and be very clear, keep on asking and make sure that you do not accuse anyone. although they might have made mistakes, never appoint someone in person, because then they are very eager not to help you anymore. However, this is a very typical characteristics for Latinos.</p>
<p>transfer of credits</p>
<p>3 UCR créditos are equivalent to 7.5 ECTS.</p>
<p>student life</p>
<p>welcome/orientation programme</p>
<p>The orientation programme consisted of two days in which we got information on our courses, the visa procedure, a tour around campus, a sketch on Costa Rican customs and salsa class. It were nice days in the sense that you got to know the other exchange students. However, both the visa procedure and the course application were explained too briefly and therefore caused quite some confusion. They should have paid more attention to these topics.</p>
<p>accommodation</p>
<p>Accommodation is reasonably easy to find. All around campus you can find advertisements for apartments and on craigslist.com you can find much accommodation as well. As soon as you get to Costa Rica you should start looking for housing and contacting people. Sometimes it can be easier to team up with other students with whom you can rent an apartment together, this way it might be cheaper. However, for your Spanish it is better of course when you move in with a Tico or Tica.</p>
<p>leisure/culture</p>
<p>San José has enough possibilities to go out, especially in La Calle in front of UCR, to see a movie (very cheap), go to the city centre and sometimes there are concerts etc. However, the city centre is not very interesting, you've seen in easily in a couple of hours. Besides, UCR also organizes sports activities etc. There are various sports groups that you can join for example. But besides all this I would definitely advice you to go out of the city. Costa Rica is a beautiful country, it has such a great diversity in nature and therefore you should try to see as much of the country as you can during your stay! The Caribbean coast for example is completely different form the Pacific, and the mountains of el Valle Central around San José provide you with yet another sight of nature. All these places are also quite easy to visit by bus, which are also reasonably cheap. If you go during their spring semester, so from august until December you should go to the Carnaval in Limon and see the turtles hedge!</p>
<p>suggestions/tips</p>
<p>-</p>
<p>conclusions</p>
<p>would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain</p>
<p>As said before, the migration procedure can be very difficult and you really need to make sure that this is arranged well. Besides, the assistance in general is not so very well organized at UCR, so if you go to Costa Rica you should keep this in mind. However, besides these pitfalls, Costa Rica is a great country to visit! As said before, nature is incredible and de people are very kind. If necessary they will walk with you to the other end of the city to show you where to go. So overall, if you decide to go to Costa Rica you will definitely have an amazing experience.</p>
<p>do you have any additional advice or comments?</p>
<p>-</p>

Contact details:

Student Services / International Office