



# KULTURSTUDIER

## Welcome to Costa Rica, Autumn 2023

Welcome as a student of Global environmental studies in Quepos and San Isidro de El General, Costa Rica. In this document we have gathered the most important practical information that you will need. We ask you to read everything very carefully before arriving.

### 1- Kulturstudier staff in Costa Rica

**(Any enquiry before 28th of August 2023, please contact us via email).**

Besides academic staff, there is also administrative staff which coordinates every situation or issue related to health, safety, housing, food and social well-being. They will also organize the arrival to Quepos and San Isidro and arrange some social activities during the program.

*Field Manager in Quepos:*

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*Seminar leader:*

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### 2- Help yourself and assistance

Kulturstudier is an educational institution with an emphasis on academic programs. We consider our students to be responsible adults and do not wish to create a summer camp environment where your whole stay is organized by us. For the most part, you will set up your life in Costa

Rica on your own. In this manner, it will be easier for you to explore and get to know your new home. This means, for example, that if you are unlucky enough that your luggage does not arrive, you will have to contact the airline company yourself. If you have trouble with your ticket, you have to talk to the airline company/travel agency. If you need to see a doctor, we provide phone numbers and addresses so you can contact the doctor and go by yourself, or together with your roommate. If you want to travel during the weekends, you will have to find the information about the buses. If the shower in your room does not work, you need to talk to the house manager. In other words, you just act in the same way as if you were traveling on your own.

Our staff will work as your safety net. We will be available to give you advice, counselling and guidance. If there is a serious situation or emergency, we will always be there to help you!

### **3- Accommodation**

#### **Quepos/Manuel Antonio**

During the first 6 weeks (2<sup>nd</sup> of September-11<sup>th</sup> of October), students will live in [Vista Serena](#), an accommodation up in a hill at the entrance of Manuel Antonio village. This accommodation features nice ocean and sunset views, and it is conveniently located besides several supermarkets and restaurants. In the immediate surroundings you find Manuel Antonio downtown: the church, communal hall, the school and the soccer field. In Vista Serena you will share bedroom with 2-3 other students. Vista Serena has common kitchen and bathrooms and nice social areas. It is possible to do laundry service in place (\$3 per Kg) To access Quepos you can walk 2,5 km downhill or take the regular and unexpensive bus service (about \$1) whereas the bus stop is just in front Vista Serena. You can also walk downhill 2,5 km (or take the bus) in the other direction and reach Manuel Antonio beach and National Park. The bus service between Quepos and Manuel Antonio departs every ten minutes with the first service at 05:30 am and the last one at 09:30 am.

#### **Accommodation in San Isidro del General.**

During the last 4 weeks of the program, students will live in San Isidro del General, a mountainous and rural city 1000 meters above sea level. Your accommodation there will be normal Costan Rican houses in a neighbourhood convenient located near [UISIL San Isidro campus](#) and near San Isidro downtown.

**Toilet paper:** Flushing toilet paper in Costa Rica is a no-no. The simple reason for the request is that Costa Rica's small and antiquated septic systems can not accommodate discarded toilet paper without clogging, just for you to be aware of and avoid any chaos.

**Hot water:** Don't take hot water for granted. It sounds pretty basic, considering the majority of North America/Europe has hot water in every faucet or at least every home. But that is not always the case in Costa Rica. There is a large percentage of homes that do not have hot water. The student houses and Vista Serena do have hot water, but as in many homes with hot water, it is limited to only the shower or certain faucets. You will find wall-mounted instant hot water units (that use less electricity than the tank units). These units are capable of heating the water very quickly and to a very high temperature. You can adjust the max temperature of the water for comfort and safety. Ask your family members to show you how to use the shower correctly.

**Washing machines:** In Vista Serena (Quepos) you can paylaundry service in place (\$3 per Kg) In your houses in San Isidro you have washing machines to wash your clothes. It is important for you to know that these usually work with cold water. Therefore detergents are often stronger so everything gets clean. As well washing machines are not comparable with the ones we know from Europe. Be prepared to wash delicate clothes by hand or think about not taking your favourite delicate pieces to Costa Rica. Especially during the rainy season, you have to calculate the hours of sun to dry your clothes efficiently.

**ADDRESS:** Your address for receiving mail in Costa Rica depends on what house you live in, but you may also use:

Quepos: UISIL Quepos / (“*your name*”), 500 metros al noreste del Puente de Paquita, Paquita, Provincia de Puntarenas, Quepos, 60601, Costa Rica

San Isidro: Hotel Zima/ (“*your name*”), McDonalds 200m norte, 100m este. 11901 Perez Zeledon Centro, San José. Costa Rica.

As you see, street names are not used as we use them in Europe. Often the direction is therefore an explanation of where your house is in relation to some monument/well known place. You may use the above address to Hotel Zima to give to the migration officer at your arrival in the airport.

#### **4- Food**

Lunch is included on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in [Restaurant El Lagarto](#) while in Quepos and at UISIL campus while in San Isidro. The food will be Costa Rican typical cuisine. Food will be made adjusted to vegetarians, allergies etc. Breakfast and dinner are not included but there are a variety of places to eat out in Quepos or San Isidro and of course you can prepare meals in your accomodation. After a while, you will find your favorite places and share your preferred spots with others. There are options to choose from, including vegetarian and vegan options.

## 5- General information about the studying abroad

The basis for all studies at university level is the individual student's effort to learn. Kulturstudier academic staff is highly motivated to help you along the way with lectures and seminars, but a successful study is first and foremost dependent on your own preparation for lectures and seminars. You are expected to attend both lectures and seminars, and to be well prepared for both.

### Therefore:

- Develop good routines for studying efficiently after you arrive to Costa Rica. Most students experience that the study outcome increases when one takes notes or highlights important sections in the literature with a marker. If you make good notes during both lectures and self-study, you will also find it easier to review the curriculum when the exam is approaching.
- Work in groups! Our experience shows that group work offers many advantages as compared to working individually, even though you may not think so. One of the advantages of studying with Kulturstudier is that it is easy to create small study groups. This gives you, as a student, many advantages. You should thus strive to utilize this advantage.
- Participate actively in classes and lectures! An important prerequisite for good classes is the students' own effort. This means that we expect our students to meet for seminars and lectures well prepared and to participate actively in-group discussions. The seminars are only useful if everyone is well prepared and takes part in the discussions. Don't be afraid to say things that might be considered foolish. Take our word for it: the other students may not know as much as it seems either.
- Be well-prepared to the academic excursions. You must have proper shoes, rain jacket, notebook, and a good attitude. Remember that Autumn in rainy season in Costa Rica.

## 6- Time plan (schedule) and study start

During the classes all students are expected to participate actively. You are thereby obliged to come prepared to class and not try to get a "free ride". One of the nice things while studying at campus is the direct contact you will have with the teachers.. **Remember, this is a full-time study.** The time plan may vary, but we try our best to keep it as stable as possible. However, during the program, changes are bound to occur; lecturers may be sick and unforeseen things may occur. The Kulturstudier staff does not have the capacity to notify all students in person about

changes so changes in the schedule and important information will be sent by email or in the Facebook group, so check your email inbox and Facebook every day as well!

The first day of classes is on Monday 4th of September at 09:00 am. This will be an introduction seminar in [Restaurant El Lagarto](#), which is located just besides Vista Serena Hostel. The academic week lasts from Monday through Friday with lectures and seminars and reading/ self-study. Lectures will be held at the campus of [UISIL Quepos campus](#) the first 6 weeks of the program and at [UISIL San Isidro campus](#) the last four weeks. In Quepos, you can have self-study time in El Lagarto from 08:00 -13:00 from Monday to Thursday, whereas while in San Isidro you can use UISIL San Isidro campus. There will be several group rooms available to self-study time there.

## 7- Transport

We can help you arrange Airport pick- up if you arrive independently. The taxi costs around \$180 from the airport to Quepos (about 180 km/ approximately three hours and half drive). Please fill in the *arrival-form* we will send you through the Facebook group in early August. Please write to [costarica@kulturstudier.no](mailto:costarica@kulturstudier.no) for assistance with transport outside of joint-arrival. We keep track of people arriving at the same time so you can share transport and make the price per person cheaper if you arrive at the same time. Note that if your flight arrives after midnight or is very delayed the price may increase. There might be other transport services offering lower prices, but we can not guarantee the safety and quality of these drivers

[Tracopa buses](#) from San José to Quepos/Manuel Antonio runs throughout the daytime often (departs around every 90 minutes) and it takes around 3 hours trip. There are no busses during night time. Try to take a *directo* (“direct”) bus rather than a *colectivo* (“collective”) bus, which makes multiple stops and is one hour longer. The *directo* bus is about 3.5 hours. Cost: ₡4,500 (about \$9). In San Isidro you will get information about local busses and the bus between San Isidro and San José called [MUSOC](#).

Remember that Costa Rica is part of the Global South, so transportation is not quite as efficient as in Europe. In Costa Rica public transportation is actually very good if you are going to popular tourist destinations and major areas. Sometimes a lot of patience and time is required. As well you can take private transportation (which will take you faster but is a bit more expensive). Regarding public transportation there might be some bus stops that don't even have a sign; it is helpful to ask locals where the bus stops are. There is no efficient app or website for all the buses in the country, though some offer a trustworthy schedule online. If you use Uber or any private app to get from one place to the other, we recommend you to send your live location to your host family or a close friend, to have a glimpse on where you are.

## **8- Traveling and spare time**

When planning your weekends, please keep in mind that there will generally be lectures on all weekdays (Monday-Friday) during the “odd weeks” of the program (1,3,5,7,9) while it would be from Monday to Thursday during the “even weeks” (2,4,6,8,10).

When you are not studying, you are free to do whatever you want. Quepos and San Isidro have many possibilities, and it is up to you to explore them. Kulturstudier will arrange some optional activities and we can provide contacts for volunteer work. You will get more information about these things during the program. Besides, you should explore Costa Rica on your own or with other students during the weekends. We recommend you to not travel alone or when it is dark. We ask you kindly to write to the local staff without exception if you leave town and stay overnight, to be prepared in any case of emergency. The evenings and weekends are free for students to organize as they like. There will be some cultural activities a few evenings in San Isidro, but these are optional. Long weekends are provided every other week of the program for students to travel if they wish to explore other areas of Costa Rica.

### **Organized weekend excursions**

There will be two organized weekend trips while you are in Costa Rica:

Week 2: Weekend trip from Quepos to Montezuma/ Santa Teresa (Thu-Sun).

Week 6: Weekend trip from Turrialba to Puerto Viejo in the Caribbean coast (Thu-Sun).

There will be Scandinavian students from other program participating in these trips. A Kulturstudier trip leader will be on duty at the destination in case of any health or safety issue. KS will organize the transport (price covered by the student) and students must arrange their accommodation during these social excursions.

## **9- VISA**

As a Scandinavian citizen you will automatically get a 90-days tourist VISA when you arrive in Costa Rica. It is important that you are able to show an outbound ticket (bus or airplane) to leave Costa Rica within 90 days.

## **10- Money and costs of living**

In the center of San Isidro or Quepos, you can find several ATMs where you can take out both Colones and dollars. **1 NOK = 50 CRC (Costa Rican Colon). 1 USD = 550 CRC.** You can use both US Dollars and Costa Rican colones in touristic places in Costa Rica, although Colones is

the most commonly used currency and of course accepted in any situation. If you travel to rural areas, as well as some little beach towns that are less touristy, it is important to be aware that there might not be any ATM. In the big supermarkets it is usually possible to pay with a card, while small stores - especially in villages - often only accept cash. Normally in Manuel Antonio you can use dollars everywhere, but in San Isidro you must have colones available.

The cost of living is slightly higher in coastal areas in Costa Rica. It is possible to buy a meal for \$10-20 at tourist restaurants and down to \$7-8 at local places in town. In San Isidro the cost of living is around 15-30% cheaper. Transport is relatively cheap in Costa Rica, for example local public busses cost around \$1-2. Taxis or UBER cost approximately \$2 per KM.

## 11- Internet and phones

We have wireless Internet at all student houses and homestays, and it is also available at the UISIL campus. Be aware that the quality of the connection may vary (and sometimes be absent), depending on how many are connected. It is not allowed to download big files, like movies, as this slows down the Internet for everyone else. We strongly recommend you to bring a laptop if you have one. We advise you to buy a high-quality adapter before you leave Norway or Europe. The electricity can be quite unstable in Costa Rica (especially in the rainy season), and you should not leave your computer charging longer than necessary.

In Costa Rica many populated areas have access to the internet, though in small towns it isn't quite as common to have access to a high speed internet, and in some far or isolated areas it just doesn't exist. It is not a guarantee that in your homestay you will have a high running internet. Anyways, you can always get a SIM card with the speed you desire.

You can buy a local sim-card for your smartphone or a cheap cell-phone with a local sim-card, remember to ask them to activate the sim-card at the store. You need to buy prepaid minutes and internet at kiosks or stores or by app (*Kölbi*), you will find these around town. We recommend all students to buy sim-cards from the same phone company as it is cheaper to call each other. In our experience *Kölbi* is the company with the best signal.

Whats' app is the most used app for communication in Costa Rica, more than traditional messages and phone-calls.

Many parents want to call Kulturstudier in Oslo within a couple of days of your arrival to Costa Rica - It is important for you to call your family and tell them that your journey went well and that you are in good shape. **Call or write home as soon as you arrive!**

## **12- Communication with Kulturstudier**

We appreciate suggestions from students during the semester. It is important for us to make sure that suggestions and grievances are communicated to us while there is still time to make changes. This includes issues with the academic program, housing, and other aspects of the program and the welfare of the students.

### ***Compulsory student & staff meetings***

Every week, all students and staff gather for an information meeting. The purpose is to share information and to discuss problems and opportunities. These meetings are compulsory. If for some reason you cannot attend, you are responsible for obtaining the information from fellow students.

### ***Talk to us***

If you need help with something, it is important that you let us know. Do not take for granted that your suffering is obvious and visible to everyone. Use your voice and contact us.

### ***Student representatives***

During the second- or third- week, at the assembly meeting we will ask the students to elect their representatives both for the houses and class representatives. The representatives typically meet with members of staff once every second week. It is their job to be an intermediary between students and staff, to help make sure that staff is able to give attention to problems or opportunities that have been overlooked. The student house representatives have meetings with the field manager on a regular basis and class representatives are the link between the seminar leader and the students. For specific occasions, trips, happenings, etc, separate committees can be formed. These will be responsible for planning and carrying out the activities.

### ***Final evaluation form***

At the end of the semester you will receive an extensive evaluation form where you are expected to give us your feedback and help us improve.

### ***Complaints***

If you have any problems and feel that you are not getting a serious response, you are welcome to file a complaint by contacting Kulturstudier in Oslo. Preferably in time to make us able to act on your issues. Read more here: [Document on feedback](#)

## **13- Local knowledge**



Efficiency is different here in Costa Rica than back home, so being patient is very important! Communication problems often create misunderstandings and rumors. Even those of us that have been living in Latin-America for a long time must accept that things do not go as smoothly as we wish. To get frustrated, angry, and stressed and to show immediate irritation will make the situation more difficult and might damage your relationship with other people.

In Costa Rica there are other norms and values when it comes to clothing. To maintain a respectful relationship with the local population, it is important that we analyze and think about what might be considered as inappropriate. As a general rule, the more decent you are dressed and the better behaved you are, the more respect and less negative attention you will receive. In other words: The respect you get is connected to the respect you show. When we have classes at UISIL Campus, the general custom is to wear long pants/skirts and t-shirt/top, though this is not a requirement. We advise you to observe how the Costa Ricans dress, and then try to adapt to this.

A Scandinavian student will attract more attention in San Isidro than in Stavanger or Bergen. This means that people you do not know might want to know about who you are and if you are a part of the Norwegian group. To get the acceptance of a group of students and to integrate them in the local society, it is important to think about what kind of signals we give. Each student serves as a representative for the group and can influence how Costa Ricans view the entire group.

It is also important to be aware of gender roles being different in Costa Rica than at home. This can be a source of misunderstandings, especially for Scandinavian girls. Girls can get a lot of attention from men. Though for many people it is viewed as a part of Latin-American culture, this might cause you to feel uncomfortable and you should be prepared and find a strategy to deal with these encounters that will be understood by the local population. Men will also find examples of gender differences.

## **14- General routines**

You will travel to Costa Rica as students, not as charter tourists. It is up to you to choose what you want to do during your spare time, and it is up to you to choose what you want to make of your stay. We do recommend that you begin your daily routines as fast as possible in order to get used to life in San Isidro. Even though you will be studying in another continent, there are many routines and activities you can continue with. The most important thing is to get started with your studies, reading, and to remember the study habits you had at home. We also recommend you to bring running shoes and a gym bag in order to take advantage of some of the training opportunities you can find.

Students can fill their free time with traveling, in the cinema, voluntary work, course activities

and sports. Of course, the main attraction near Manuel Antonio are beaches while there are several mountains around San Isidro that you can hike. As autumn is rainy season in Costa Rica, it is important to have rain clothes, rain shoes / boots available, especially during the day excursions and the overnight field trip. During the dry season you need to have rubber boots and rain jacket for the overnight field trip as well, since in the southern part of Costa Rica and especially Longo Mai there might be rainy weather as well.

## **15- Climate**

Costa Rica has a range of microclimates. On the Pacific side (where San Isidro is located), *invierno* (winter), or rainy season, runs from May to November, *Verano* (summer), or dry season, is December to April. Especially for the Autumn semester you should bring a light rain jacket and proper shoes.

Mold (mugg) is a common problem in the tropics, especially in the rainy season. Clothes, books, shoes etc. can easily get damaged if they are kept many days in closed compartments, such as in your suitcase, a drawer, or in a closed cabinet, without much ventilation. The way to prevent mold is by ventilation. Keep windows, drawers, closets and doors open as much as possible. Keeping the fan on helps. As well you might check on your stored belongings once in a while to take them out into the sun.

## **Flora y fauna**

Costa Rica has a wealth of natural diversity and wildlife, making it one of the most biodiverse places on earth. Costa Rica is home to around 5% of the world's biodiversity. What this means is that the number of wildlife species per 10,000 sq km here is 615. This fact alone shows the spectacular natural splendor that Costa Rica has to offer. That means as well that you should get prepared for mosquito parties and different types of flowers, trees, insects and animals during these next months. Costa Rica is well known for its flora and fauna diversity. From National parks to your own home, you might find new species you have never seen before. It is always a good idea to keep mosquito repellent at hand. As well, be prepared to encounter cockroaches or ants inside of buildings once in a while. Some people find it useful to bring a travel mosquito net for their journeys.

## **16- Ethical conduct**

In Kulturstudier there is no tolerance for harassment or bullying. We also expect everyone to avoid using swearing and offensive language in their communication with each other.

Harassment also includes sexual harassment from staff towards students. If you experience sexual harassment from Kulturstudier/UISIL staff or lecturers you should report to

[rune@kulturstudier.org](mailto:rune@kulturstudier.org), which will be treated confidentially. Staff and teachers are informed that sexual attention towards students is strictly prohibited. We expect staff and students to socialize together, but drunkenness or drugs are not accepted. Neither is drunk driving.

## **17- Safety and sexual harassment**

As in any other place in the world, you should take safety precautions. Poverty and inequality remain the main concerns on this side of the world. That means you have to take care of yourself and your belongings when you go out. This does not mean that you can not go to the supermarket or beach by yourself, but you always have to stay attentive. Especially being a tourist, people know that you have more money than they do. So be conscious about how much money and valuable items you take with you when leaving the house. Regardless of your gender, you should not walk the street by yourself at night. At parties take good care of your drinks, since date rape drugs are used in Costa Rica as they are in European countries. Unfortunately machismo, or male chauvinism/sexism is very present in Costa Rica. Wolf whistles, piropos (come-ons or pick-up lines) are common and men may be very invasive and insistent to catch your attention, especially (but certainly not exclusively) in the direction of younger foreign women living in Costa Rica.

San Isidro and Manuel Antonio are said to be a safe places in Costa Rica. It is a good idea to avoid Quepos downtown at night. Anyways, we need you to take our advice into account:

- It is not safe, especially not for girls, to walk alone during the night.
- We always recommend taking a taxi after dark!
- Never visit a place alone at night if you are drunk!
- Try to take transportation home together.
- Do not accept drinks from strangers.
- Always keep an eye on your belongings and do not walk around with a lot of cash or valuables.
- Even in your home it is best to keep your things in good order and not leave your valuables, cameras etc. out. We trust our employees, but we do not want to cause temptation that they cannot resist. If something disappears it will usually lead to an awkward situation with accusations, arguments etc.
- Do not trespass private property! We are not in the United States of America, but it is certainly dangerous to enter people's property without permission. As well, people often have dogs to protect their houses.

Drinking and driving is against the law, as anywhere else! Never take a ride with someone who has been drinking. If you are caught drunk driving or taking a ride with someone who has been

drinking, this is considered as highly irresponsible behaviour and might be a reason for expulsion from the program.

You should not carry around your passport, but you should always keep a copy of the photo page in your wallet. It can be smart to scan important documents such as your passport, insurance papers and flight tickets, and mail this to yourself so that you always have it available if you need it. When you travel on overnight trips you need to bring your passport, as most hotels ask for it during check in, and just in case you get stopped by the police.

## **18- Drugs**

Kulturstudier takes drug consumption very seriously. Not only to fight it, but also to maintain our good reputation. Even though Costa Rica has strict laws concerning the use of drugs, the consumption is common in some parts of the city. Many may see and be offered drugs and might be told that you do not have to worry about the police. This is not true. The local police has a very good control of drug consumption, and if you do not keep away from it, the police might use you as an example. The prisons in Costa Rica are crowded and not very nice. A Scandinavian student there would probably receive a lot of attention both by the media and the Norwegian Embassy in Mexico. In other words: Kulturstudier has **zero** tolerance for the use of drugs among our students, and our immediate and only action is to expel you from the program!

## **19- Health**

COVID-19: Here you can find the latest information for entrance to Costa Rica:  
[www.visitcostarica.com/en/costa-rica/planning-your-trip/entry-requirements](http://www.visitcostarica.com/en/costa-rica/planning-your-trip/entry-requirements)

In Costa Rica as per now there are no restrictions due to the virus. It is not mandatory to wear masks inside some public spaces.

### **Insurance**

If you are insured with *Norwegian Europeiske* you have access to counseling for health issues by phone +47 21 49 24 01.

### **Basic health**

Generally, it is safe to eat out in San Isidro, but be careful with salad, uncooked vegetables and meat when eating in certain places, especially in the street. The water in San Isidro is considered drinkable, but we recommend that you buy bottled water, at least the first weeks.

Some of you will get sick in the beginning of your stay. Usually we are talking about annoying, but not very dangerous stomach infections. They can be partly avoided by wise choices about

where and what you eat and drink, and hygiene. It is important to drink a lot of water. We recommend at least 3 liters a day of total fluid intake, because it is easy to get dehydrated. When you have a stomach infection it is smart to drink water mixed with oral rehydration salts (ORS). You can buy it in the pharmacy under the name *Suero oral*. The milk from a green coconut and the sports drink Gatorade/Poweraid may also help. The ORS allows the body to absorb more liquid and minerals even though you may have diarrhea. Therefore, this will help you to get on your feet faster. Hand hygiene is the most important precaution. Wash your hands often and thereby avoid most of the germs.

Every year there are cases of Dengue Fever and Chikungunya in Central America, which is a tropical disease, caused by the virus transmitted through mosquito bites. The symptoms are high fever, fatigue, headache, pain in the eyes, rash and muscle pain. The virus often spreads more during the rainy season (the autumn) and it normally affects the local population. No vaccine exists to prevent this virus, but you can protect yourself by putting on mosquito repellent and using a mosquito net. The mosquitos are most active during sunrise and sunset, so this is the most important time to put on mosquito repellent and/or wear long-sleeved clothes. If you are worried about having Dengue Fever you should see a doctor right away.

Malaria is not considered a problem in Costa Rica, and it is therefore not common for the local population or visitors to use malaria prevention pills. Some students that have planned to visit malaria-contaminated areas may have to take these pills. It is up to each one of you to choose if you want to take these pills but be aware of the side effects. Consult a doctor before you leave home and do research for the specific areas you may want to travel.

Roommates have a certain responsibility to show some extra care when one of you is sick. This means for example to help your roommate to get to the doctor, help with food and to help buy medicine. If you can't do it yourself, we would like your roommate to inform the staff so that we can follow up. **It is important that the staff knows about your condition so they can help you and update your family if they get phone calls from home.** Normal practice for the clinics and doctors in San Isidro is that the patient pays for their consultations/stay upon leaving and after making a claim with the insurance company that will pay them back. The insurance company (Europeiske) will, in any serious cases, need to be informed about your condition so they can have their own doctors counseling on the treatment-plans.

We will provide a list of doctors and clinics you should use. We usually only get students with minor health problems, but when you are far away from home, it can feel more dramatic than at home. Remember to take care of each other, and to contact the staff if you don't feel safe.

**Yellow fever vaccine.** Costa Rica (and other countries in the region) may ask for proof of yellow fever vaccine if you come from/pass through countries with risks of Yellow Fever. Eg. Panamá, among other Latin American countries are on this list: [List of countries](#)

Have this in mind along with stricter Covid-measures if you plan to go traveling in the region. Keep yourselves updated on the newest information.

## 20- Culture Shock

To stay in a foreign country for a long time is usually a wonderful experience, but you should expect some difficulties during your stay. Most people go through phases characterized by alternating mental ups and downs. This phenomenon is common enough to have its own term, *culture shock*. It may be a good idea to share these experiences with your co-students so you can help each other to see your reactions in a bigger perspective. Culture shock is often divided into 3 phases:

**Tourist phase** - you have just arrived in the country, and everything is new and exciting.

**Sentencing phase - the reaction phase**, you've come across the first "top". What is new and different is not that exciting anymore, so you are more vulnerable to the frustration of the things you are not accustomed to - the language is different, differences in behavior and way of thinking, customs. You may experience feeling tired and sad and less sociable and to have strong homesickness. This may lead to you being less patient and more irritable.

**Reorientation phase** - you start to get used to and accept cultural differences. Instead of criticizing, it is easier to appreciate the differences and understand how to navigate in the new society.

### **Reverse culture shock**

It sounds strange, but after having lived overseas for several months, one can often experience a reverse culture shock when returning home. You have finally begun to get used to life in the host country. When back home, everyday life feels different. Things have changed, or you have been given a new look at things. You may feel that you have difficulties fitting into society again. It is often difficult to share the experiences with family and friends, as they do not really understand what you have experienced. It can be useful to get together with others who have been traveling too and share experiences and personal challenges from time abroad.

***We look forward to seeing you in Costa Rica and wish you good luck with your academic learning and your deep cultural experience!***