



## Costa Rica Health and Safety Guidelines & Policies

### Health Information:

All participants of Common Ground International programs are required to complete the program application which includes student health information. This information is used to assist the program leader and on-site staff and Common Ground International to make any necessary preparations and be advised of any health issues. If there is any further information we should know regarding your health, contact your program representative at Common Ground International.

As a reminder, by signing the Release and Waiver you have authorized Common Ground International staff or its agents to release medical information contained in the application to health care providers and to secure medical treatment on your behalf in the event of emergency medical illness or injury. You have also agreed to accept financial responsibility for the treatment.

### Health Issues & Illnesses While Abroad

You should understand the health conditions in Costa Rica before you leave, and obtain information about appropriate precautionary measures. A couple of tips are especially important while traveling:

- Eat and drink lightly for several days after arrival until your system has had a chance to adjust to changes in climate and food. Adjusting to a new diet often causes mild intestinal upsets or diarrhea. You may want to bring along an anti-diarrhea medication. You should also check on other health issues, such as whether it is safe to drink the local water, and ask your doctor about preventive medication for the common illnesses that can result. If you are very ill, see a doctor.
- Some drugs available by prescription in the US are illegal in other countries. Check the US Department of State [Consular Information Sheets](#) for Costa Rica. If your medication is legal but simply not available in the country you will be visiting, ask your health-care provider to write a letter on office stationery stating the medication has been prescribed for you.
- In most cases, it is not legal or feasible to mail prescriptions from the US overseas. Plan to take enough, in original bottles for your full program.
- If you have a medical condition that is not easily identified (diabetes, epilepsy, severe allergies), you should wear a medic alert bracelet while you are abroad and consider translation. You should also inform Common Ground International, traveling companions, and on-site staff so that they can be prepared in case of an emergency. Be sure to discuss a plan with your physician before you leave home.
- While abroad, avoid injections and blood transfusions to limit any possible exposure to diseases and infections. If an injection is required, make sure that the syringe comes directly from a sealed package. Diabetics are encouraged to bring a sufficient supply of needles and syringes with a prescription or doctor's authorization. Avoid ear piercing and tattooing in country as well.

### Mental Health

The application asks you to disclose any past and current mental health issues and prescription medicines you have taken. It is imperative that Common Ground International staff know this information before you travel. Past or current treatment for psychiatric and mental health conditions does not necessarily preclude you from participating in international programs. By disclosing this information the Common Ground International staff can help you prepare for your experience. International travel is both enormously fulfilling and challenging for all students and can present some additional challenges for students with mental health conditions.

## Staying Safe:

### Sexual Assault and Rape

In the event you, or someone you know, experience sexual harassment or sexual violence while abroad, you are strongly encouraged to seek medical and legal support of resources in country. Seek safety first; then talk to the Common Ground's Onsite coordinator. You will also want to inform your home university study abroad office.

### Transportation

Traffic related accidents are the leading cause of student injuries and deaths while abroad. Learn about overseas road conditions from the State Department's [Road Safety Overseas](#) and by reviewing the specific information about [Costa Rica](#). Heed the advice of your program staff and obey all local pedestrian laws. Check with your home university on student driving policies. They may prohibit student driving while on a university program. Common Ground strongly discourages student driving in Costa Rica.

### Alcohol & Drugs:

Common Ground International's Behavior Contract allows for responsible drinking if you are legally allowed to drink in Costa Rica. Illegal, irresponsible drinking and/or misbehaving while drinking are violations of Common Ground's Behavior Contract.

Common Ground has a no tolerance approach to drug use while abroad. Students using drugs abroad may immediately be removed from the program at their own cost.

If you have questions about the alcohol and drug policy, please call or email Common Ground International.

### When Choosing to Drink or Use Other Drugs in a Foreign Country

- Your consumption of alcohol or another drug, and/or your behavior while under the influence, might lead to a violation of local laws in addition to program and University conduct codes.
- Certain types of alcoholic beverages may be stronger than what you are used to in the United States.
- You are representing yourself but also your program, the U.S., Common Ground International, and your home University. Your actions will reflect either positively or negatively on many people.

### Emergencies:

Any situation or condition that jeopardizes Common Ground International student(s)' physical or mental health, safety, well-being, or program participation and/or requires the intervention of program staff. Such events or occurrences may include,

but are not limited to: civil disturbance, natural disaster, severe or prolonged illness or injury requiring hospitalization, disciplinary action, emotional or behavioral disorders, illegal actions (i.e. drug use), absence from program site, academic probation, etc.

## Notification Procedures

In the case of an emergency, students are instructed to dial 911 for immediate attention by local authorities. Also, contact appropriate on-site staff immediately. Common Ground International staff may contact the person the student has listed as their emergency contact, depending on the situation.

If a family member or friend is contacted by the student about an emergency and it is unclear whether or not the on-site staff is aware of the situation, they should call Common Ground International at (303) 684-5557. This number is answered during business hours.

If it is necessary to contact Common Ground International, please provide as much of the following information as possible:

- your name
- student(s) names
- date & time of occurrence/condition
- description of occurrence/condition
- action taken thus far
- action requested of Officer (if appropriate)
- return contact information

In the event of a political, social, or natural emergency, Common Ground International will be in close contact with the on-site staff and/or US program contact for any study abroad program offered through Common Ground International. The on-site staff will in turn seek advice from the local authorities and the US Consulate or Embassy nearest the program location. Assistance will be managed in coordination with our medical and security insurance provider.

Parents, friends, and family are asked to communicate with Common Ground International staff to allow on-site staff to focus on working with students and local officials.

## Health and Security Insurance

Common Ground International will coordinate with the travel medical and security insurance provider to respond to individual and group emergencies. In rare cases where students are covered by an approved alternative plan, Common Ground International will monitor progress through its partners. Common Ground International will assist students and their families in understanding coverage.

## US Consulates and Embassies

The US State Department's [Bureau of Consular Affairs](#) in Washington, D.C. aids Americans needing emergency assistance. The US State Department's Crisis Emergency Center telephone number in Washington, D.C. is 202.647.5225. Updated recordings on State Department travel advisories are also available at this number.