

# COSTA RICA HIGH SCHOOL IMMERSION

## PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK



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# Costa Rica Spanish Immersion Program Handbook

## Summer 2019



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# Important Contact Information

## UNITED STATES

Common Ground International

PO Box 174

Lafayette, CO 80026

Tel: (303) 684-5557\*

Fax. (303) 684-5558

[info@commongroundinternational.com](mailto:info@commongroundinternational.com)

\*This number also rings to the Common Ground Office in Costa Rica – your family is welcome to leave messages for you at this number. In case of an emergency, please try to reach us on our cell phones. Then you can call the office number (US) and leave a message for us to get back to you at our closest convenience.

## COSTA RICA

Medical or safety emergency: 911

### Program Leaders

Kelsey Ouellette: [kbouellette54@gmail.com](mailto:kbouellette54@gmail.com)

\*cell:

Megan Medeiros: [meganmmedeiros@gmail.com](mailto:meganmmedeiros@gmail.com)

\*cell:

Leslie Foster: [lfoster@commongroundinternational.com](mailto:lfoster@commongroundinternational.com)

\*cell: 8475-6463

\* These are all iPhone numbers, you can iMessage us from a Wi-Fi connection free of charge. If you need to call us from the US you must dial the country and area code 011 (506) followed by the numbers above.

## Lapa Verde Language School

Address: Del Mcdonalds, 100m sur, Santo Domingo de Heredia, Costa Rica

Daniela Leon, General Manager (Spanish only):

[danielapaverde@gmail.com](mailto:danielapaverde@gmail.com)

cell: 8326-9371

### Homestay Family Members:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Homestay Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions to Homestay: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Phone Numbers of students who live near me:

_____	_____
_____	_____

## Summer 2019 Spanish Immersion in Costa Rica!

This Handbook is designed to help you prepare for your experience, and to help you get the most out of it. The Handbook is yours to keep, and while some pages contain questions, we encourage you to use the blank pages to record your thoughts and observations.

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## Programa de Colegio: Itinerario de Inmersión

Junio - Julio 2019 | 2-3-4 semanas

**The most updated version is online**

### Itinerary Key:

- LV= Lapa Verde, our spanish language school
- Mochila = Backpack
- Vestimenta = Clothing

### ¡Cosas que siempre necesitan en su mochila!:

- Botella de agua, librito de CGI (handbook), repelente, \$, cuaderno/lapicero para escuela, chaqueta de lluvia /paraguas, meriendas...

Fecha:	Itinerario:	Apuntes:
Before Program Begins	<p>Make sure you have WhatsApp loaded onto your phone so that you can text CGI if you have any problems on arrival day:  <a href="https://www.whatsapp.com/">https://www.whatsapp.com/</a></p> <p>Kelsey Ouellette +1 (207)-446-2232  Megan Medeiros +1 (601) 447-2943  Leslie Foster +1 (303) 638-9270</p>	
Jueves, 27 Junio Día de llegadas	<p>Houston arrivals: Exit your plane and head to the gate to meet up with Megan and Kelsey!  *Let us know if you'll need to re-check your baggage (non-Southwest flyers)  <a href="#">Refer to Flight Document Here</a>  <u>Group Flight Arrival:</u>  SJO SW 112 @ 7:40 PM  <u>Individual Arrivals:</u>  -Maria Beloreshki--&gt;SJO JetBlue 1695 @ 9:50 am  -Aidan Dresang--&gt; SJO Delta 325 @ 8:08 PM  Noche en Hotel Rosa de America  *Contact your family so they know you arrived safely!</p>	<p><i>Group arriving to Houston and flying together to Costa Rica will eat dinner before the connecting flight in Houston!</i></p>
Viernes, 28 Junio	<p><b>Playa &amp; Parque Nacional Manuel Antonio</b>  8:00 am: Desayuno en Rosa de America  8:45 am: Rompehielos con el grupo  9:00 am: Salir para Manuel Antonio  Almuerzo de camino: El Jardín (Necesita ~\$3.500 colones! Es estilo buffet.)  2:00 pm: Llegamos al hotel Villa Bosque  2:00 - 5:00 pm: Actividades del grupo en</p>	<p><i>Supermercado - buy snacks for long day at park!</i></p>

	<p>la playa en español (Necesitan libritos de CGI) Cena juntos en La Cantina</p>	
Sábado, 29 Junio	<p>7:00 am: Desayuno en hotel &amp; hacer sandwiches for hike! 7:30 am: Tour del Parque Nacional -Hiking, almuerzo, y la playa 3:00 pm: Hotel, piscina, descansar Actividades del librito en grupos pequeños 6:00 pm: Cena juntos en Mar Luna</p>	<p>*Snacks can't be prepackaged: Sandwiches, fruit, etc. is ok!</p> <p>Mochila: Paño, traje de baño, bloqueador, repelente de mosquitos, botella de agua, gorra, meriendas.</p> <p>Vestimenta: ropa de playa / aventura</p>
Domingo, 30 Julio	<p>8:00 am: Desayuno en hotel -Optional surfing lesson! -Group that does not go, will hang out a@ beach! 12:00 pm: Hotel check out Almuerzo en camino at El Jardín (~3.500 colones) *Leer: Host family expectations y hablar 3:00-4:00 pm: Meet host families @ Lapa Verde! Cena y noche con las familias ¡Primera noche con familias hospederas!</p>	<p><b>Register and pay for this optional surf class <a href="#">here</a></b> <b>By June 1st</b></p>
Lunes, 1 Julio	<p>Desayuno con su familia 8:00 am-10:00 am: @ Lapa Verde Language School- Orientation and placement exams -Prevista de la semana: -Actividad del librito -Preparación para el trabajo voluntario 10:00 am-11:30 am: Tour de pie de Santo Domingo *Traigan dinero para comprar meriendas para la semana. Paremos en el supermercado. 11:45- 1:00 pm: Almuerzo juntos</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito de CGI (program handbook), \$ para el almuerzo, y meriendas</p> <p>Vestimenta: Casual</p>

	<p>1:00-5:00 pm: Clases de español  Reunión final del día: Debrief day and look ahead  *Traigan meriendas para almuerzo (la clase de cocina) mañana!  ¡Familias hospederas y cena!</p>	
Martes, 2 Julio	<p>Desayuno con su familia  8:00 am: Meet at puntos de reunión  8:30 am: @ LV- Preparación para el voluntario  -Go over general plan  -Students break into groups and prep stations  -Una práctica de las estaciones  Almuerzo juntos en LV: ¡Clase de cocina!  1:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español  Reunión final del día: Debrief day and look ahead  ¡Familias hospederas y cena!</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, librito de CGI, materiales para el trabajo voluntario, \$ para almuerzo/ meriendas</p> <p>Vestimenta: Casual</p>
Miércoles, 3 Julio	<p>8:00 am: Meet at puntos de reunión  8:30 am: Trabajo voluntario - <b>Campamento LAPA GREEN</b>  Almuerzo juntos  1:00-5:00 pm: Clases de español  Familias hospederas y cena</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito de CGI, \$ para el almuerzo, materials for campamento</p> <p>Vestimenta: ropa escolar/semi-profesional</p>
Jueves, 4 Julio ¡Feliz día de independencia de los EEUU!	<p>8:00 am: Puntos de reunión  9:00 am: Trabajo voluntario - <b>Campamento LAPA GREEN</b>  Almuerzo juntos  1:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español  5:30- 6:30 pm: ¡Clase de baile!  Familias hospederas y cena</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito de CGI (program handbook), \$ para el almuerzo</p> <p>Vestimenta: ropa escolar/semi-profesional</p>

Viernes, 5 Julio	8:00 am: Puntos de reunión 8:30 am: Trabajo voluntario - <b>Campamento LAPA GREEN</b> Almuerzo 1:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español + <u>Graduación de estudiantes de 2</u> <u>semanas</u> 6:00 pm: Partido de fútbol Familias hospederas y cena	Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito de CGI (program handbook), \$ para el almuerzo, ropa deportiva para el partido  Vestimenta: ropa escolar/semi- profesional
Sábado, 6 Julio	¡Mañana libre con su familia! 12:30 am: Puntos de reunión 1:00 pm: Almuerzo 1:00 pm: El Turno o Experiencia cultural: Bus público al mercado central en Heredia centro, para tour del Mercado, Fortín con Dani y crepas  La tarde con familias hospederas	¡NO MOCHILA! -camera, monedas para la tarifa del bus, \$ para el almuerzo  Vestimenta: casual pero NO shorts
Domingo, 7 Julio	9:00 am: Depart for La Fortuna / Arenal Parar en Sarchi Almuerzo & tour en Fábrica de Eloy 2:00 pm: Hotel check-in Rest and relax at hotel ---> check out aguas termales! Cenar juntos en Lava Lounge! *Pack your libritos de CGI on this trip!	<i>2-week participants pack all your        belongings. You can leave your big        bag at Lapa Verde and pack a        weekend bag for excursion</i>  <i>3 and 4-week participants: Pack a        bag for the days we will be in La        Fortuna (so you don't have to carry        your whole suitcase) with all the        essentials.</i>
Lunes, 8 Julio	Desayuno en hotel 8:00 am: Salir para SkyTreK 3-1 tour y almuerzo OPTIONAL 8:00 am-2:00 pm: Canopy, hanging bridges, tram *Non-skytrekkers: Hike with group and hang out at gift shop Almuerzo juntos incluido PM: Actividad del grupo, relajarse en las piscinas del hotel, senderos del hotel, ir al pueblo, etc.! Cena juntos en el hotel	<b>Register and pay for SKYtrek <a href="#">here</a>        by June 1st!</b>  ¡No mochila!  Vestimenta: pantalones, close toed shoes, repelente, bloqueador



Martes, 9 Julio	<p>Desayuno en hotel 8:00 am- 12:00 pm: Hike La Fortuna Catarata (Traigan paño!) Almuerzo juntos en La Parada Regresamos al hotel 3:00- 9:00 pm: Las Aguas Termales Baldi y cena *2 weekers: Write "Letter to myself" en librito</p>	<p>Mochila: paño, bloqueador, repelente, botella de agua, \$ para almuerzo</p> <p>Vestimenta: usa los traje de baños debajo de la ropa</p> <p>Aguas termales: pano, traje de baño, cosas para ducharse, ropa para la cena</p>
Miércoles 10 Julio	<p>Desayuno en hotel Group actividad: Last day our whole group will be together! 11 am: Hotel Check out- Regresan a Santo Domingo Almuerzo en camino 2 weekers stay in Rosa de America w/ Megan &amp; her husband, Ryan 3, 4 weekers return to their host families w/ Kelsey *Vamos a parar en el supermercado para comprar meriendas para la semana. *2 weekers write/give letter to Megan!</p>	<p>Pasan por Lapa Verde si alguien dejó maleta en LV</p>
Jueves, 11 Julio	<p><b>¡Adiós estudiantes de 2 semanas!</b> Ir al aeropuerto con Megan &amp; Ryan : Desayuno con su familia 8:30 am: Puntos de reunión 9:00 am: Lapa Verde 10:00 am: Mercado central de Heredia por bus público C450 12:00 pm: Almuerzo y supermercado 1:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español 5:00-7:00 pm: Noche de películas Familias hospederas y cena</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, librito de CGI, materiales para el trabajo voluntario, \$</p> <p>Vestimenta: Casual</p>
Viernes, 12 Julio	<p>Desayuno con su familia 8:45 am: Puntos de reunión 9:15 am: Meet at iglesia / parque central 10:00 -11:30 am: Toucan Rescue Ranch \$35.00 *Los demás: ¡Mañana libre con su familia! Almuerzo juntos: Pizza en LV</p>	<p><a href="#">Register &amp; Pay for Optional Excursion here!</a> <b>By June 1st!</b></p> <p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, librito de CGI, materiales para el trabajo voluntario, \$, ropa deportiva</p>

	<p>1:00-5:00 pm: Clases de español  5:30-6:30 pm: Partido de fútbol con Vinicio (1.000 cada persona)  Familias hospederas y cena</p>	Vestimenta: Casual
Sábado, 13 Julio	¡Día libre con su familia hospedera!	
Domingo, 14 Julio	<p>Desayuno con su familia  Optional Day Excursion to Isla Tortuga!  5:50 am: Salir del parque central de Santo Domingo  8:30 pm: Regresamos</p>	<p><a href="#">Register &amp; Pay for optional excursion here!</a>  <b>By June 1st!</b></p> <p>Mochila for Isla Tortuga: traje de baño, \$, paño, sandalias, bloqueador, botella, meriendas, repelente, gafas del sol, dinero, gorra, cover up, clean/dry clothes for ride home</p>
Lunes, 15 Julio	<p>Desayuno con su familia  9:00 am: LV- Preparación para el voluntario  -Prevista de la semana  -Preparación para el trabajo voluntario  -Trabajan en grupos  -Actividad de libritos  Almuerzo juntos  1:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español  Reunión de la tarde: Debrief day and look ahead  ¡Familias hospederas y cena!</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, librito de CGI, materiales para el trabajo voluntario, \$</p> <p>Vestimenta: Casual</p>
Martes, 16 julio	<p>Desayuno con su familia  Be in parque by 7:10am!  7:20 am: Bus público (.800 colones for bus)  8:00 -1:00 pm: Trabajo voluntario- Escuela de Kamuk (We will eat school lunch at Kamuk! Bring 3.500 colones.)  1:20 pm: Bus público  2:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español  Reunión de la tarde: Debrief day and look ahead  ¡Familias hospederas y cena!  *3 weekers write "Letter to myself" in librito</p>	<p>*3.500 colones for lunch @ Kamuk</p> <p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito, \$ para el almuerzo</p> <p>Vestimenta: ropa escolar/ semi-profesional</p>

<p>Miércoles, 17 julio</p>	<p>Desayuno con su familia          Be in parque by 7:10am!          7:20 am: Bus público (.800 colones for bus)          8:00 -1:00 pm: Trabajo voluntario- Escuela de Kamuk          Almuerzo juntos cerca de LV          1:20 pm: Bus público          2:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español + <u>Graduación de los estudiantes de 3 semanas</u>          Reunión de la tarde: Debrief day and look ahead          ¡Familias hospederas y cena!</p> <p>*3 weekers give your "Letter to myself" to Kelsey!</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito de CGI (program handbook), \$ para el almuerzo</p> <p>Vestimenta: ropa escolar/semi-profesional</p>
<p>Jueves, 18 julio</p>	<p><u>¡Adiós estudiantes de 3 semanas!</u>          Ir al aeropuerto con Kelsey:</p> <p>¡Mañana libre con su familia!          Almuerzo juntos          1:00- 5:00 pm: Clases de español          Reunión de la tarde: Debrief day and look ahead</p> <p>¡Familias hospederas y cena!</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito de CGI (program handbook), \$ para el almuerzo</p> <p>Vestimenta: Casual</p>
<p>Viernes, 19 julio</p>	<p>Desayuno con su familia          9:00 am: LV - Preparación para La Iguana          *Comprar botas para la finca si no las tienen          12:00 pm: Almuerzo          1:00 – 5:00 pm: Clases de español + <u>Graduación de los estudiantes de 4 semanas</u>          Familias hospederas y cena</p> <p>*Última noche con familia hospedera</p>	<p>Mochila: botella de agua, cuaderno, lapicero, bloqueador, repelente, librito, \$ para el almuerzo y botas</p> <p>Vestimenta: Casual</p> <p>*As you are packing all of your belongings, make sure you have your passport!</p>

<p>Sábado, 20 julio</p>	<p>Desayuno con familias  9:30am: LV - Despedidas de la familia  Salida a la Iguana Chocolate Farm  Almuerzo juntos de camino  2:00 pm: Llegada a la finca, settle in  4:00 pm: Walk through &amp; orientation of the farm, Seguridad + Tour de Cacao (Parte 1)  6:00 pm: Cena en la finca  Noche en la finca la iguana</p> <p>La Iguana Chocolate  Mastatal, Santiago de Puriscal,  10409, San Jose.  Costa Rica</p> <p>Jorge - (506) 8725 8644 (English &amp; Español)  Farm - (506) 2200 0924 (Solo Español)</p>	<p>Mochila: \$ para almuerzo de camino y snacks</p> <p>Vestimenta: Casual, con botas for walk through</p> <p><i>*We will leave big suitcases at Lapa Verde, bring them to the school and take only a smaller bag on this trip.</i></p> <p><i>*We will stop to purchase snacks, there are no supermarkets at the farm.</i></p>
<p>Domingo, 21 julio</p>	<p>7:30 am: Desayuno  8:00 am: Cosechar chocolate y nadar en el río  Almuerzo en la finca  PM: Tour de Cacao (Parte 2)  6:00 pm: Cena en la finca  Noche en la finca</p>	<p>Mochila: Botella de agua, traje de baño, paño, repelente, hiking shoes, bloqueador</p> <p>Vestimenta: Long pants, work shirt, boots, hat. Wear swimsuit under clothes.</p>
<p>Lunes, 22 julio</p>	<p>6:30 am: Desayuno en finca  8:00 am: Trapiche  1:00 pm: Almuerzo  PM: Procesar chocolate en la finca  6:00 pm: Cena en la finca  Noche en la finca</p>	<p>Mochila: Botella de agua, traje de baño, paño, repelente, hiking shoes, bloqueador</p> <p>Vestimenta: Long pants, work shirt, boots, hat.</p>
<p>Martes, 23 julio</p>	<p>7:00 am: Desayuno en finca  9:00 am: Despedidas, comprar chocolate  Return from La Iguana, to Santo Domingo, pick up bags and head to hotel Rosa de America  Quick almuerzo in LV: Pizza! (Need colones)  6:00 pm: Cena en el hotel (Need \$12)</p>	<p><i>¡Última noche de programa!</i></p>

	Noche en Rosa de America  *Write "Letter to myself"!	
Miércoles, 24 julio	Regresan a los EEUU 5:30 am: Airport for chaperoned flight- Southwest # 1203, departs at 8:00 am  Give letters to Megan and Kelsey! :)	

## Common Ground International Immersion Mission Statement

Common Ground International aims to provide its Spanish Immersion Program participants with training and experiences that will help them acquire the Spanish language and learn about the culture and country. The opportunities that we provide will help participants develop their oral and intercultural communication skills, and genuinely experience the culture such that they may effectively communicate with native Spanish speakers in a variety of settings. We also believe that an immersion experience can be a life-changing opportunity that challenges comfort zones, preconceived ideas and stereotypes, breaks down barriers and can result in tremendous personal growth. Our mission is to help participants meet their language goals and cultural understanding as well as experience personal growth in an area of their life through a combination of the following:

- 1.) **Pre-departure preparation:** The objectives for this pre-departure preparation are:
  - To understand what an “immersion” experience entails
  - Learn an overview of the country: geography, time change, currency, food, climate
  - Learn about homestay families: expectations, standards of living, common cultural customs
  - Review Itinerary: day to day details as well as excursion details
  - Learn about the organizations that you will be working with
  - Review behavior contract and emergency contact information
  - Set your goals and expectations for the trip
  
- 2.) **Language and cultural immersion:** The objectives for this component are:
  - Learn and participate in intensive Spanish classes taught by native Spanish speakers
  - Live and INTERACT with a local Costa Rican Family
  - Begin to understand cultural similarities and differences
  - Communicate with Costa Ricans in a variety of settings
  
- 3.) **Service-Learning Projects:** The objectives for this component are:
  - Learn about the populations and the communities that you will be working with
  - Be involved in the planning and coordination of these outreach opportunities
  - Participate in meaningful and relevant service learning projects in communities in Spanish
  - Engage with other Costa Rican adolescents from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds
  
- 4.) **Adventure travel:** The objectives for this component are:
  - To explore a variety of bio-diverse “hot spots” in Costa Rica with a local guide in Spanish
  - Learn about the wildlife, flora and fauna of these habitats in Spanish
  - Stay safe

## What is an immersion program?

By definition, an immersion program is an experience designed to expose you fully to the host language and culture by having you live within it. The completeness of this exposure is aptly illustrated by the metaphor of submerging oneself in water; for better or worse, no part of you remains untouched by the new environment.

By having to complete everything from the most basic daily activities to more complex educational objectives within this context, you realize quickly that language and culture affect every aspect of our lives, and determine many of our reference points of “normal” and “right.” Living and working within someone else’s reference points is at once exciting and disorienting, eye-opening and challenging.

Immersion is uncomfortable at times, and it is by allowing yourself to fully “be” in those difficult moments, as much as the enjoyable moments, that you can bring depth to your experience and learning. As you face personal challenges, it is useful to reflect on why a given situation is stressing you out or rubbing you the wrong way. What part of you is being offended or frustrated? Perhaps it’s your sense of what’s right, what’s logical, what’s safe, what’s important, what’s humane, what’s healthy, what’s funny or what’s fair.

The gift that cultural immersion gives participants is the chance to examine their own assumptions and begin to understand their own perspective by clashing with the parts of them that are so deeply engrained that they’re not even aware of them. If you can begin to see that your own perspective, judgments, and assumptions are just as arbitrary and culturally bound as those of your hosts, you will take the first step in being able to interact with people who are different from you in a way that is respectful, objective and free of judgment. This is because, bit by bit, you will be less inclined to use your own cultural norms as an unconscious measuring stick of the “right” way to live, but instead see them as just one of an infinite number ways to live life. This is the learning that we hope will take place.

### What this program IS:

- An educational experience for you.
- First and foremost, a language / leadership program. It’s a chance to grow as a Spanish speaker by pushing yourself to think and speak in Spanish at all times and grow as a leader in various foreign contexts.
- A chance for you to move outside your comfort zone and understand your own perspective by observing how you react to the host country, culture and language.
- An opportunity for you to share your stories and culture.

### What this program IS NOT:

- An English-speaking vacation in a Spanish speaking country.
- A charity mission, in which you will “save” the poor by offering short-term volunteer work in a vacuum.

## Common Stages of Cultural Adjustment (aka Culture Shock)

Everyone deals with immersion in a new culture differently. However, there are four very common stages of cultural adjustment that many people experience (in their own time). You may experience a few or none of these stages during your time in Costa Rica, but it's helpful to be aware of them:

1. **The Honeymoon -- Initial euphoria and excitement.** In this stage, you feel able to handle anything; your experience may be characterized by:
  - Excitement with new sounds, sights, smells.
  - Intrigue with both similarities and differences between the host culture and your home culture; little differences between life at home and life in your host country (i.e. walking to school, having to go to four different stores to get what you need, etc.) seem charming and enjoyable.
  - Lots of interest in learning, very motivated and cooperative.
  - Eagerness to please, may smile and nod a lot to indicate understanding when really you don't.
  
2. **Culture Shock -- Irritation and hostility.** The novelty of the new culture has worn off. Your feelings in this stage may include:
  - A focus on the differences between your host culture and your home culture.
  - Stereotypes and prejudices surface; you have one frustrating interaction and blame the entire country and culture, rather than the individual.
  - Small differences or problems feel like major catastrophes, and what used to be charming is now just annoying. You become stressed and depressed; your sleep and appetite may be affected.
  - Homesickness and missing your family and friends in the U.S.
  
3. **Gradual Adjustment -- Finding humor and perspective.** In this stage, you decide to make the most of your experience. You may have these reactions:
  - Increased familiarity with (and acceptance of) the host culture, its logic and values.
  - Periodic lows, but more often highs, as adjustment gradually takes place.
  - You start to have a sense of humor about yourself and your mistakes; you recognize that you like some parts of the host culture better than your home culture.
  - A stage of deeper learning about life abroad and questioning of your previously held assumptions about the world.
  
4. **"Feeling at Home"-- Adaptation and Biculturalism.** You now appreciate certain aspects of foreign culture and critique others more objectively. Other reactions at this stage include:
  - You maintain allegiance to your own country, but also feel at home in the "foreign" country.
  - You're no longer negatively affected by differences between the host culture and the U.S.
  - You can move freely between your home culture and your new culture, living and working to your full potential in both.



## The effects of culture shock and how to deal with them

Unmet expectations can trigger discomfort any immersion program. The things that Common Ground participants often comment on are:

- The pace of Monday - Friday and how busy the program is.
- Bed isn't as comfortable as at home.
- Not sleeping well because of the bed and ambient noise.
- Weather is different than expected.
- Food and dietary norms are tough to adjust to.
- It's harder than expected to interact with the host family; not being able to express even simple ideas is isolating and frustrating.

Some of the physical and psychological expressions of cultural stress are<sup>1</sup>:

- Exhaustion, fatigue or changes in your appetite.
- Major concern over small health problems.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs.
- Craving for things from home (food, amenities, etc.) and homesickness.
- Strong desire to interact only with Americans/foreigners.
- Fits of anger and frustration, or alternatively, depression alternating with elation.
- Superior attitude toward host nationals. You find yourself complaining about, and criticizing, everything.
- Feelings of rejection, isolation and loneliness.
- Feeling like a child.

A few strategies for coping with cultural stress:

- **Personal Supports:** Ways of Thinking and Feeling
  - Understand the stages of cultural adjustment.
  - Analyze your situations and reactions.
  - Identify what helps you manage stress.
  - Identify new ways of thinking positively.
  - Investigate real facts.
- **Physical Supports**
  - Eat healthy foods and get plenty of rest
  - Identify any weaknesses (e.g. alcohol abuse, binge eating) and make plans to manage them.

Struggling with the language and culture during immersion doesn't mean something is wrong; it's normal, and if you're not having a hard time at all then you're probably not letting yourself fully "be" in the local culture. In our experience, the best way to deal with these difficulties is to recognize them for what they are – an expected and important part of immersion - and take the most positive approach to either resolving or accepting each situation.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/outbound-students/life-in-a-foreign-culture-tips-for-cultural->

## Traits of Successful International Students and Volunteers

1. **Flexibility:** Although embarking on a trip abroad with realistic and accurate expectations is necessary to ensure professional behavior, you must also expect the unexpected. You may have modified job duties depending on the needs of the organizations with which we're working, and itineraries may shift at the last minute due to local circumstances. The expectation for all of us is that we always remain engaged and attentive, and that we coolly adapt to changing circumstances and demands.
2. **Patience:** The pace of life and work in developing countries is often much slower than what Western volunteers are accustomed to for several reasons. Latin American societies tend to place less value on punctuality, are less project-oriented, and have more limited transit and communication infrastructure than do their Western counterparts. AS our work abroad has taught us program after program, in order to maximize effectiveness and maintain a positive attitude, you should focus on relationships with local community partners and the people that they serve instead of trying to force an agenda. It's best to let things develop at a natural pace.
3. **Openness:** Immersing yourself in a foreign culture is a rare and rewarding opportunity - take advantage of it by welcoming new perspectives on the world. You will be going into an environment where many things will not immediately make sense, so be careful not to jump to conclusions. Respect, tolerance and an open mind are essential to averting unprofessional behavior precipitated by culture shock and ethnocentrism.

*"Volunteers should either have a really open worldview or have a willingness to have their worldview opened. Don't be afraid to acknowledge your prejudices. If you think that you do not have any, then you are pretty naïve."* [http://www.uniteforsight.org/international-volunteering/module4 -\\_ftn3](http://www.uniteforsight.org/international-volunteering/module4 -_ftn3)<sup>2</sup>

4. **Humility:** Traveling to a place with an unfamiliar language, new rules, and a foreign culture will give you the unique opportunity to discover just how little you know. You may often find yourself asking for assistance to complete basic tasks, such as navigating a city or purchasing food. Regardless of your accomplishments or status in your home country, you will be a novice overseas; this is a realization that can be difficult sometimes. Collins and Wendt suggest answering the following Life Experience Assessment questions to help you understand the knowledge and experience of the people you're working with abroad.<sup>6</sup>
  1. What knowledge and skills do the people from this community possess that I do not?
  2. What life experiences do they have which are different from mine?
  3. What are some of the obstacles they have had to overcome in their lives?
  4. What challenges do they face daily that I do not?
  5. What are some of their personal and professional strengths?
  6. What can I learn from them?
5. **Enthusiasm and a positive attitude:** Students on Common Ground's immersion programs each face different circumstances and obstacles with their host families, Spanish learning and volunteer work. We have found that the difference between students who have largely positive versus negative experiences has little to do with the actual challenges they faced, but everything to do with their attitudes.

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Helen Richter, Volunteer, Mennonite Central Committee, Vietnam. Cited in Collins and Wendt, 2003.

## Proyecto #1 - Campamento: Lapa Green

**\*\*Use this space to brainstorm and outline your workshops or activities at your volunteer site\*\***

Be sure to include time needed and materials (whether you can get them in-country or if you must bring them down with you)

### **Specific activity:**

Volunteer site and dates:

Activity that you are in charge of and objectives:

Ice-breakers questions / name games to get to know your group of students:

Key vocabulary, verbs that you need to know in Spanish in order to run your activity:

Line out the specific steps to your game/activity:

Materials needed:

Game plan:





## Orientation Notes: Keep these things in mind...

### Saludos, saludos, saludos!

Don't forget that taking time to greet people warmly is just basic good manners in Costa Rica. Whether you're passing a neighbor on the street, walking into a store, or coming home to your *familia tica*, it's very important to greet people when you first see them. (*Hola, Buenas. ¿Cómo está?* works nicely in any situation.) Don't forget to smile ☺, and with your *familia tica*, a kiss on the cheek (women to women, men to women) or a handshake (men to men) is always appropriate when saying hello and goodbye! Don't be shy!

### Remember that you're a guest.

Once you get settled in Costa Rica, some of the little differences of everyday life may become annoying. Remember that you're a guest here. Try to avoid comparing life in Costa Rica to life in the U.S. After all, you didn't travel all this way for things to be the same! Try to stay open to new experiences of all sorts, especially when you feel frustrated.

### Your plans are going to change.

Things work differently in Costa Rica than they do in the United States. While this is part of what gives Costa Rica its charm, it can be frustrating for North Americans who are used to detailed planning, strict schedules and efficient use of time. Life here is more laid back, and also subject to more changing factors. You will enjoy your time much more if you're able to be flexible, and roll with the changes!

### Usted vs. Tú (and Vos)

You may have learned that in Spanish *Tú* is used in informal situations, or among one's peers, friends and family, while *Usted* is reserved for formal situations and showing respect to someone of a higher age, rank, or position. In general, this is true, but in Costa Rica it's a bit different. Here, *Usted* is used almost exclusively – even among close friends, family members, and when talking to children. You may hear *Tú* slipped into conversation occasionally, but often it's reserved for moments of expressing strong affection (romantic or not). You may also hear *Vos* occasionally – it's not *Vosotros*, but another informal second person pronoun like *Tú*. It has its own set of verb conjugations, which are not crucial for you to learn. While you're in Costa Rica, best to stick with *Usted*.

### Getting Directions

In Costa Rica, 1 block counts as 100 meters. So if you ask someone for directions to the bank, they will likely indicate with their hands, and give an answer like “*sigue recto dos cientos metros, coja a mano derecha ciento cincuenta metros y el banco está a mano izquierda.*” (Go straight two blocks, take a right and go a block and a half and the bank is on the left hand side.)

### Piropos

Females traveling in Costa Rica (or anywhere in Latin America) should be prepared to hear *piropos* when they are out in public. A *piropo* is a suggestive comment, generally made by a man to a woman in passing. These can range from flirtatious compliments to vulgar sexual remarks. Women may also hear catcalls and men making hissing noises at them on the street. While it may be hard to get used to this, it's best not to respond: just keep your eyes ahead, keep walking, and ignore the source of the comment. Generally this behavior is harmless, but it is important to ignore it.

### **Dinero, Plata, Monedas, Efectivo, Pesos, Colones...**

Approximate Exchange Rate: \$1 = \_\_\_\_\_ Colones

Costa Rica has a very cash-based economy, so it's good to always have some *colones* with you, and be familiar with the bills and coins. Also, it's nice to pay with the smallest bill or coin possible, since it might be difficult for some vendors to break larger bills and make change.

### **If you have a problem.**

Living and studying in a new culture comes with a lot of unexpected challenges, which can be stressful and overwhelming. If something comes up during your time in Costa Rica that you can't handle alone, we expect you to discuss it with one of the Program Leaders. They are onsite to make sure you stay safe and have the best experience possible. Don't hesitate to talk to them about any kind of problem or concern you may have.

### **Agua Potable**

It's fine to drink the tap water in Costa Rica. If you have any doubts about the safety of the water in a certain area, just ask.

### **¿Agua caliente? Tal vez...**

You may or may not have hot water in the shower at your homestay. You should ask your *mamá tica* to show you how the shower works. The shower heads in Costa Rica are different from those in the US, and if there is hot water available, you will need to learn how to properly turn it on.

### **Papel Higiénico = Toilet Paper**

Most Costa Rican plumbing isn't designed to handle paper products of ANY kind. So, be sure to throw your toilet paper (and any feminine products) in the wastebasket near the toilet. If you don't see a wastebasket, ask your *mamá tica* if it's okay to flush the paper or not.

### **La Comida = Amor**

In Latin culture, people show their love with food. Your *mamá tica* may serve you far more food than you can eat, and seem concerned if you don't finish it. If this is the case, don't be afraid to say that you like the food but it's *mucho*, and you need *menos*. Also, be honest about the food! If something is served that you really like or dislike, say so! Your *familia tica* wants you to be happy – there will be no hard feelings if you graciously explain that you don't like certain foods.

### **El Cariño = Affection**

Ticos, like most Latinos, are more physically affectionate with each other than North Americans tend to be. You may find your *familia tica* embracing you, sitting close, taking your hand, etc., while you still feel like you barely know them. If this makes you uncomfortable, don't be afraid to speak up and explain that in your culture it's different, and you need a little more space.

### **Tell your *familia* when you're coming and going**

Your *familia tica* will worry about you, regardless of your age. Also, you should ask permission before inviting someone over to your house, and never bring a complete stranger home.

## Costa Rican Menu Items

...what you might find at your local *soda*

### Desayuno

Gallo Pinto (“spotted rooster”) – A mix of rice and beans, usually flavored with bell peppers, onion, garlic, cilantro, and of course, Salsa Lizano

Empanada – A fried half-moon turnover that contains a filling such as cheese, beans, or meat

### Almuerzo/Cena

Casado...de pollo, de pescado, de chuleta, de carne en salsa, vegetariano, etc. – The traditional lunch plate in which you just pick the meat, and it comes accompanied by rice, beans, some kind of salad, fried plantains, and picadillo

Arroz con...pollo, lomito, mariscos, etc. – A plate of seasoned rice mixed with small bits of the meat of your choice, often including diced vegetables or beans as well

Olla de Carne – Traditional beef and root vegetable soup

Sopa Negra – Soup made from the *caldo* (broth) that black beans are cooked in, egg, and seasonings

### Acompañamientos (side dishes)

Picadillo – A mix of diced squash, potatoes, and sometimes ground beef, boiled and seasoned

Maduros – Ripe plantains, usually sliced and browned in oil or baked in the skin

Ensalada verde – A simple cabbage- or lettuce-based salad with tomato and onions

Ensalada rusa – A cold salad of beets, hard-boiled-egg, mayonnaise and seasonings

### Para Tomar

Refrescos/Naturales/Liquidados/Batidos – Natural fruit drinks, like smoothies, made by blending one kind of fruit with your choice of water or milk. Often sugar is added if the fruit is tart. Typical flavors: blackberry, pineapple, cas, papaya, strawberry, guanabana and passion fruit.

### Postres

Tres leches – White cake soaked in a sauce made from whole milk, condensed milk, and evaporated milk, and then iced with a with a fluffy sugar- and egg-based icing

Arroz con leche – A sweet rice pudding, often flavored with cinnamon and raisins.



## Tiquismos / Costarricensismos (common Tico slang & phrases)

a la par – next to	mejenga – casual fútbol game
a medias – to share the cost or go fifty-fifty	menudo – left overs, loose coins/change
a pata – on foot	meter la pata – to put one's foot in it
agüevado – depressed or bored	miche, pleito – fistfight
¿al chile? – seriously?	¡Ni modo! – Cannot do anything about it
baboso, bestia – a stupid person	no darle la gana – to not want to
batear – to guess	no entender ni papa – to not understand anything
brete – work	no es vara – it's not a lie
buena nota – a nice or cool person or thing	¡Ojo! – Be careful!
Buenas – Good morning, good afternoon	palo – a tree
camote – crazy	papi – father or sweetheart
campo – room or space	pasar la brocha – to have an ulterior motive
carajada – thing	pelota de gente – a large group of people
chile - a joke	pepiado/a – to be head over heels in love
chiva, chuso – cool, great	por dicha – luckily, fortunately
choza, chante – house	por si las moscas – if it happens (just in case)
chunche – thing, stuff	pulpería – a small corner grocery store
comerle a alguien – to talk bad about a person	pura vida – perfect, pure life
¿Cómo amaneció? – Good morning! How do you feel this morning?	puros dieces – very well
compa – friend	¡Qué cáscara! – What nerve!
despabilado - to be on top of things	¡Qué rico! – How good (food, feeling, etc.)!
¡Diay! – an interjection, like um, well,	¡Qué tirada! o ¡Qué rollo! – What a mess!
dolor de jupa – headache	rojo – a 1000 colón bill
estar de chicha – to be angry	ruliar – to sleep
estar en la luna – to daydream	sacarse el clavo – to get off one's chest
estar hecho leña – to be in a bad state	¡Salado! – Tough luck! / unlucky
estar legal – to be good, cool, great	se la juega – to know how to manage or handle somethin
fregar – to be broken	ser chineado – to be spoiled
gato – a person with blue, green, light eyes	suave – wait
grosero – rude	tallado – broke (no money)
¡Guacala! – Used to express disgust.	tata – father
güila – kid	teja – A 100 colón coin
hablar paja – to talk nonsense	tener chispa – to be intelligent, on top of it
irsele a la onda – to forget	tuanis – very good
¡Jale! – let's go!	¡Un tirito! o ¡Un toque! – Just a moment!
joder – to bother	¡Upe! – Anybody home?
jugar de vivo – to brag or act cool	vacilar – to have fun
¡Lárguese! – Beat it!	vacilón – Fun
llegar a la hora del burro – to arrive late	vieras – you should have seen
macho/a - a person with light skin	vuelto – change (money) from a transaction
mae/maje – buddy, dude, man...	
media naranja – your perfect mate	

## Dichos = Sayings

¿Qué significan estos dichos comunes?

A mal tiempo, buena cara. = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hay más ojos que hojas. = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pueblo pequeño, infierno grande. = \_\_\_\_\_  
 ¿Qué es la vara? = \_\_\_\_\_

¿Qué dichos has oído en Costa Rica?

¿Qué significan?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### What does your family say?

Has your host family said anything you found surprising, interesting, or confusing?

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## La Cultura Latina/Tica

Now that you've spent some time in Costa Rica, you may be noticing some of the differences between tico culture and your home culture. Below is a list of some fundamental elements of culture found throughout Central and South America.

**Have you seen or experienced these elements of culture in Costa Rica?**

**Give examples from your experience so far.**

*Personalismo* – a very strong emphasis on personal relationships/connections as a basis for building trust and working together in any context (sometimes described as “ritual politeness”). For example, the fact that a doctor would never simply ask a patient what is wrong without first greeting them warmly, inquiring about their general well-being, their family, recent events, etc.

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*Familismo* – a very strong emphasis on the family unit, which takes priority over the individual and serves as his or her support system. For example, the fact that a young person might forego a professional opportunity in favor of staying close to family, or being available to care for grandparents, parents, nieces or nephews, etc.

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*Respeto* – a high regard granted people because of their age or higher position in a hierarchy (granted, not *earned*, as it might be in the U.S.) or because of perceived admirable character traits, like integrity or courage. For example, children are unlikely to challenge parents' viewpoints or talk back to their grandparents.

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## Entrevista de amigo / familiar

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

1. ¿Cuáles son las características buenas de los costarricenses?
  
2. ¿Cuáles son las características no tan buenas de los costarricenses, por lo general?
  
3. ¿Qué planes o esperanzas tiene usted para su vida en 5 años? En 10 años?
  
4. ¿A qué edad piensa usted que vaya a salir de la casa de sus padres, para vivir en otro lado?
  
5. ¿Qué piensa usted de que yo vine a Costa Rica con este grupo de estudiantes?
  
6. ¿Cuáles son las cosas más importantes en su vida ahora?
  
7. ¿Cuáles son dos cosas muy importantes para su futuro?
  
8. ¿Qué es lo mas importante para buena comunicación (por ejemplo cuando habla con alguien)?
  
9. ¿Qué es la mejor cosa que los padres pueden hacer para sus hijos?
  
10. ¿Quiénes son sus héroes, o las personas que más admira, y por qué?
  
11. ¿Cuáles son los problemas más graves que tiene Costa Rica ahora?  
¿Qué deben hacer para resolverlos?
  
12. ¿Cuáles son los problemas más graves que tiene el mundo ahora?

**Cultural Awareness Assignment:** Some questions to get you thinking – and asking!

1. What time do the ticos you talk to typically wake up in the morning?
  
2. What is the most common means of transportation for most of the people you talk to?
  
3. How sensitive is it in Costa Rican culture to talk about a person's weight?
  - How do they comment on it?
  
  - Is it seen as offensive or loving?
  
4. How often do the people you meet use credit cards in a month?
  
5. What is the acceptable distance between two people who are standing and talking?
  
6. What is the typical amount of vacation in Costa Rican culture?
  
7. What is considered a routine work day - including length of day, number of breaks, etc.
  
8. When considering what is important in a lifetime, how important are friends and family?
  - How much time is devoted to friends and family in a day or week here?

## Un poco de introspección

What have been your favorite aspects of Tico life? Least favorite?

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What has been the hardest thing to adjust to? How did you adjust?

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What was the most surprising thing about Tico life/culture?

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In what ways have your Spanish language skills changed?

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Look back at your first impressions of Costa Rica (p.14). Has your perspective changed in the weeks you've been here? How?

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What have learned from your Tico hosts?

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# Coming Home: Returnee Resources

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*  
~T.S. Eliot

Returning home after being immersed in another culture can be just as challenging as it was to go in the first place. People who have spent time abroad often return home **broadened** by their new perspective, and also confused by how to re-integrate themselves back into their “old” life and home country, which they may see through different eyes. It’s not unusual to be bored, **conflicted**, or even depressed upon returning home. You may be **frustrated** that your friends and family just don’t understand, or don’t want to hear about your experience. You may feel **“reverse homesickness”** as aspects of your host culture seem to be slipping away, and struggle with not having an outlet for your new skills. Coming home can be hard.

## **But.**

While your return from Costa Rica marks the end of one (hopefully) great experience, it’s also the necessary **first step** towards what can be a fulfilling and **exciting** way of life. What you choose to do with your experience is up to you, but if you want, you can build on in many ways and continue to **internationalize** your life right here at home. You learned more than just Spanish in Costa Rica. You went outside your comfort zone and immersed yourself in another culture – something few U.S. citizens ever do. If you choose, you can use this as a jumping off point to become a truly global citizen, and enjoy the **challenges** and **rewards** of moving between languages and cultures. We hope that the next few pages will help you process your experience, and explore **possibilities** for the future.



## Back Home – Thinking About Your Experience

Now that you've been back in the U.S. for a few weeks, you may be able to step back and begin to understand your experience more than you could while you were in the middle of it. These questions will help you understand your experience – and how it has affected you - more fully.

What has been the hardest part about coming back to the U.S.? Why do you think that is?

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Look back at your expectations from before the trip - were they met?

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Were you forced to adapt, grow or change in Costa Rica? How?

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Look at the stages of cultural adjustment...Did you experience any of these stages? How?

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Has this experience changed your perspective about yourself and your life? How?

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Has this experience changed your perspective about your culture and your country? How?

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## How to take your experience to the next level...

take the time to...**express yourself!**

- Write a story about your experience and submit it to local newspapers (with photos!).
- Write about your experience for the Common Ground blog: Contact Leslie for details.
- Share your photos and stories from abroad in these study abroad magazines (be sure to check out upcoming photo and writing contests!):

[www.glimpse.org](http://www.glimpse.org) [www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com) [www.abroadview.org](http://www.abroadview.org)

get involved in...**your community**

- Find volunteer opportunities in your area that allow you to speak Spanish and get involved with the Latino community, doing something you enjoy: [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)
- Got an important message to share about your experience abroad? Prepare a presentation for your school, church, or other community organizations.
- Find local people interested in speaking Spanish and Latin culture: [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)

consider the options for...**your education**

- Keep studying Spanish in high school, and you'll be in a great position to study abroad in Latin America or Spain during college. A directory of study abroad programs: [www.studyabroad.com](http://www.studyabroad.com)
- Contact your local university's Spanish or Latin American Studies or International Studies Department to learn about what those majors entail, and how graduates use them.
- Ever thought of doing your entire undergraduate degree abroad? Don't forget to include foreign universities in your college search. Learn about colleges that offer degree programs in English: [www.collegeabroad.com](http://www.collegeabroad.com)

learn about the possibilities for...**your career**

- Contact your local Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to see if they know of any primarily Hispanic companies that take interns.
- Learn about bilingual careers: <http://www.omniglot.com/language/careers.htm>
- Explore resources for international careers & opportunities: <http://www.intlcareers.org/>

make a difference in...**your world**

- One of the best things you can do as a global citizen is stay informed. Use resources like Google News to search news sources from all over the world: <http://news.google.com/nwshp>
- Consider hosting an exchange student through the American Field Service: [www.afs.org](http://www.afs.org)
- Explore volunteer and other opportunities abroad: [www.goabroad.com](http://www.goabroad.com)

## Keep in touch!

Now that you're back in the U.S., we hope you'll keep in touch with Common Ground – and each other! Don't forget that your program leaders' email addresses are in the front of this Handbook. Here's where else you can find us:

Facebook: Common Ground International

\*Keep an eye out for our Summer 2019 Immersion Photo Album!

Twitter: CommonGroundCO

Common Ground Blog: <http://commongroundinternational.com/blog/>

Instagram:

## Become an Immersion Program Representative!

If you enjoyed the Immersion Program and would like to help other students learn about it, there are two ways you can get involved and get paid for it!

1) Let us give your contact information to prospective students who have questions. If you would like other students who are interested in the program to contact you so they can ask you about your experience, make sure you give us the appropriate contact information on your program evaluation. If you didn't, just email us at [info@commongroundinternational.com](mailto:info@commongroundinternational.com).

2) Get paid to spread the word! If you enjoyed this program and would you like to help us present next year's High School Immersion Program to Spanish students in your area, email me today. We would love your help! If you're interested in talking about your experience during our classroom presentations – or having us present in your school, make sure you mark this option on your program evaluation. If you didn't, just email us at [info@commongroundinternational.com](mailto:info@commongroundinternational.com).

# Mapa de Santo Domingo, Heredia

