



ICDS Immigration Advising and Paperwork for Student Permits (Visas)

It is necessary to have a valid passport (at least six months before expiration date) to travel to Costa Rica. **NO ENTRY VISA IS NEEDED** for American and Canadian students --as well as for those of a few other nationalities-- only a valid passport.

UPON ARRIVAL, IMMIGRATION WILL GRANT A THREE-MONTH TOURIST PERMIT(visa). THIS TOURIST VISA MUST BE CHANGED FOR A SPECIAL PERMIT FOR STUDENTS THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE AT ULATINA. STUDENTS ON A TOURIST PERMIT --EVEN WHEN EXTENDED BY GOING OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND COMING BACK IN AFTER 72 HOURS-- WILL BE CONSIDERED ILLEGAL AND WILL BE SUBJECT TO DEPORTATION IF THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE SO DECIDES.

IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOU TO CALL THE CONSULATE BEFORE STARTING THE VISA PROCESS. ALL CONSULATES WORK DIFFERENTLY; THUS, YOU MUST BE COMPLETELY SURE OF THE EXACT REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES OF THE CONSULATE YOU WILL VISIT!

PLEASE READ ON AND MAKE SURE TO FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS TO BRING THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS TO OBTAIN YOUR STUDENT PERMIT ONCE THE PROGRAM BEGINS. IT WILL BE A PROBLEM TO GET HERE WITHOUT THOSE DOCUMENTS!!

ATTENTION! >> The revised Costa Rican Immigration Law, in effect since March 1st, 2010, requires **YOU TO PROVIDE the following documents** in order to obtain a student permit :

1. **Birth certificate** issued in the state or country of origin of the student
2. **Criminal history record** (or a certification as to the absence of one) issued in the state/country where the student has resided during the past three years. In the case of being a resident of a country instead of a citizen thereof, the student should also show documents to demonstrate his legal resident status in that country.

Both these documents must be notarized by the respective authorities, and they should be further authenticated by the signature of the designated consular officer of the nearest Costa Rican Consulate. For information on CR Consulates, please check <http://www.costarica-embassy.org/consular/consulates/default.htm> .

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS:

1.) Obtaining the Birth Certificate and Criminal History Record

- a. Birth certificate is issued in the state or country of origin of the student
 - Must be an official copy, a copy with a raised seal, or an authenticated copy --every state calls it something different
 - Must be requested from and issued by the state or country the student was born in
- b. Criminal history record is issued in the state/country where the student is a legal resident (i.e., your home state if you still have your driver's license from there). In the



- case of being a resident of a country instead of a citizen thereof, the student should also show documents to demonstrate his legal resident status in that country.
- Check your **State Police** website for contacts in the Criminal History Section. Generally, the process includes visiting your local police station to request a state criminal history check, getting fingerprinted, and paying a small fee.
 - Each state has different procedures so talk to the State Police first

Authentication by Corresponding Secretary of State

- c. The birth certificate must be sent to the Secretary of State of the state you were born in
- d. The criminal history record must be sent to the Secretary of State where you reside

****Every state has a different procedure for this but verify what the procedure is to authenticate your documents. Some offices give you the option to choose between “authentication” or “apostille”. You must choose “authentication” because the Costa Rican government and Immigration does not accept an “apostille”.****

****Depending on the State, there may be some costs involved in the process of obtaining these documents. Please check with your State’s Secretary and Police ahead of time. Also, as these documents may be valid for only a specific length of time, please verify in advance that both documents are valid at least through September 2011****

2.) Authentication and Issue of Provisional Student Permit by a Costa Rican Consulate

- a. Inform ICDS that you already have your birth certificate and police history record with due authentications by the Secretary of State Office and ready to be sent to the CR Consulate. With this information, we will e-mail you an official letter from ICDS/ULatina, addressed to the Costa Rican Consulate where you will be sending/bringing your documents and indicating that you have been accepted into ICDS Fall 2011 program and requesting their assistance with your student visa documents so that the process of obtaining a student permit may be completed as required by the Costa Rican Immigration Office.
- b. Take or send your birth certificate and police history record, plus the CRConsulate-specific acceptance letter to the Costa Rican Consulate with jurisdiction over your state --which for Delaware, for example would be Washington D.C.
 - For more information on CR Consulates in the US, check the Costa Rican Embassy website: <http://www.costarica-embassy.org/consular/consulates/default.htm>
 - Call ahead of time and find out whether you will be required to bring in the documents in person or just mail them to the Consulate for authentication. **But ask about how you should proceed first!**
 - CR Consulates **will charge \$40 per document for consular authentication.** This payment is to be made before sending the documents in and through a deposit to a specific account provided by the CR Consulate. If you pay in the US, make sure the CR Consulate includes some kind of proof of payment on the documents themselves



(a stamp or ticket) so that you would not have to pay them here for the authentication by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- c. The Consulate will authenticate the documents (i.e., say they are from a legitimate US State source with a valid Secretary of State signature) and issue a provisional student permit that will allow you to enter the country on a temporary student status (**call beforehand to inquire about this!! Some consulates require you to go there personally!**), which has to be formalized later into a temporary permit of stay for students (student visa). This permit may be either a stamp on your passport or a separate note stapled to it by the CR Consulate. Payment of a \$30 fee is required with this step, and you will be given the authenticated documents back to bring with you for further paperwork during the first couple of weeks of the program.

Attention!! If for any reason the Costa Rican Consulate does not issue the temporary student permit and limits its function to the authentication of your documents --giving or sending them back to you to bring along when you come to Costa Rica-- you will be required to cover an additional \$200 change of status fee, (from a tourist status to a student's one).

The Following Steps are Carried Out in Costa Rica After the Student Arrives

3.) Translation Into Spanish (carried out once in Costa Rica):

- a. Documents from the first three steps must be translated into Spanish
 - This is carried out by an official Costa Rican Foreign Ministry translator through the International Office at ULatina
 - **This costs \$100, as an average –being the student's responsibility.**

4.) Fingerprints (carried out once in Costa Rica):

- a. The student must go to the Costa Rican Ministry of Security to get their fingerprints taken
 - The student needs two passport-size color photos of themselves, which they can bring or obtain here before fingerprints are taken (FYI: the next steps require additional pictures, so you should bring at least **6 passport size pictures**)

5.) Authentication by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (carried out once in Costa Rica):

- a. The birth certificate and criminal history record, along with their Spanish translation, must be further authenticated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - This step can be carried out with the assistance of ICDS and the International Office at ULatina
 - **The cost (currently \$40 per each document) is the student's responsibility, and it is to be paid at the CR Consulate in the US or once in Costa Rica (please refer back to Step 3).**

6.) Further Steps and Costs to be Covered in Costa Rica:

- a. You will be required to fill out and sign some forms and eventually hand in your passport to be stamped with the student visa.
 - Please **be prepared to cover an average of \$105 in cash for additional fees and taxes required by the CR Immigration Office.**



- Also, if for any reason your provisional student visa was not approved and issued by the Costa Rican Consulate in the US after authentication, and instead, they were mailed back to you to bring them along, you will be required to cover an additional **\$200 change of status fee** (from that of a tourist to a student's one).
- ULatina's International Office and its Student Immigration Affairs Lawyer will guide you through this process and will give you any pertinent instructions as you move along.

Additional Information

Students who are citizens of and have passports issued by countries other than the USA may need to obtain an entry or tourist visa at the closest Costa Rican Consulate before entering Costa Rica. **If your nationality is other than American, please contact us as soon as possible so that we may consult with the Costa Rican Immigration Office about any special requirements.**

If you have specific questions regarding visas you can reach the Consulate General of Costa Rica in Washington, D.C. at (202) 234-2945. Additional information on entry and exit requirements may be obtained from the Consular Section of the Embassy of Costa Rica at 2114 S Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, telephone (202) 328-6628, or from a Costa Rican consulate in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Puerto Rico, San Antonio, or San Francisco. The Embassy of Costa Rica also maintains a web site at <http://www.costarica-embassy.org/>

While in Costa Rica, you should carry a copy of your passport (the first page with your photo and personal information, plus the page where the tourist permit was stamped when you entered the country) with you at all times. Only carry your actual passport with you when you want to change money at the bank and whenever you leave the country. We strongly recommend that you leave a copy of your passport with ICDS and the Office of International Cooperation, as well as one at home.

In cases of lost or stolen American passports while in Costa Rica, US citizens need to reapply at the US Consulate in San José, located on Carretera a Pavas, in front of the Centro Commercial (tel. 220-3939, 519-2000, fax 220-2305). A birth certificate and some picture I.D. to prove identity and citizenship will be required. (Check with ICDS for procedure and contacts for other nationalities).