

*Pre-departure program update.*

# Costa Rica Youth Exchange 2021



**Tilaran to Monteverde, 16 days along the hummingbird highway.**

**Fresh air**, friendly people, pura vida -Costa Rica!

Let's get one thing straight - summer is for exploring, having fun, being yourself - with no expectations.

Think of our exchange like going back in time. It's the 1950's, you're visiting a cousin you've never met, who still lives in the old mountain village where your Grandma was born. After so many years, the family lost touch and now you're starting on an adventure to reconnect family. You're a bit nervous, not knowing the language or what to expect but you're going anyway, it's just too important not to.

That is our story too, we are all connected whether we think we are or not. Our exchange is hosted in the lush tropical mountains of Guanacaste separating the Pacific from the Caribbean. Tilaran at its heart is a diverse immigrant community that started in the early 1900's. Today it has a youthful and energetic spirit that embraces an open-border mindset

You too might feel nervous about living in our community but within a few days we hope you will feel like you have found your second home. Our exchange is focused on local engagement with youth in the community. As villages recover from the Covid-19 virus, we coordinate outdoor events that bring youth together. We have local Youth Ambassadors to support activities in and around the 5 villages of Tilaran . Unlike a tour program, you will enjoy daily life as a local teen, absorbing and experiencing the relaxed pace of rural Costa Rica.

### **We don't like to hurry**

Without hurry, enjoy meeting people and trying out new things, take time to write a journal, stroll along watching feeding toucans, take an art class, or join a pick-up game of handball. Tilaran, is easy to mingle and gentle on the spirit. We don't hold to a "formal itinerary", we choose instead to slow down-summer by highlighting people's interactions over schedules. It's the friendships that create fluency and open doors to greater adventures. From swim adventures to local dance encounters - always be ready to jump in.









**The “hummingbird highway” follows the small villages along the Tilaran Cordillero range and ends in the cloud-forest community of Monteverde.**

**First 8 days** in the village communities of Tilaran, Quebrada Grande, Silencio, Rio Chiquito, Tronadora. Youth leaders and local teachers will help facilitate student activities within each community. We will coordinate fun excursions along the way, including farms, waterfalls, lazy river adventures and more. We will stay at our quaint hotel in central Tilaran. Tilaran provides lots of local engagement to practice Spanish. The villages are linked by small rural roads with spectacular vistas, each town is only 10 minutes by car. The entire Hummingbird highway is only a 90 minute drive, but includes different ecosystems and different farming cultures from honey and milk to coffee and cacao.







### **Humming-bird Highway to Monteverde.**

**Our second 8 days-** will take us higher into the Santa Elena and Monteverde cloud-forest communities. Our “Hummingbird Highway” ends at Monteverde Lodge where hummingbirds abound. From our Eco-lodge in the rainforest we will participate in biodiversity projects and explore this wild lush canopy, home to many unique species of wildlife and fauna. Nights will require flashlights, raincoats and sweaters as the best hikes happen in the evening. The Monteverde Reserve staff will organize hands-on activities that contribute to the mission of rainforest restoration. Youth programs sponsored by Santa Elena Reserve will give visiting students a glimpse into the lives of young people who live in and around the two protected cloud forests. Part of the Monteverde experience is to embrace the collective spirit of these small communities - walking, working with our hands and enjoying the rich variety of fresh local foods is what makes Monteverde one of the healthiest places on the planet.





### **Where health and wellness is 100% natural.**

Tilaran is located in the Guanacaste region of Costa Rica, often mentioned as one of the three healthiest regions in the world. Adopt the local lifestyle and you too might be an active centenarian. Secrets of long life in Guanacaste, Costa Rica

- Move naturally. Do physical work. Walk don't hurry.
- Balanced work with community needs.
- A connection to nature keeps stress away.
- Eat a good lunch, take a siesta, enjoy a light dinner.
- Drink mineral-rich water.
- Focus on family events.
- Maintain neighborhood social networks.
- Have faith
- Get some sun (sensibly)



### **Tilaran essentials -**

Gateway to Lake Arenal and Monteverde, Tilaran is a charming town that lies in the northeastern regions of Guanacaste province, close to the border of Alajuela. Located along the Pan American Highway some 4 km from Lake Arenal, Tilaran is now fast becoming a key location for adventures in and around the lake area. A quaint little town 22 km from Canas, Tilaran is also a major farming zone for, peanuts and macadamia nuts in the region as well as for cattle and horse ranching.



## Off the Beaten Path



The traffic here is unhurried and the streets and houses in town are always clean. Accommodations here are ideal for those traveling on a budget, and there are plenty of activities to engage in when you are here. Often referred to as one of the country's undiscovered gems, Tilaran is a great place for individuals and families to have a nice and tranquil vacation. The center of town is where most of the hotels, restaurants, and lodging options are located, while nearby is the largest church in Guanacaste, the Cathedral Church.

**Tilaran Weather Conditions:** Tilaran is approximately 1400 ft higher than the hot/humid lowlands – the elevation provides very comfortable temperatures. Tilaran will be somewhat cooler and wetter. The average temperature is 75/85 days with 64/71 nights. Having a sweater, a few long sleeve shirts and pants provide extra warmth on windy evenings. Mornings tend to be misty, with afternoon sunshine. The Green season in the tropics includes warm days with occasional showers. Having a good rain jacket, waterproof day bag and good footwear: hiking sandals or light boots.

### **Monteverde Weather (a bit cooler than Tilaran)**

Temperatures range from 50 F with strong wind and mist, to 80 F and sunny. The record low for Monteverde is 45 F, and it is rarely warmer than 86 F. Rainy season lasts from May to November, as a rule. The rainiest months are September and October, with an average yearly rainfall of over three meters (that's nine feet of rain!). December to February is transitional season, with winds and mist. Dry season is February to May.

## Packing Recommendations

**Clothing:** Casual clothes are the norm in Tilaran/ Monteverde. (see photos for typical clothes) wear jeans or khakis with t-shirts or sweaters. You might like to bring a pair of slacks and a sports shirt (men), or a dress (women) for a special occasion. You also should bring clothes that dry quickly.

**Dress in layers:** You'll want a waterproof layer (jacket, windbreaker, poncho, or raincoat). You will also want fleece, sweaters or sweatshirts. Fleece is especially useful since it is lightweight and dries quickly. Also bring warm sleepwear and lots of socks. Jeans are nice to have, but will take a long time to dry in the rainy season. Bring several sturdy, light-weight pants.

**Footwear:** light hiking boots for slippery trails, crocs/teva sandals for river/waterfalls. Light running shoes for everyday use.

**Back Pack:** Bring a backpack for daily use to hold jackets, change of shoes, poncho, flashlight, your lunch, books, and whatever food you might carry.

### Basic items

- 6 T-shirts (a variety of shirts are sold locally)
- 6 pairs underwear
- 1 or 2 bathing suits
- 1 lightweight sweater
- 2 exercise wear, sports gear (if playing a sport)
- 2 long - sleeved shirt
- 2 pair of slacks
- 2 pairs of shorts
- 1 pair of lightweight running, or court shoes.
- 6 pairs of socks





Be yourself, see the adventure in using Spanish, make connections so you can return again on your own. You have daily support - have any issue, contact me as soon as possible. Ilba Prego



## General safety concerns in Costa Rica

First, be aware – you're in a new environment.

**The streets** -Never be in a hurry to cross the street. Roads are not pedestrian friendly. Using headphones or talking on a cell phone in the street will increase your risk.



**Swimming** -We supervise every swim excursion, we never swim in unknown waters! Never try to swim beyond your capability. No diving or flips. We will follow a strict safety protocol on every swim excursion and we still have plenty of fun.

Other health issues:

1. Mosquitoes – are not an issue in Tilaran, bring repellent for when we visit lower elevation excursions.
2. Dogs/Monkeys: Do not handle dogs, especially street dogs which have many health problems and often are not vaccinated. Monkeys have many germs and frequently bite - avoid monkeys at all cost.
3. Wash your hands often as viruses and bacteria are easily passed in the tropical climate.
4. Sunburn: The tropical sun is very intense and will burn or create fatigue very rapidly. pace yourself, take breaks, consume plenty of water..
5. Water: Bottled water is supplied by your host family.

**Doctor visit:**

Any student not feeling well will be escorted to our family doctor, we supervise the visit. Parents are notified of the visit and prescribed care.

**Foods** -We eat healthy, locally grown food!

Please let us know if you have any foods concerns.

**Crime:** Tilaran is a small, very safe community. Limit what you carry around and do not carry your passport! Be alert, make eye contact and walk with confidence.

**Do not isolate yourself:**

1. Never walk alone: out of town, or at night. 2. Do not get in any vehicle unless approved by Director Ilba Prego. 3. Do not put confidence in someone you've just met. 4. Do not share private information (home location, or schedule )

**Money:** Costa Rica – Colon (currency) Dollars are accepted. Bring bills in small amounts 5-10 -20s. No cost to enter Costa Rica. **Bring** extra -money for snacks, purchasing high school logo shirt, personal shopping.

There are no extra fees for all program events, all meals and lodging and excursions are included in program cost. Including bottled water, laundry and doctor visits.





### **Bring things to Share-**

We encourage you to bring anything that you enjoy sharing with others. That could be a frisbee, soccer ball, guitar, photos of family, favorite music or your favorite recipe from home.

### **Making the most of your trip!**

How to help your son/daughter make the most of their immersion experience! When your son/daughter steps off the plane in Costa Rica, they will begin a journey to discover for themselves a new culture and community. Costa Rica will challenge them, it will challenge them to see the world differently, it will challenge their ability to cope in a foreign language, and it will challenge them to find ways to adapt. Each student responds differently to living in a foreign environment. The most successful students are not the students with the best language skills, the most successful students are those who jump into local culture with both feet and focus their energy on absorbing community life. Just being yourself, interacting in meaningful ways and exploring your surroundings is the easy way to gain real language confidence. We will support you every step of the way!



Ilba with Juan Pablo (Mayor of Tilaran)

**We thank you again for supporting our youth exchange to Tilaran!**

We always encourage your questions - I hope this info has helped you to get excited about joining us this summer. Ilba Prego, Director