

Furman University Study Away Program: Program Expectations

Program Title: Sustainable Development in Costa Rica

Locations: Monteverde, San Luis, Veracruz, Costa de Pájaros, Cañas, Nicoya, Playa Grande (Costa Rica)

Dates: May 14-June 1, 2025

Program Description: This course will explore the concept of Sustainable Development in Costa Rica, a country often heralded for its innovative sustainability programs. We will visit several field sites, traveling from Monteverde, a high-altitude rainforest, down to the tropical dry-forest on the coast. In each location, we will explore innovative grassroots sustainable development initiatives, such as participating in agrotourism, learning about beekeeping, visiting a butterfly garden, and hiking along a community trail, among others. At these locations we will learn from community members. We will read about the theory of sustainable development and explore some of the challenges experienced by rural community members who are trying to preserve lands and a traditional way-of-life in the face of global economic forces. Students participating in this program should be comfortable with rustic accommodations such as dorm-style housing without air conditioning and moderate outdoor activities.

Academic, Environmental, Physical & Health Expectations for Participation

Below is a list of academic, environmental and physical expectations and requirements for participation in this study away program. The list captures most, but not all, requirements. If you have questions about the expectations and requirements, please check with the study away office or the program directors. Students requiring a physical or academic accommodation should contact the Student Office for Accessibility Resources (SOAR) no less than 4 months prior to the start date of the program.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS	Frequency Always, Sometimes, Never/ Required or Optional	STUDY AWAY ENVIRONMENT	Frequency Always, Sometimes, Never/ Required or Optional
Course work in a foreign language	Never	Foreign Language Environment	Always, there will be individuals with the group who can translate from Spanish to English when interacting with locals.
Course work in English	Always	Terrain (Mountains, Tropical, Forest, Desert, Hilly, Flat)	Mountains, tropical, hilly, somewhat rugged
Laptop Required	Optional: Bring at your own risk. (At the end of the program there will be time to work remotely to complete assignments before the last day of MayX).	Population: Rural, Urban, Remote, etc.	Rural, sometimes remote.
Smart phone required (videos, photos, blogs)	Always	Environment (high altitude, air pollution, dusty, sandy, humid, dry, hot, cold)	Humid, dusty, hot, we'll be in several zones so pack for variable temperatures
Traditional Classroom	Classes primarily will be held outdoors in an experiential fashion.	Mosquito Borne Risk of Illness	Yes - Dengue, Zika, Chikungunya risk. Bring clothes to protect against bug bites. Bring own bug repellent and apply often.
Group Work	Infrequently	Is tap water safe to drink	Generally safe to drink, but bottled water is recommended.
Academic Assessments (tests, journals, presentations, essays)	reflection, readings, discussions, essay, presentation	Other Risks (natural disasters, crime, pickpocketing, etc.)	Bug bites, crime, occasional flooding which might change the itinerary
Interactions with local residents	Focus is grassroots sustainable development. There will be some opportunities to interact with the community through course activities. Lots of the interactions will be in Spanish.	Field Dress Code	Good pair of boots, breathable long pants for hikes, sun shirt. The Costa Rican culture is more conservative in terms of dress.
Internship/ Volunteer Work	No	Motion Sickness	Mountain driving in buses

PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS	Frequency Always, Sometimes, Never, / Required or Optional
Lifting/Carrying Own Luggage	Being able to carry your own luggage is essential. There may be short stretches where you have to carry your luggage over gravel
Carrying equipment or program supplies	No
Standing 60+ minutes	Lots of the tours will require standing
Ability to walk up one or more flights of stairs (elevators may not be available)	We will be in rural sites that are not fully equipped for tourism which means they probably are not meeting code for accessibility. There may be stairs and no elevators.
Hiking (easy to strenuous; frequency; miles)	A moderate 3 mile hike; service learning that may involve an activity with walking; a farm tour with difficult terrain; generally, expect a fair amount of walking.
Walking 3+ miles per day	Frequently

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS	Frequency Always, Sometimes, Never, / Required or Optional
Host Family	Never
Roommate	Always
Dormitory	Dorm-style accommodations for half the program.
Hotel	Hotel for half of the program
Cell phone signal available	Strong signal in most places for students who have an international calling plan
Internet signal available	Wifi should be available in accommodations. Strong signal in most places for students who have an international calling plan
Refrigerator Access	Not usually, but we can inquire if necessary for medication
Air Conditioning	No air-conditioning in the dormitory and hotels
Laundry	1 time per week

HEALTH & DIET	Frequency Always, Sometimes, Never, / Required or Optional
Vegetarian and Vegan Options Available at all meals	Beans and rice is a staple. Most places should be able to provide vegetarian options. Vegan options might be bland - a vegan might want to bring some snacks.
Food Allergy Accommodations	Most allergies can be accommodated, but students need to let the program directors know well ahead of time.
Group Meals	All meals are included and group-style
Cooking for oneself	Never
Healthcare easily accessible	Healthcare may be located an hour away
Quality of Healthcare	Good healthcare

WATER ACTIVITIES	Frequency Always, Sometimes, Never, / Required or Optional
Swimming	Beach day, swimming optional
Snorkeling	No
Boat, canoes or other water activities	Motor boat tour of mangroves
Sea sickness	Probably not
Other	
Center for Disease Control Traveler Health Recommendations: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/costa-rica	
Prevent mosquito bites to decrease risk of dengue fever, chikungunya virus, zika virus. Be up to date on routine vaccinations including COVID. Obtain chikungunya vaccine. See CDC website for more traveler health guidance.	