

Hello, please read this information carefully.

Thank you very much for choosing our Spanish School. We hope that you will have an excellent experience at ACCE and that you will also enjoy the wonders of our country. At our school you will not only have the opportunity to learn Spanish and the culture, but you will also have the chance to take excursions to many of the most beautiful places in our country.

Information about the airport pick up.

Once you are at the airport customs, they might ask you for a Costa Rica address where you will be staying. If that happens, the address you should give them is:

ACCE Costa Rica
Grecia, Avenida Leon Cortes Castro
50 metros oeste de los bomberos
Contact person: Diego Alvarez Alfaro
Contact phone: (506) 8993 3209

After you have passed through Costa Rican customs, there is only one door that allows you to leave the airport building, please take this door. An identified ACCE employee will be standing outside with a school logo sign (see attachment). He will be the one driving all the students from the airport to the host family. If you do not see him, do not panic, he will be around the airport, but please do not leave the airport. The airport is pretty safe, but we do not want the students to walk around since you could get lost. In case of an emergency, please call Diego Alvarez to his cell phone **(506) 8993 3209** (Fofó's number: **(506) 6226 8505** or write an e – mail to diegoalvareza@me.com) **Please do not pay attention to the people offering transportation or other services at the airport, some are not trustful.**

First of all:

You should bring some dollars for your travels, but do not carry large amounts of money in your wallet or purse. Try to put them in a different place, just in case your wallet or purse get lost. Most places accept dollars, debit or credit cards, otherwise you can exchange money at any bank. Do not exchange money at the airport since the exchange rate is very low. When you arrive, you can also use the ATM and use your debit or credit card to get “colones”. The exchange rate right now is between ¢500 and ¢510 colones per US dollar. The rate for using the ATM depends first of all of the rate that your bank back home will give you. **Before you travel remember to tell your credit card company that you will be using the card in Costa Rica, otherwise they will block your card.** You are better off bringing the necessary for paying the remaining amount due for the classes, plus the money for the excursions and spending money. Leaving out the balance for the classes, a good approximate for the excursions and spending money could be around \$200 US dollars per week; some people spend less some even more, depends on how many excursions you take, how often you go out and how many souvenirs you buy, but that is a good approximate.

Remember that you should pay the remaining amount in cash the first day of class (Monday).

To give you an idea about how much things cost in Costa Rica, here are a¹ couple examples. A lunch can cost you from \$8 to \$10; a bus ticket from Grecia to the capital

San Jose \$2 and to other destinations from \$2 to \$10. A taxi, the first Km is about \$1, always be aware that the taxi driver turns on the taximeter (Maria), they must reset the device before each ride.

Secondly: Here is a list of items you should bring with you:

1. Passport (make a copy of the passport and the stamp you get when you enter Costa Rica, keep it in your wallet and leave the original in a safe place)
2. Sunscreen
3. Insect repellent (not that important - there are not many mosquitoes in Grecia)
4. Spanish / your language Dictionary (not indispensable)
5. Pens / pencils
6. Small backpack
7. A notebook
8. You don't need to bring any special electric plug. The ones we have are compatible.
9. **Applicable only for Social Work Program.** One thing we always ask is if, but only if you have clothing that you do not use anymore or maybe from someone in your family that do not use it anymore, we would appreciate greatly if you could bring it. The reason is because we visit a kid shelter and also another social work relate agencies which really need help with clothing so we would really appreciate if you could bring something, but again, that is only if you have something extra, it is not necessary to buy anything. Thanks!

Thirdly: Here is a list of clothing you need to have with you:

1. Clothing for hot weather (short sleeves, lightweight)
2. Sweater or sweatshirt for the evenings (it can get cool at night)
3. Sandals
4. Walking shoes and socks
5. Beach clothes - bathing suit
6. Towel
7. Raincoat or an umbrella
8. **Applicable only for Social Work or Play Therapy Program.** Very important: when visiting agencies, schools or any organization that is visited by the program, you must wear proper clothing. If the outfit is not adequate, you cannot participate in the activity. Long and loose pants and a formal blouse or a shirt with sleeves are perfect. Low-cut tops are not recommended. Those are rules of the organizations.

Important

- Regarding the host family, we will give you the details when you arrive, **not previously.** Except when there is a special or previously established situation between ACCE and the university of origin.
- There is no need for immunizations when traveling to Costa Rica.

Advice to students at ACCE

Your experiences at ACCE in Grecia, Costa Rica should be one of the best of your

life. You can get the most out of your experience by spending a short time thinking about being on your best behavior with the people you are about to meet.

Here is a list of things that, if you follow and respect, will make your stay perfect:

Security: The town of Grecia is very safe, but you need to be aware of your surroundings at all times, especially at night. Do not leave your belongings anywhere unattended. In Costa Rica, cars do not stop for pedestrians, so please pay extra attention when crossing the street.

The meals: The food in Grecia is very typical of Costa Rica. The fruits and vegetables, rice and beans, meats, chicken and fish are all fresh and are prepared with love and care. Enjoy the experience of new foods.

Staying with a host family: Remember that your breakfast and dinner are included. Lunch, however is not included and if your host mom invites you for lunch at the host family one day, it does not mean that you will be served lunch at the host family every day. Host families sometimes like to offer lunch to the students, specially on the first day of arrival. Also it is important to ask your host family for the meal schedule.

Each family has their own custom when it comes to eating. Usually breakfast and lunch are the main meals, and for dinner something light is served. Remember that you are in a cultural immersion program. Because of this, you must try to adapt into your Tico families customs. If you happen to dislike a specific dish made by your host family, do not ask them to make something especially for you. If you have a food allergy let your host mother know. In Costa Rica, we don't throw away food. Just let it on your plate or ask your host family what to do with it.

Our goal is that our students have an authentic intercultural experience. **This requires a certain level of adaptation from the students.** If you do, you will learn SO much more of the language and the culture. On the contrary, if you expect everything to be the same, or similar, as it is at home, you are closing the door to immersion, a new experience and learning. Remember: The gastronomy is a window to apprehend the new culture!

It is totally forbidden switch home stay families or spend the night in another host family.

Homestay culture: In your host family's home you need to be sensitive to their culture. Act respectfully, and you will be amazed at the fun you will have.

Make sure you let your family know, especially your host mother, when you are going to be late for meals or late coming at night. Always call to let them know your plans.

Also, it is important that, even though your host family will wash your laundry; you

will still be responsible for washing your underwear, since some students or families do not feel comfortable doing it. An important policy for students staying with a host family is that students are not allowed to bring any person to the host family's house. This is for the safety of all the students who are staying with host families. Finally, remember that when you are staying with a Tico host family, you have the extra advantage of being able to practice your Spanish more. Take advantage of this opportunity and practice your Spanish with your host family!

For those who are staying with a host family. **Not** all host families have Internet. This is not a requirement for the host families.

Showers: Most host families have hot water available, but the system we have in Costa Rica is a little different. If you have some trouble with the hot water, please ask your host family to explain you exactly how it works.

Since Costa Rica is a **tropical country**, it is part of the habits to shower daily. Please be considerate since not showering daily might produce unpleasant odors for the people around you. You might put your family and teachers in an uncomfortable situation if you do not shower daily. Please do not stay in the shower for more than 10 minutes.

WiFi: The wireless service name at the school is **ACCE** and the password is **dalespanish2025**. If you have any trouble connecting to the wireless please ask for help.

We also recommend limiting your time in front of the computer or cellphone. Remember that you are in a new country with a new culture, so enjoy this opportunity!

School schedule: The School opens at 7:30 am and closes at 2:00 pm during the regular season and from 7:30 am till 5 :00 pm during high season. Saturdays and Sundays the school is closed.

Activities: You are free to take as many excursions as you desire, but please do not skip classes! Please remember to talk ahead of time to the ACCE staff in case you want to arrange a tour/activity to volcano, beach, canopy, etc.

Departure information: Please, remember when you are getting close to the time for departure from Costa Rica you must confirm your departure time and day at least 2 days before your departure. You need to be at the airport at least two and a half hours before your departure time. Because of this we need to know in advance in order for the school to coordinate all the pick up times for all the students. It is also important to let the school know if you are extending your stay in the country or if you need transportation to any other destination instead of the airport.

The Spanish classes: Each class will have a maximum of 4 students. The classes will include activities, lectures, written exercises, conversation topics and vocabulary. During classes there will also be different topics for conversation and discussion. If you do not like these topics, please let your professor know if you feel uncomfortable. During classes and at all times, try to answer with full answers (do not use “yes” or “no” answers). Do not worry about your pronunciation; you are here to learn. Classes consist of 80% conversation and 20% grammar so you will be talking most of the time.

To reinforce the topics reviewed during classes, the instructors will give you some homework every day for you to practice. Please be responsible with your homework because if you do not complete your homework, you will slow down the others in your group.

It is very important to be punctual for your classes, PLEASE DO NOT SKIP OR BE LATE TO CLASSES! This is rude, not only to the instructors, but also to your fellow classmates.

Everyday there is a short coffee break of 20 minutes. This “merienda” usually includes tropical fruits, a small snack, coffee and juice. If you do not like what is served, you are not obligated to eat it, you are free to bring your own snack. **Do not compromise the school’s staff asking for a special meal.** This break is to relax and clear your mind for a couple of minutes, not to check your mail or leave the building. So again, please be responsible and be back on time for classes.

Additional information:

Ethical Traveler

(Moon Costa Rica Magazine, 2008)

- Travel with a spirit of humility and a genuine desire to meet and talk with local people.
- Be aware of feelings of others. Act respectfully and avoid offensive behavior.
- Cultivate the habit of actively listening and observing rather than, merely hearing and seeing. Avoid the temptation to “know all the answers”.
- Realize that others may have concepts of time, and attitudes that are different – not inferior – to those you inherited from your own culture.
- Instead of looking only for the exotic, discover the richness of another culture and way of life.
- Learn local customs and respect them.
- Remember that you are only one of many visitors. Do not expect special privileges.
- When bargaining with merchants don’t take advantage of the poor. Pay a fair price.
- Keep your promises to people you meet. If you cannot, do not make the promise.
- Spend time each day reflecting on your experiences in order to deepen your understanding. Is your enrichment beneficial for all involved?
- Be aware of why you are traveling in the first place. If you truly want a “home away from home”, why travel?

Culture shock:

Culture shock is one of the situations that most affect and frustrate second language students who face the original cultures of the languages they learn, especially when they are in countries where the second language is spoken and they are not part of that group. Also, when students do not have a broad knowledge of the language and they have not been previously prepared for this. For Miguel Alsina culture shock occurs when someone gets in contact with people from very different cultures and not only there is a misunderstanding of the behavior of others, but also a series of negative emotions arise: distrust, discomfort, anxiety, worry, etc.

The Instituto Cervantes mentions that other authors have defined culture shock as "the loss of the operating capacity for resolution strategies of problems that the individual has developed in his first language, when he tries to apply them to the context of the new culture."

How to avoid culture shock?

- Open your mind; eliminate value judgments and prejudices you have about the new culture.
- Be conscious that being different does not mean you are better or worse. Do not be ethnocentric.
- Learn about the new culture and show interest in it.
- Neither show off about your culture nor denigrate others.
- Do not try to change something about the new culture in order to make it similar to your own culture.
- Get to know the other culture as it is.
- Listen, observe, taste, touch and smell everything new that the new culture offers to you. Then, think, reinterpret, be flexible and adapt. Adaptability is an essential quality for evolution.
- Remember that the better you get acquainted with the new culture, the faster and better you will learn the second language.

Ps. Please confirm that you received this message. Download this document to your phone; at the end there is a map of the city of Grecia.

Also, if you have not sent us the details of your flights, please use the following format:

Arrival information.

Name: _____
Date: _____
Arrival time: _____
Flight number: _____
Airline: _____

Departure information

Name: _____
Date: _____
Departure time: _____
Flight number: _____
Airline: _____

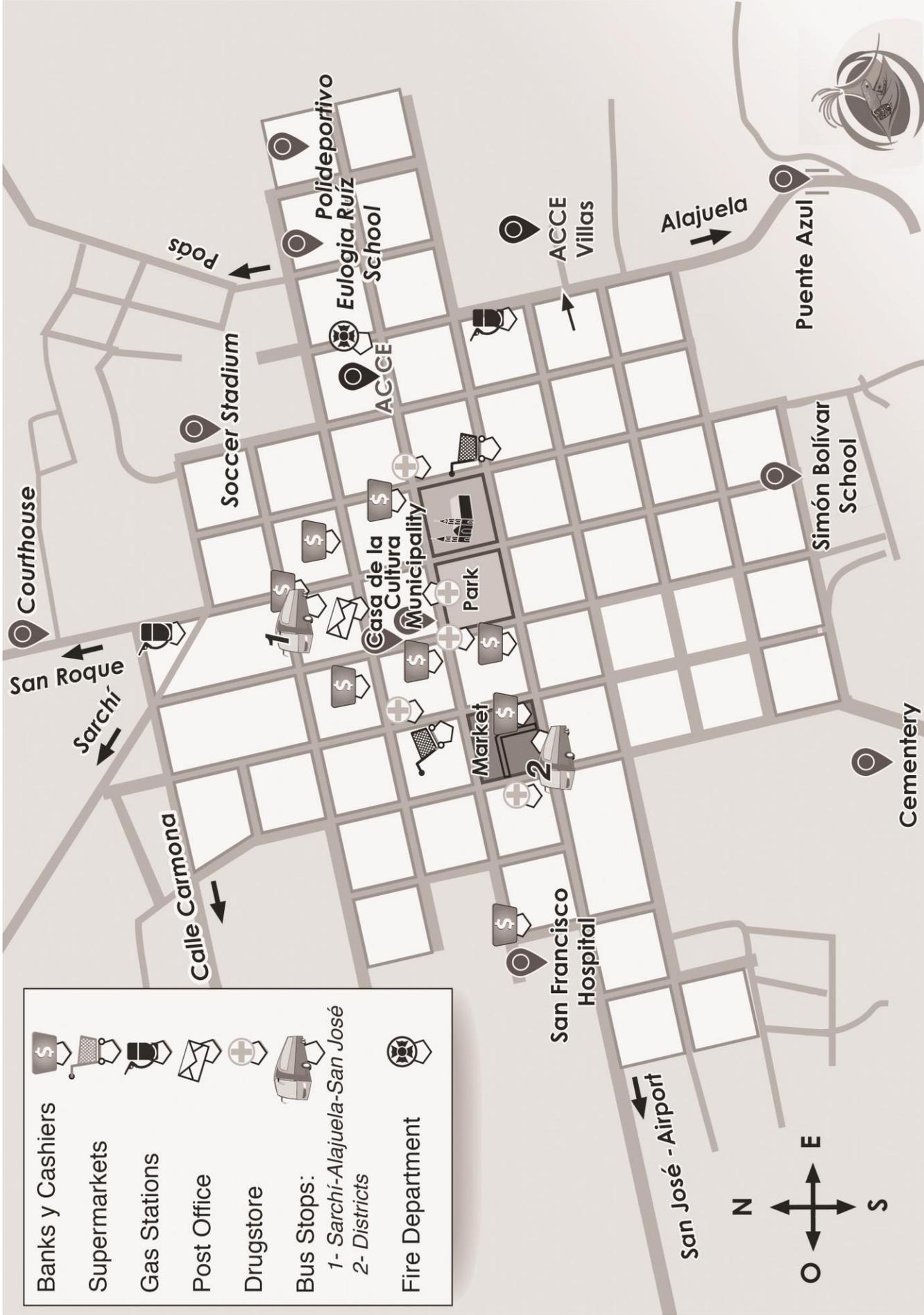
Emergency contact:

(506) 8993 3209 Diego Álvarez

(506) 8838 4308 Alejandra Rodríguez

Please let us know if you have any questions before you leave for Costa Rica. Again, thank you for your choice.

**Sincerely,
ACCE**



Grecia Downtown AC•CE

Banks y Cashiers	
Supermarkets	
Gas Stations	
Post Office	
Drugstore	
Bus Stops:	
1- Sarchi-Alajuela-San José	
2- Districts	
Fire Department	

