



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## **International Federation Office**

**San José, Costa Rica.**

## **Security Welcome Brief**

REV 07/19

## Security Welcome Brief

**Current Security Phase:** **WHITE**

The Country Representative/HoD has the ultimate responsibility for security in the delegation. For any safety concern or report, please contact the Country Representative/Head of Office:

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[andres.morales@ifrc.org](mailto:andres.morales@ifrc.org)

### **IFRC Office Address:**

IFRC Country Office within CRRRC HQ: Avenida 8, between 14 & 16 streets, San José, Costa Rica.

### **IFRC Office Hours:**

Monday through Friday: 0800 – 1730 HRS.

Weekends: No work unless mission dictates.

Holidays: No work unless Mission dictates.

The security situation in Costa Rica is good, however, but you should not be overconfident. PASSPORT THEFT is on the rise. Generally they are non-violent thefts; they just take advantage of a carelessness moment of the victims. In order to prevent such incidents, the elementary rules of caution with luggage and personal effects, especially with other valuables such as cameras, video devices and jewelry, should be adopted

The police can be of great help to you, and if they are identified, they could be a great ally. Currently Costa Rican authorities allow tourists to carry only a photocopy of their passport, as long the original is accessible (for example at the hotel where you are staying). Photocopy both the personal data sheet and the one with the entry stamp in Costa Rica.

Since rental vehicles are preferred but not exclusive targets of criminals, it is strongly recommended to remove the rental vehicle at the hotel and not at the airport (where there is an official orange taxi service that works properly).

The possibility of being attacked and robbed in Costa Rica is relatively low. Simple theft is the most common and occurs more frequently in tourist areas such as Quepos, Manuel Antonio, Jaco, Fortuna and Tamarindo.

In some areas of San Jose, Alajuela, Heredia, Puntarenas and Puerto Limón it is better not to circulate. Avoid walking in the red zone of San Jose, on Calle 6, Calle 8, Calle 10, Calle 12, León XIII and Pavas. At night, you should also avoid areas such as Coca Cola, Dominican Land, Hotel del Rey, Parque Central, Parque Morazán, Alajuelita and rural areas. Also, do not walk in the city of Limón in the neighborhoods known as El Bosque, Envaco, Limón 2000, Corales Tres, Pacuare, Cieneguita and the port of Moín.

## Security Welcome Brief

When visiting volcanoes or national parks in Costa Rica, respect the safety distance of the red zone indicated, this is a warning of danger. Otherwise you could be in a life-threatening situation.

There are currently three volcanoes that have been exhibiting volcanic activity (gas and ash emissions). Turrialba Volcano, located in the province of Cartago, has been in frequent activity since 2010. In addition, starting in 2017, the Poas Volcano, located in the province of Alajuela and the Rincón de la Vieja Volcano, located in the province of Guanacaste, have had regular activity. So far, the explosions have not threatened the population and this is not expected to change. If there is a large ash explosion, it is recommended to wear masks to cover the mouth and nose, and glasses to prevent it from entering the eyes. Volcanic ash damages electronic devices so it is recommended to cover and clean them if they have been exposed to it. In case of a large eruption, follow the recommendations of the National Emergency Commission (Comisión Nacional de Emergencias, CNE).

When traveling outside of San José pack only what is necessary and keep your belongings out of sight. Avoid traveling at night and in desolate areas for safety reasons.

One of the techniques most used by criminals is to place objects on the road to flatten the tires and then, while someone pretends to offer you help, others steal personal assets from inside the vehicle. Therefore, if a tire is deflated, do not stop. If you are in an isolated area, drive to the nearest public area. Pay attention to your belongings if someone comes to offer help. Also be extra cautious if a vehicle hits yours from behind because sometimes it is used as a scam.

Keep in mind that the condition of the roads, traffic signs and road traffic in the rural areas are very poor. There are risks directly related to natural hazards; In which case, it is advisable to consult before starting the trip. As a reference, consider that:

September and October are traditionally the months of greater rainfall in the Central Valley and the Pacific region.

Therefore, if you plan to travel to these areas on those dates, you are advised to be informed and updated; and adjust travel plans.

Many factors contribute to heavy rainfall throughout the year in different parts of the country. It is recommended to check the website of the National Commission of Emergencies (Comisión Nacional de Emergencias) [www.cne.go.cr](http://www.cne.go.cr)

For information on the state of the roads, you can visit the website <http://www.transito.go.cr/CenCom-General/Paginas/Situaciones-de-cierres-y-rutas.aspx> or call the police 800-87267486 of the Transit Police.

Seismic activity is expected throughout most of the country throughout the year. You can consult the website of the Volcanological and Seismological Observatory of Costa Rica (Observatorio Vulcanológico y Sismológico de Costa Rica, OVSI-CORI) [www.oviscori.una.ac.cr](http://www.oviscori.una.ac.cr)

## Security Welcome Brief

### **WEATHER CONDITIONS:**

It should be noted that the rainy season runs from May to early November, with the most intense months being in September and October. Extreme caution is recommended in those months where the rains are daily after noon.

In addition, the Atlantic hurricane season officially begins on June 1 and ends on November 30, although the most difficult period is between August and October. For more information, you can consult the following Internet address: [www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov), which has a section of predictions in both English and Spanish.

Like the rest of Central America, Costa Rica is located in an area of important seismic and volcanic activity. The authorities and the local population are familiar with these phenomena. Therefore, observe the national safety instructions and be cautious.

**REQUIRED VACCINES:** None. However, check the section dedicated to yellow fever as this vaccine is required according to country of origin.  
**Recommended:** None.

**Yellow Fever and Dengue:** On August 1, 2007, the Executive Branch decreed that it is mandatory to vaccinate against yellow fever before entering the country for people coming from the areas considered at risk:

- Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Sudan.
- South America: Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador.
- Caribbean: French Guiana

Such persons must present the International Certificate of Vaccination. Otherwise they will not be allowed to enter the Costa Rican territory. The International Immunization Certificate is not required for travelers from any Central American country, even if one of these countries is included in areas at risk of yellow fever.

Although in Costa Rica there have been no cases of yellow fever patients since 1950, there is a moderate risk of this disease occurring since the mosquito that transmits it (*Aedes aegypti*) circulates. This mosquito also transmits the dengue virus, zika and chikungunya, which have spread throughout the country, especially in the Guanacaste area. For this reason, extreme caution is recommended to prevent mosquito bites that may transmit these viruses.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

If domestic air transport is to be used, it is advisable to fly early in the morning because weather conditions sometimes make it difficult to fly after noon

## **Security Welcome Brief**

There is quite a limited railway in the capital. Except for inland flights, all transport is by road. The road network is in poor condition so caution is recommended, especially in the rainy season, because of the numerous bumps, landslides, mists and poor signage

If you use taxi services, ask a taxi cooperative near the locality by telephone. In the Metropolitan Area you can call:

- Taxis Guaria: 2226-1366/2226-7125
- Taxis Unidos: 2250-5094/22506868
- Aeropuerto: 2441-1319
- Coopetico: 2224-7979
- Transportation service in mini bus throughout the national territory: 2220-2126

For safety, avoid the use of informal taxis or "taxis pirata". Violent incidents have been reported in them. When getting into a taxi, make sure that the photo ID of the driver is visible and that you use the meter. Also, Uber service is not legal and there have been attacks on Uber cars by taxi unions as well as cars impounded by police. There has not being any incidents reported about passengers being hurt.

### **Road safety**

In the case of car rental, the same precautions should be taken. National authorities responsible for road safety provide recommendations summarized below:

1. Always carry a copy of your passport.
2. Carry the international mission card or any other identification card, and show it if necessary.
3. Carry the international health insurance card.
4. Program the route to the final destination in advance, and check with a local. If you are lost, find a public place to consult your map, such as a gas station (service station), grocery store, pharmacy, company or public office. Never ask for directions to groups on the street, or give signs of not knowing where you are going. Remember that GPS does not take your safety into account, and the route it assigns you is not necessarily the best.
5. Carry a cell phone with you and be sure to charge it every day.
6. Be very observant around you. Try not to carry with you much cash or valuable jewelry, or be very discreet.
7. Always be careful when using your credit cards. Also check the amount charged to the card.
8. If another driver asks for help, tells you that something is wrong with their vehicle, or you notice that someone is following you, stop for no reason and continue to the nearest public area. Request police help with 911.
9. The signs of emergency vehicles or police are blue or red; Do not stop if you only see flashing lights.
10. Watch out if you prefer to keep your windows open when you drive. Always keep doors secure. Do not carry bags, cameras or other valuables to the eye, even if they're of lower value you can be subject to assault and damage to your car.

## Security Welcome Brief

11. Always park in a well-lit location and check the surroundings before driving or entering your vehicle. Try to be accompanied by someone from the security of the place when you happen to have to walk across dark areas or late at night.
12. Use ATMs in areas with good lighting, withdraw your money and card quickly and save them. For security reasons all ATMs are closed after 10pm. Check that there's no one following you.
13. Do not leave the engine running or the keys in the vehicle under any circumstances. Always close your car.
14. Never leave children alone in the car or in public places.
15. If you walk around the city avoid wallets, cameras and jewelry. It is best to leave them hidden in the closed car and parked in a public parking lot.
16. If a hostile person confronts you, do not resist. Give them what they ask and avoid eye contact.

If an accident occurs, Costa Rican legislation requires the vehicles to remain immobilized until the arrival of the Traffic Police and both insurance companies. In the event of an accident resulting in death or serious injury, the parties may be detained in police stations. The telephone number for traffic police is 2222-9330 or 2222-9245, and the National Insurance Institute's telephone number is 800-800-8000.

A new in 2016 allows those involved in minor crashes to reconcile without calling a traffic officer. This type of settlement only applies to minor accidents; That is to say, where there are no injured people or where the cars do not suffer damages that prevent them from continuing to circulate. If a car can only be moved with a crane, this type of reconciliation is not valid therefore you should call a traffic officer. If one of the drivers does not want to reconcile with this form, then you should also call the Traffic Officer to make the sketch and the part of the event. You must carry a physical copy of the document "Declaration of minor accident" and in case of accident fill it with pen. It can not be filled directly online.

It is not essential for both parties to have car insurance to be able to use this type of settlement, since the conciliation by this means the good faith commitment of one of the parties to pay or the commitment from each party to pay for their own damages. If the Declaration is signed but then one of the parties fails to comply with the agreement, those involved must go to the corresponding judicial court, where they can present as proof the Declaration of Minor Accident signed at the time of the collision. If the parties have insurance, they must first contact their insurer and follow the procedure established for these cases. You can download the form at the following link: <http://www.damcr.com/>

The conditions of the insurance of the vehicles of rent must be reviewed prior to signing contract. Some companies take advantage and immediately after the notification of the accident by the tourist, the company proceeds to make on their credit card charges by the maximum authorized in the policy, without consulting. It is recommended, therefore, to rent at internationally recognized companies and check the exact coverage of the insurance policy.

*Bring a copy of this guide with you for your safety and security.*

## Security Welcome Brief

### THE 9-1-1 EMERGENCY SYSTEM

Telephone service # 911 reports directly to:

- Firefighters: Direct telephone 2255-2750 (Structural and forest fires, short circuits, spills of hazardous materials, bee swarms)
- Red Cross: Direct telephone 2528-0022 (medical emergencies, respiratory and cardiac problems, injured in traffic accidents or obstruction, gyneco-obstetric emergencies, Injured by weapons, burns and poisonings.)
- Transit police: Direct telephone 800- TRANSITO (87267486) (Reckless driving, obstruction of the route, collisions, vehicles parked in restricted areas.)
- Police: Direct telephone 1176 (Robbery of vehicles, houses and others.) Aggression by family violence in process. Murders, assaults, thefts, quarrels, kidnappings, Illegal sale of drugs, lotteries and fireworks.)
- National Emergency Commission (Comisión Nacional de Emergencias): Direct telephone 2210-2828 / 2220 2020 (Floods, landslides, strong winds, avalanches, hurricanes, tsunamis, volcanic or seismic activity.)
- National Poisoning Control Center: Direct telephone 2223-1028
- Judicial Investigation Agency: Direct telephone 295-3272 / 295-3273

### MEDICAL:

#### PEP Kits:

Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits (for exposure to HIV/AIDS, rabies or a post-rape situation), are currently on hand **at the Country Representatives work area in the Country Office**. For any additional kits, the Country Representative will be coordinating with the national society for the use of their PEP kits should the need arise.

#### First Aid kits

ALL RC/RC personnel lodging, residences, offices and vehicles are to be equipped with a first aid kit. The contents are to be adapted to the local risks especially, taking field movement into consideration. **The IFRC Office First Aid Kit is located in the Country Representatives work area / Office.**

### HOSPITALS

Red Cross ambulances will take you to the nearest hospital. If you could choose remember the international health insurance. If you need urgent telephone numbers or information call 1113.

#### Private Hospitals:

- Clínica Bíblica. San José centro. Tel. 2522-1000  
Los Sueños, Marriott Playa Herradura, Puntarenas. Medical practice. 2637-8610  
Liberia, Guanacaste. Pharmacy and medical practice. 2667-0891

## Security Welcome Brief

- Hospital CIMA. Escazú. San José. Tel. 2208-1000
- Hospital Clínica Católica. Guadalupe. San José. Tel. 2246-3000

### Hospital facilities:

- Hospital Nacional de Niños. Paseo Colón. San José. Tel. 2523-3600
- National Poisoning Control Center: San José. 2223-1028
- Hospital San Rafael de Alajuela. 2436-1000
- Hospital Rafael Angel Calderón. San José 2212-1000
- Hospital Monseñor Sanabria. Puntarenas. 2630-8000
- Hospital México. San José. 2242-6700
- Hospital Max Peralta. Cartago. 2550-1999
- Hospital de San Carlos. Ciudad Quesada. 2460-1176
- Hospital de la Anexión. Guanacaste. 2685-8400
- Hospital de Ciudad Neilly. Near Panama border. 2783-4111

If you are the subject of a crime immediately contact:

Public Prosecutor's Office, the Delegations of the Judicial Investigation Agency or the Offices of the Administrative Police of the Ministry of Public Security. You can also file the complaint in the Reception of Complaints Office of San José.

### **Oficina de Recepción de Denuncias (Reception of Complaints Office):**

295-3272 / 295-3273.

Schedule: 7:30 am - 12 md y 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm (24/7).

Location: first floor of the OIJ building, 1st Judicial Circuit of San José.

### **Oficina de Atención a la Víctima (The Victims' Services Office):** 295-3271 / 295-3565.

Location: sexto piso edificio del OIJ, I Circuito Judicial San José.

### **Delegaciones del Organismo de Investigación Judicial (OIJ) (Delegations of the Judicial Investigation Agency)**

- Puriscal: 416-8900 / 416-5727.
- Pérez Zeledón Centro: 771-7300 / 771-3001.
- Corredores: 783-3183 / 783-3325.
- Osa: 788-8549
- Alajuela Centro: 437-0442 / 437-0340.
- San Ramón: 445-7181.
- San Carlos: 460-0922 / 460-2472.
- Heredia Centro: 262-1011.
- Sarapiquí: 766-6200 / 766-6121.
- Médico Forense: 265-4200.
- Cartago Centro: 550-0333.
- La Unión: 279-6558 / 279-4344.
- Turrialba: 556-1573 / 556-7328.
- Puntarenas Centro: 630-0377.
- Aguirre y Parrita (Quepos): 777-0511 / 777-1511.
- Limón Centro: 799-1437 / 799-1334.
- Pococí, Guácimo, Guápiles: 710-1865 / 710-1355.



## Security Welcome Brief

- Siquirres: 768-8487 / 768-6003.
- Guanacaste, Liberia: 690-2901.
- Cañas: 669-3444 / 669-1966.
- Nicoya: 682-5328.

### **Denuncias Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (Costa Rican Tourism Institute complaints)**

If you have a complaint against hotels, rent a car companies or travel agencies, please contact the Complaints Department of the Costa Rican Tourism Institute, located on the 13th floor of the Genaro Valverde building (building attached to CCSS) On Avenue 4 between 5th and 7th Streets. Hours of service from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Monday to Friday. Telephone: 223-1733 ext 341 / 238. Fax: 257-8018

### **LEGISLATION ON DRUGS AND SEXUAL TOURISM**

The "Law on Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, Drugs of Unauthorized Use, Legitimacy of Capitals and Related Activities" of the Republic of Costa Rica, establishes in its article 58 that "A sentence of imprisonment of eight to fifteen years shall be imposed on anyone who, without authorization (...) transport, store or sell the drugs, substances or products referred to in this Law, or cultivate the plants from which such substances or products are obtained. The same penalty shall be imposed on who, without proper authorization Possesses such drugs, substances or products for any of the purposes stated, and who possesses or trades seeds with germinating capacity or other natural products to produce said drugs." Article 77 of the same provision raises to 20 years the maximum penalty for the same offenses when they are "committed at an international level".

With the spread by some media of the image of Costa Rica as a destination for sex tourism (including with minors), local authorities have significantly strengthened the legislation and active awareness campaigns are being carried out. **This can be reported to the police.**