



Student Handbook

Costa Rica

August 4th - August 17th, 2024

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Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to FutureVets, an extraordinary opportunity to experience veterinary medicine in its purest form. You will meet a wide variety of patients, shadow veterinarians, work in the anatomy lab, observe surgery, and immerse yourself in the unique blend of tradition, natural beauty, and a friendly, welcoming spirit that embodies Costa Rica.

The greater metropolitan area of San José, Costa Rica, where our program takes place, offers a blend of natural charm and agricultural richness. We'll be frequenting the central highlands of Costa Rica, part of the beautiful and mountainous terrain that characterizes the country's interior. The landscape is dominated by mountains, rolling hills, and dense forests. We'll be staying within the bustling and vibrant capital city of San José in a modern hotel with access to urban conveniences. You are sure to find many things to love during your two weeks there.

Clinical rotations take place on the campus of [La Escuela de Medicina y Cirugía Veterinaria San Francisco de Asís](#), a private veterinary school founded in 1993 and accredited by the Colegio de Médicos Veterinarios de Costa Rica. The school offers a five-year Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree program, taught by a faculty of experienced veterinarians and scientists. The school's mission is to "provide quality education in veterinary medicine that prepares graduates to meet the needs of the profession and society." The school also has a strong research program.

Before we take off on our journey together, you will need to become fully oriented with the contents of the student handbook. The handbook houses detailed information relevant to the program and students are encouraged to review the handbook multiple times in the leadup to the program.

Code of Conduct

As a reminder, you signed the following Code of Conduct Agreement as part of your enrollment:

As a student enrolled in FutureVets Abroad, I agree to the following expectations with regard to safety and conduct. I agree to complete to the best of my ability all aspects of the FutureVets Abroad Program and successfully participate both as an individual and a representative of The National Leadership Academies. I agree to conduct myself in such a way that supports my own learning, and supports the learning of my peers, the teaching of physicians, and the guidance of the chaperones.

FutureDocs Abroad is an alcohol-, smoking-, and substance-abuse-free experience. I agree to refrain from use of these substances as well as any illegal substances.

I agree to not engage in any behaviors that will put my health or life at risk, such as but not limited to departing from the scheduled itinerary and tour, entering restricted areas of host medical school and medical centers, entering financial agreements with locals, inviting strangers into the program or hotel, and providing locals with personal information such as passport information, credit/debit card information (other than secure bank/vendor), home addresses, and phone numbers.

I agree to remain in the assigned hotel or dormitory room as indicated by staff. Any changes or breach of this security precaution could lead to expulsion from the program.

I agree to not solicit any FutureDocs Abroad or host university or institution's students or staff for my own personal financial benefit.

I agree to maintain all required dress code standards as set forth by FutureDocs Abroad staff or requested by participating medical school/medical center policies. I also agree to remain with my assigned mentors, physicians, or other assigned staff at all site visit locations.

I agree to abide by the host university or institution's standards and requirements.

I understand not complying with the above-mentioned expectations may result in dismissal from the program and return to the United States at my and my parent's or guardian's expense.

I agree to make FutureDocs Abroad administrators and staff aware as soon as possible of any difficulties I may encounter regarding my health, safety, finances, or any other issue that I consider serious or should be disclosed.

Immunizations

Routine

You *must* be up-to-date on all routine immunizations outlined by the [CDC](#), including:

- DTAP
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Meningococcal
- MMR
- Varicella (Chickenpox)

As a reminder, a copy of your immunization record is due by **March 31st, 2024**. Please reach out to your primary care physician as soon as possible to begin the process of obtaining your records.

Typhoid

You are *required* to submit proof of Typhoid vaccination in order to participate in clinical rotations with FutureVets Abroad. We recommend that you schedule an appointment with your primary care physician or a nearby travel clinic as soon as possible if you are not already vaccinated.

Please note that either administrative routes (intramuscular injection or oral medication) are accepted for the program. Proof of vaccination can come in the form of an International Certificate of Vaccination against Typhoid, a copy of your prescription for the orally administered Typhoid vaccine, or a copy of your routine immunization record that includes Typhoid. Proof of vaccination is due by **May 31st, 2024**.

Please visit the [CDC website](#) for additional information on prevention and resources for getting vaccinated against Typhoid.

Rabies

You are also *required* to submit proof of Rabies vaccination in order to participate in clinical rotations with FutureVets Abroad. The Rabies vaccine is given over multiple doses depending on whether or not you've been previously vaccinated against it. We strongly encourage families to begin this process as soon as possible to avoid potential issues as the program approaches.

We only accept records from a physician that shows you have received both doses of the Rabies vaccine as forms of proof. Your record must clearly list your full name, date of birth, and dates of administration.

For more information, please visit the Rabies Vaccine Information Sheet on the [CDC website](#).

Passport Information

Getting or Renewing Your Passport

Your passport will need to be valid through February 17, 2025, in order to enter Costa Rica. Costa Rica immigration requires all passports to have at least 6 months' validity beyond our departure date. Check the expiration date on your passport.

This is a VERY IMPORTANT STEP AND TIME SENSITIVE as you will need a valid passport through February 17th, 2025 in order for us to secure your international flight.

If your passport is **VALID** through February 17, 2025, take a picture of the photo page of your passport and upload it in the onboarding section as soon as possible.

If your passport is **NOT VALID** through February 17, 2025, visit the [State Department website](#) for instructions on how to renew your passport.

If you **DO NOT HAVE A PASSPORT**, please visit the [State Department website](#) for instructions on how to apply for a passport immediately.

NOTE: Passports can take up to four weeks to arrive, so please make sure you apply immediately to avoid delays. All students are required to have a valid passport book to travel to Costa Rica. Passport cards are not valid for international travel to Costa Rica.

Additionally, confirm that you have signed your passport on the page opposite the photo page. A U.S. passport is only valid once it is signed! If you have NOT signed your passport, use a non-ballpoint pen and make sure the ink is dry before closing your passport. We recommend that you add your contact information in pencil on the Personal Data and Contact Information page as well. If you lose your passport, this will give you the best chance of getting it back.

You must submit a copy of your passport into the student portal by **December 31st, 2023**.

Domestic Travel

Our team is in the process of finalizing the international flight arrangements for the group. We will provide you with the detailed information that you need in order to book your domestic flight to the airport that the group will be departing from as soon as possible.

In the meantime, here are a few details to keep in mind:

Students are responsible for organizing domestic arrangements to the airport that the group will be meeting at prior to departing for Costa Rica. As soon as we finalize our arrangements, we will provide you with arrival and departure windows for your inbound and outbound domestic flights. You must provide us with a copy of your domestic flight confirmation using the Travel Information Form so that our team can establish a time that we can expect you to arrive, as well as monitor for any potential delays on the day of travel.

FutureVets Abroad has partnered with Atlas Travel to simplify the process of booking domestic flights for our students at no additional cost. If interested, you will need to fill out the Atlas Travel Registration Form that will be sent out via email in the coming months. An Atlas Travel agent will use the information you've provided to gather a list of various flight options for you that fall within the arrival/departure windows.

Note: Students who use this service do NOT need to complete the Travel Information Form.

We will also provide specific details about travel day (which terminal, check-in time, etc..) along with instructions for navigating the airport to the FutureVets Abroad check-in table. Our staff will be on-site to ensure students safely navigate to the meeting point should they need assistance in doing so. Upon arrival to the FutureVets check-in table, students will be introduced to their chaperone and provided a name badge and their international health insurance card that should be kept on them at all times throughout the program.

NOTE: The FutureVets Abroad check-in table will be located outside of security near the check-in desk of the airline that the group will be flying. We will wait as a group until check-in opens with the airline – then proceed through check-in and security together. ***Students are not able to check-in for the international flight without the group.***

International Travel

Stay tuned – we will update you with everything you need to know about our international travels soon!

Clothing

Packing List

Shared below is a basic packing list for FutureVets Abroad. Keep in mind this list is intended to provide basic guidance for essentials. This does not necessarily include every item that you may personally require.

Carry-On Items:

- Phone charger and chargers for any other electronics
- Pen(s)
- Small notebook
- Entertainment for the plane ride (headphones, phone, playing cards, book, etc...)
- Empty reusable water bottle (you'll need to fill it up after you get through airport security)
- 3-to-2 prong adapter for any electronics that may have a 3-prong plug
- A change of clothes for 2-3 days – It is very important to include a change of clothes that will be appropriate for Orientation and the Opening Ceremony (refer to Dress Code section) in your carry-on. In the event that your hold luggage is lost in transit, you will need to be prepared for the first couple of days of the program. Lost luggage normally takes between 1 to 3 days to be returned.
- **Prescription medications****

Clothing Items:

- 5-6 sets of scrubs for rotations. Packing 5-6 sets of scrubs (and planning to do laundry once or twice) should cover the trip
- 1-2 white full-length lab jacket(s). Short sleeved lab jackets are acceptable
- Waterproof boots or walking shoes for rotations
- Rain jacket or slicker for outdoor rotations
- Boots or shoes that you are willing to get dirty are recommended for rotations at the school as you will be working in some farm-like environments
- 2 business casual outfits and appropriate footwear for orientation and the closing ceremony
 - **MEN:** Trousers/khakis and collared shirts
 - **WOMEN:** Knee-length dresses or skirts, trousers, collared shirts, blouses

- **NOTE:** No jeans, shorts, or athletic wear
- Casual warm-weather clothing for weekend excursions
- Pajamas/sweats for your overnight accommodations
- Socks and undergarments
- Light hoodie or jacket
- Bathing suit & towel if you wish to use the hotel's pool.

Toiletries:

- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Brush/comb
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Body wash or soap
- Sunscreen
- Small first aid kit
- If needed, glasses/contacts, contact case and solution
- Bug spray
- Ladies, please be mindful that feminine hygiene items are difficult to come by in brands and styles you might be comfortable with. Be sure to pack these items with you if you'll need them on our trip.
- Advil, Midol, Imodium, Vitamin C, Hydration tablets/packsto name a few of the most common items

Dress Code**Travel to and from Costa Rica:**

Ultimately, comfort plays a large part in making long-haul flights pleasurable. Always wear comfortable clothes, and this includes your travel shoes.

- Wear layers – You will need pieces that you can easily take off or put on to help you combat the varying temperatures you encounter throughout your journey
- Wear something that you can keep on for the next 12 hours – travel time to Costa Rica and to our first rotation destination once in-country will be at least 7 hours
- Wear clothes that don't restrict you
- Wear natural, breathable fabrics
- Wear socks and comfortable footwear

Rotations at Clinical Facilities:

Students will be asked to wear scrubs (all rotations) and a white lab coat for some sessions at the veterinary facilities.

- Scrubs can be any color/pattern/short sleeve/long sleeve
- Lab jackets are required for most rotations (Short sleeve if possible as it is very hot)
- Students will be on their feet for long periods while on rotations, so comfortable shoes are recommended. All shoes worn on rotations must be closed-toed. Waterproof walking shoes or boots are advisable during rotations as some rotations are outdoors in rural areas.
- Students should bring rain gear such as, but not limited to: ponchos, umbrellas, rain-boots/wellingtons, etc...

Cultural Tour Day:

A full day is planned to explore a local coffee manufacturer in Costa Rica:

- Wear comfortable/breathable casual clothes
- Wear comfortable shoes (sneakers are a great option)
- Bring a sunhat
- Wear sunscreen

Rest Day:

You are welcome to kick back and relax in whatever clothes are most comfortable for you. If you plan on spending time at the pool, be sure to pack a swimsuit.

Closing Ceremony:

This will be your last impression when saying goodbye to your Costa Rican hosts. **Dress to impress with a business casual outfit.** Absolutely NO athletic wear, jeans, or shorts

Ladies: Plan on wearing dress/trousers/knee-length skirts, shirts with a collar or blouses, and comfortable shoes

Gentleman: Wear trousers/khakis, collared shirt, and comfortable shoes

Accommodations

Specific details regarding our accommodations will be located here soon!

Meals and Water

Meals

Breakfast and dinner will be provided at the hotel. A selection of food will be available including authentic Costa Rican fare, and a variety of American classics. Lunch will be provided at the campus cafeteria during Monday – Friday rotations. Meals will also be provided on off-campus activity days and will include BBQ's and picnic-style lunches.

Snacks are available for purchase on campus, and at the hotel. Cafes are also located in all of the clinical locations. Trips to the local convenience store can also be arranged with the chaperones upon request.

Be sure you have updated any special dietary requirements on the portal so we can be sure to prep the chef ahead of your arrival.

Water

Tap water in Costa Rica is drinkable and, in many areas of the country, quite good. However, if you have a sensitive stomach, it's recommended to refrain from drinking tap water. San Jose is a modern city so you will be able to purchase bottled water everywhere and chaperones will be available 24/7 to assist students if needed.

Electronics

Powering Electronics

The voltage supplied in electrical outlets as well as the outlet type varies in countries throughout the world, so in order to charge your devices when you visit another country, it's important to check the voltage and outlet requirements of your host country.

In Costa Rica, the standard voltage is 120 volts, which is the same as U.S. wall outlets. The power outlet types in Costa Rica are also the same as in the U.S. You will find both the 2-prong and 3-prong outlets you're familiar with from the U.S. in Costa Rica. However, if you are packing any electronics with a 3-prong plug, you may want to pack a [3-to-2 prong adapter](#) in case 3-prong plugs are not available.

Remember to pack battery packs and any charging cables you may need.

International Cell Phone Use

In all likelihood, your cell phone plan does not accommodate international texting, calling, or data use. If you use these functions while traveling abroad, you will likely rack up a huge roaming bill – possibly in the thousands of dollars. To ensure this doesn't happen, be sure to turn off your cellular data and put your phone in airplane mode **before** we depart on our international flight. You will still be able to connect to Wi-Fi where available while on airplane mode. It's safest to leave your phone in airplane mode for the duration of the trip, and only use Wi-Fi for internet access, in order to avoid a surprise phone bill when you get back.

Alternatively, you can explore options with your cell service provider for international travel plans. Most cell service providers offer a daily or monthly plan ranging from \$5-\$20 per day for international travel. Be sure to explore all the limitations before traveling.

Currency and Payment

FutureVets includes all program costs, international airfare, accommodations, local in-country transportation, and meals, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Students may want to bring pocket money for their own personal expenses, shopping, personal care items, souvenirs, snacks, etc. (\$250-\$300 should be more than adequate).

In advance of your trip to Costa Rica, we recommend you have a discussion with your parents on how you will pay for personal expenses while abroad. You may choose to carry a credit card, withdraw Costa Rican Colones using an ATM card, bring U.S. dollars to exchange in Costa Rica, or some combination of these options.

Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in Costa Rica; Discover and American Express are not accepted as widely. If you plan to use a credit card while in Costa Rica, your parents should ask their credit card company about their international transaction fees and alert them of your international travel plans beforehand to avoid security holds. Check the expiration date on your credit/debit cards and make a separate note in a safe place of their numbers and the service number on the back of the card.

It is also advisable to carry some small denominations of local currency for small purchases. Most purchases have to be over a certain amount in order to pay by card.

Costa Rica's currency is the Colón. Currently, 1000 Costa Rican Colones equals about 1.65 USD. U.S. bank ATM cards can also be used in Costa Rica to obtain Colones. Students should check with their bank about foreign ATM transactions and conversion fees.