



High School Student Exchange All About the Program

Who are Partners of the Americas? Partners of the Americas originated in 1964 under President John F. Kennedy's administration. States in the US were paired with Latin American countries which enabled the two to form friendships, cultural exchanges, and assistance in various forms. Under this program, Oregon was partnered with Costa Rica. The original exchanges were between businessmen and politicians but expanded to include senior citizen, teacher and student programs and many others.

In 1966, Mrs. Margaret Byers, a Salem Spanish teacher, took five boys and five girls for a few weeks to stay in Costa Rica. A few years later, the Partners of the Americas Oregon--Costa Rica High School Exchange Program began. It has expanded to two full months and up to 25 students.

Partners of the Americas is a non-profit organization made up of several committees of volunteers: students, teachers, schools, business people, professionals and families--all interested in promoting increased understanding and cooperation between Oregon and Costa Rica.

What is the purpose of the high school student exchange program?

- ✨ To promote international understanding and friendship between the people of Oregon and Costa Rica
- ✨ To provide students from both countries with the broadening educational experience of living in another culture, with opportunities to develop conversational skill in the language of the host country; and
- ✨ To strengthen ties of partnership between Oregon and Costa Rican high school students and their families.

Who travels? Up to 25 Oregon high-school student “ambassadors” travel to Costa Rica in June, live with families, and attend school for 8 weeks. They are accompanied by two chaperones.

When do students travel? Departure dates vary based on flight schedules but generally, departure from Oregon is in mid-June with the return from Costa Rica in mid-August.

Why participate? Oregon students go to Costa Rica to improve their Spanish skills, attend high school, and experience family life in Costa Rica. This enables them to be both bilingual and bi-cultural. Students have an opportunity to know Costa Rica and to make long-lasting friendships.

How do you apply? If you are a high school student, have successfully completed at least two years of high school Spanish, and have completed your sophomore year of high school by the time of departure, fill out the application found in our web site at: www.studentexchange-oregoncostarica.com

What is the cost of the program? The cost may vary based on transportation costs but ranges from \$2,100 to \$2,300 per student. This includes airfare, airport transfers, housing, most meals and all basic living expenses. Students are expected to cover the costs for medical insurance, immunizations, passport charges, excess baggage fees and incidental expenses for gifts, non-program sponsored travel and extra activities. We recommend that each student take \$400 for incidental expenses in Costa Rica. Need-based scholarships are available.

* ***Special Note:*** As part of the exchange, student travelers are expected to apply to host a Costa Rican exchange student for four weeks between early December and early February for the Partners Northbound Program or may find another family to host on their behalf. For many families, hosting a student from Costa Rica is the best part of the program since the whole family can enjoy the experience.



High School Student Exchange Program Ten Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) *Where do I live when I'm in Costa Rica?*** The Amigos de Oregon (the Partners committee in Costa Rica) selects host families for Oregon students traveling on the Partners program. All families are carefully selected and have an expressed interest in sharing their home with an Oregon student for 4 weeks. Each student stays with two families, 4 weeks each, while in Costa Rica. Families provide room and board for the Oregon student they host.
- 2) *What will my daily routine be and what will my Costa Rican families expect of me while I am living with them?*** Oregon students become "regular" members of the families with whom they live. They attend school with their host brothers/sisters and take part in normal family activities. Occasionally, the Oregon student may meet for a planned activity with other Oregon students. Costa Rican families look forward to including the Oregon student as a member of their family! They will expect that the student follow established family routines.
- 3) *Will my Costa Rican families speak English?*** While some families speak English, they will be encouraged to speak in Spanish so that the Oregon student's Spanish will improve. Oregon students are asked to speak Spanish 80%-100% of the time. Don't worry if your Spanish skills aren't great. With language immersion, skills improve rapidly.
- 4) *What preparation will I receive before traveling on the Partners program to Costa Rica?*** Oregon students who apply to participate in the Partners travel program attend a series of mandatory orientations, one of which is an overnighter at a lodge.
- 5) *What happens if I get sick in Costa Rica?*** Oregon students are expected to travel with their own health and accident insurance to Costa Rica. Costa Rica has an excellent health care system. The chaperones are always available and can assist the student in obtaining any necessary medical care.
- 6) *What is the food like in Costa Rica?*** The food in Costa Rica varies just as it does in the United States. Typical foods include black beans, rice and many interesting and delicious varieties of fresh fruits.
- 7) *What happens if I have a problem or if I need advice while I'm in Costa Rica?*** Two bilingual chaperones travel with the Oregon students and are in Costa Rica to assist students during their 8-week stay. They have cell phones and are in constant contact with the Oregon students, ready to help with any problems. They serve as the liaison between host families and traveling students when needed.
- 8) *What will the weather be like in Costa Rica when I am there?*** Students can expect sunny mornings, light rain showers in the afternoons, and cool evenings. Generally, the climate is tropical—warm and humid. Temperatures are cooler in the mountains and warmer in the low lands.
- 9) *What is Costa Rica like?*** Costa Rica is green, rolling hills; friendly, hospitable people who make their families a priority; beautiful beaches; 97% Catholic; peace-loving democratic values (Costa Rica has no army); 94% literacy rate; a diversified population (Spanish, Indian, African, Asian). . . . a wonderful place to visit!
- 10) *Is it difficult to get accepted as a participant in this program?*** Students traveling to Costa Rica are "ambassadors" from Oregon. Because only 25 students can travel to Costa Rica each year, the selection process is competitive. But most students who are motivated to improve their Spanish and who are flexible, adaptable, outgoing, and open-minded are good candidates for our program.