

## Adaptability and adjustment to new cultural environments

### Common Cultural Mistakes Visitors to Costa Rica Make

1. Thinking time and tasks are more important than people
2. Not greeting people before beginning a conversation
3. Talking loudly in public so that strangers have to hear their conversation
4. Wearing sunglasses while conversing in an indoor space
5. Chewing gum while conversing
6. Swearing
7. Sitting on tables and putting feet up on tables
8. Showing the bottoms of their shoes
9. Not taking a shower every morning
10. Walking around the house in underwear
11. Putting toilet paper or other garbage in the toilet instead of in the wastebasket.
12. Putting toilet paper or other garbage in the wastebasket without folding it carefully with more toilet paper.
13. Wearing rumpled, worn out, dirty, or skimpy clothing
14. Staring, giggling, or acting shocked when mothers breastfeed their babies in public
15. Complaining about or criticizing customs, food, and life in Costa Rica

### Families have said they feel uncomfortable when students...

1. do not say hello in the morning or do not say hello when they arrive home
2. do not say good bye when they go to bed or leave the house
3. do not follow their recommendations about safety
4. do not explain to the host family their plans during the day or their plans for the weekend
5. come home drunk
6. make funny faces when eating Costa Rican food
7. put in the garbage food that still could be eaten
8. do not know the name of the actual President: Laura Chinchilla (2010-2014)
9. do not know the name of the football teams in Costa Rica (The biggest rivals are La Liga, the Alajuela team, and Saprissa, the San José team. Students can attend games in Alajuela Wednesday nights and Sundays)
10. never ask the host family about other family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, etc.)
11. do not care when the birthdays of the members of the family are
12. are not interested in spending time with members of the family, for example:
  - a. watching TV together (news or other programs) and asking questions
  - b. teaching family members some expressions in English or teaching family members how to use internet, or a game, or...
  - c. asking if they can accompany the host parents to the market or supermarket
  - d. asking if they can accompany them to church
  - e. offering to help the family serve food, wash dishes, clean up, do projects, etc.
13. never bringing anything home for the family, for example, bread, fruit, chocolate, or a gift. Since students have paid for the program, they feel the family should provide everything.
14. families do get paid for homestays, but if students want to feel like a member of their family, students should participate as much as possible, help out, and be thoughtful, respectful, and courteous.