



Trip Information Packet

Costa Rica

University of Miami

April 27-May 5, 2025





Welcome to Courts for Kids. Most likely, this is your first trip with our organization and we are confident that this trip will impact you in ways you cannot even imagine. We work closely with our in-country partner to make sure your basic needs are met, so we can all focus on the task at hand, creating a multi-purpose sports court with the initiative, help and support of the community.

A sports court is a great project because it requires the help of many community members, provides plenty of work for everyone, and becomes an asset that provides not only safe places for children to play, but also various other benefits. The hard work of our team will be a great bridge between us and the community and we will develop a mutual respect that will help provide inroads into a rich cross-cultural experience and first-hand insight into a developing world community.

We are looking for great cultural ambassadors, so please only sign up for this trip if you are willing to step outside of your comfort zone. You will need to work hard, you will be eating different foods, sleeping and bathing in less comfortable environments. But this is where the Courts for Kids impact happens.

Most importantly, we ask that you enter into this with a great sense of humility. We want you to be eager to learn and grow in this process as we are entering into a different culture with different values and norms. We want you be quick to listen and slow to speak.

We will not be giving you a detailed itinerary as things are very prone to change with this sort of construction project. But your time will be spent working on the court, taking part in various cultural activities and, most importantly, connecting with the locals.

Please look through this informational packet and feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

If you choose to go, I can almost guarantee you will look back on this trip as a life-changing experience. You will grow so much in a week it will make you wish you could stay longer. In fact, you will probably say this was the best week of your year.

Hope you can come!

Derek Nesland
President
Courts for Kids

Community Information

San Rafael de Sabalito is a town located in the southern part of the Puntarenas province of Costa Rica, only about 3 miles away from the northern Panamanian border.

The first settlers of this place arrived around 1949. Now, the community is comprised of 64 houses with 156 inhabitants. It has an elementary school, and a technical high school with a population of 800 students coming from San Rafael de Sabalito and other neighboring communities. The same facilities are used by the Professional Institute of Community Education (IPEC), for night classes, with a population of 120 students. This community has two different churches: one Catholic, and the other Jehovah's Witnesses.

At an altitude of roughly 3,000 feet, this area is ripe for agriculture, primarily farming coffee and livestock. The local coffee cooperative, which is one of the most important economic streams to this day, collects about 45 thousand bushels of coffee annually! Many locals also have their own vegetable gardens and fruit trees on their property. Apart from working in the fields and coffee plantations, locals work in the supermarkets and bakeries, hardware and mechanic stores, local schools, pharmacies, and in tourism.

Up in the mountains, there is abundant flora and fauna. Here you can find a wide variety of birds, such as many different species of hummingbirds and the famous national bird of Costa Rica: the yigüirro. Other fauna include: butterflies, foxes and toads. With respect to the flora, there is abundant, and seemingly endless, lush, green vegetation wherever you go. Common trees found in this area are: pine, cypress, and many fruit trees, such as guayaba, guava and orange to name a few. The Ceiba tree is one of the symbols of San Rafael de Sabalito. Apart from the diverse flora and fauna, this area is also known for many beautiful waterfalls and swimming holes both tourists and locals enjoy visiting.

In their free time, this community enjoys playing and watching soccer, dancing, holding bingo events, and spending time with family and friends.

It is typical to enjoy an afternoon coffee around 3pm each day, accompanied by either a sweet or savory treat, which typically are sweet breads, empanadas, or tortillas con queso. Other dishes typical to this region include: la olla de carne (meat stew), picadillos (minced vegetable dishes), gallo pinto (white rice mixed with black beans), arroz con leche (rice with milk) and tamales of different meats.

Your group will be met at the airport by the Courts for Kids Costa Rica Country Director who has been working closely with the community to plan all aspects of your visit. You will be staying in a community building sleeping on mattresses on the floor. The court will also be built nearby and will be used by the entire community. You will work side-by-side with the locals and although it will be challenging there are jobs for everyone of every physical capacity. During the whole trip you will be fully immersed in the local culture eating authentic food, learning local traditions, customs, and way of life. It is important to note that this court will be built *with* the community not *for* the community. The community members are very motivated to make their court a reality and from the beginning, they have been the driving factor planning this project to see it come to fruition.

*More specific lodging, packing, and trip logistics will be provided as the departure date gets closer.

**Please note, the destination community is subject to change at the discretion of Courts for Kids in order to best meet the needs and safety of the volunteer group as well as the needs of the host community.



Trip Safety

Courts for Kids makes your safety our number one priority. Being in a safe, tight knit community with strong awareness and ownership of the project will provide local people who will be personally invested in the safety of the team. Courts for Kids also has safety protocols in place that include, but are not limited to:

- A **Courts for Kids representative will lead the group** while in the destination country.
- We always contract **private transportation** to pick up and return the group to the in-country airport.
- We have a **strict behavior and conduct policy** for all trip participants which promotes the safety and security of the group. All participants are required to attend a **mandatory training**.
- We have **secure transportation** available to medical facilities in the case of any injuries.
- We will have a **first aid kit** with the group at all times.
- We only drink **clean, potable water**.
- We work with community cooks to adhere to our **Safe Cooking Practices**.
- We monitor the **US State Department** travel warnings and make travel adjustments as deemed necessary.
- We require all volunteers to be disconnected for the entirety of the trip. No cell phones will be allowed once in country.
- **Insurance coverage** for all trip participants that includes evacuation with a medical escort in a worst case situation. Policy details can be provided upon request.
- A **Child Protection Policy** which includes background checks for all adults traveling in a group where minors are present.
- Courts for Kids may conduct a **behavioral background check** through a student's school and reserves the right to refuse a participant based on the information we receive.

Safety is a team effort and every trip participant is responsible for their behavior, must use common sense while traveling, and comply with Courts for Kids representatives and trip leaders at all times.

Flight Itinerary

American Flight Itinerary*

(Award points cannot be used)

Date	Fl. #	Airport	Dep.	Airport	Arrival
April 27	1593	Miami	10:22am	San Jose	11:27am
May 5	1788	San Jose	2:14pm	Miami	7:14pm

You are eligible for frequent flier miles on American. To enroll go to www.aa.com

*Flights and carrier are subject to change

Trip Checklist

1. Register through Courts for Kids (registration link to be provided separately).
2. **Passport:** Make sure you have a passport that will not expire before **November 5th, 2025**. If you need a passport, go to the nearest post office for assistance. **In order to avoid the headache and stress, make sure you get your passport on time, do it ASAP.**
3. **Vaccinations:** The recommended vaccinations for travel to Costa Rica according to the Center for Disease Control are the following (**keep in mind these are recommended, not required. Check with your local doctor and make the decision best for you**):
 - a. Routine (DPT, MMR, Polio) and COVID-19
 - b. Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid
 - c. Rabies, Yellow Fever, Chikungunya (only for certain travelers)
5. Participants must attend **mandatory Courts for Kids pre-trip training on a date TBD.**

Contact Information

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