



Families of Costa Rica

Teacher's Guide

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Families of Costa Rica Script

Rural Script

It's early morning here in Cabuya, Costa Rica. It's 5:30 and I'm getting up for school. My name is Estibaliz and I'm ten years old. I live here with my Mom and Dad and lots of dogs, ducks, geese, and roosters and hens, which you probably know are male and female chickens.

While I take a shower, Mom fixes breakfast. She mixes corn meal and water, pats the dough into flat circles, cooks them on a pan called a comal.....and we have tortillas!

Mom and Dad get up at 5 o'clock. Most people get up at 5 or 6 in the morning to get some of their work done before it gets too hot. Later the temperature will be 95 or 100 degrees.

Dad's out watering our plants, because this is the dry season. We don't get much rain from December to April. But the wet season makes up for it.

Mom collected the eggs that our hen laid, and she's cooking them for herself and Dad. She's going to fix a hot dog for me. Sometimes we have gallo pinto, which is the breakfast dish made by mixing together the rice and beans that were left over from dinner the night before.

Mom helps me get the tangles out of my wet hair, and then I finish combing it. I have to leave the house by 7 o'clock to get to school on time at 8:00.

I like to bring my breakfast to the living room where Dad is catching up on the news. I'm having tortillas and hot dogs with mayonnaise.

Before we leave for school, Mom goes over my geography lesson with me.

We say goodbye to Dad before he goes to work. Most people in this area raise cattle, catch fish, or have jobs in tourism, which is what Dad does. He takes care of the lawns and gardens for a hotel about four miles away. The road to the hotel is rough, so he always wears a helmet when he rides his motorcycle to work.

Mom made a pot of rice for me to take to school for the snack shop. She walks with me to the corner to catch my ride. I go to a private school, and one of my aunts pays for me to go there.

There's my friend's mother. She's a pharmacist, which means she gets medicine ready for people to buy in a drug store. She'll drop us off at school on her way to work. This is the same road that Dad took...see what I mean about bumps?

Here's our school. It has 45 students in grades one to six, and there are five students in my class.

My first class today is English. Students in city schools usually start to study English in first grade. But rural schools often don't have English teachers. That's one reason I'm going here instead of a public school. We're learning the alphabet with pictures of things that start with each letter. See? Frog starts with the letter "F". We also study geography, history, science, math and Spanish, which is our national language.

Today it's my turn to work at the school snack shop. I'm adding a powdered mix to water to make a drink that we'll sell.

We use the money we make at the snack shop to buy supplies for the school. Costa Rican money is called colones. Working here gives me good practice in adding and subtracting and in learning to make change.

It's time for band practice. I've been playing the glockenspiel since second grade.

One of Costa Rica's national heroes is a courageous young drummer named Juan Santamaria. He lived 150 years ago, and he died helping defend Costa Rica against forces that wanted to take over the country. Lots of buildings and streets, and even our biggest airport, are named after him, and every year the whole country honors his bravery on Juan Santamaria day. Today Costa Rica's famous for being a peaceful country. In fact, we don't even have an army!

When it's lunch time we go to the house next door to our school. The lady there makes lunch that students can buy. She usually makes rice and beans, eggs, potatoes, and cabbage salad.

My friends and I like to eat lunch together back at school.

While I'm at school, Mom cleans a neighbor's house. It seems like we're dusting all the time because when cars or motorcycles go by on the dirt road, they raise big clouds of dust that like to settle right back down inside our houses. When Mom gets done cleaning here, she'll go home and get to work on ours!

Dad's busy too. He waters the hotel's plants and cleans up the grounds. He puts leaves he's cleaned up onto a compost pile where they'll turn into soil that he can use in the gardens. At about noon the hotel makes lunch for all the people that work there.

When I get home from school, I change clothes. Then I pick up mangoes that have fallen off our trees and feed them to our neighbor's cows.

Then Mom goes over some homework with me.

Remember the ducks and chickens we have in our yard? Well, now we have new kind of

family out there. It turns out that a duck and a hen both laid their eggs in the same nest. Then they had a big fight about which one was going to sit on the nest to hatch the eggs. Well, the hen won, so she got on the nest, and the duck went away and made herself a new nest.

For some reason the hen's eggs didn't hatch, but the duck eggs did. Now the hen has the ducklings for her chicks. And the ducklings have her for their mom. But it seems like the hen can't quite figure out why her little ones always want to jump into the water dish for a swim!

We live next to our country's first nature reserve, which is called Cabo Blanco. Even though Costa Rica's small, our country has lots of different kinds of environments....high and low areas, wet and dry ones, and warm and cool ones, and different plants and animals like to live in each environment. We've protected most of these areas, so lots of people come to see and study the wildlife living here. Dad says that's called ecotourism.

Dad's finished with his work at the hotel. When Dad gets home I show him a new song I'm learning.

Then while I'm practicing, Dad starts making tamarindo, our favorite drink that's made from tamarind fruit. He separates the fruit from around the seeds, which are in a pod. Then Mom will mix the fruit with water and sugar. She says she's heard that tamarind has more sugar than almost any other fruit, but that it's also the most acidic. So it's kind of a sweet and sour battle on your tongue, and sour wins.

Mom fixed a nice supper for us. We always have rice, beans, salad, and either tortillas or plantains (which look like green bananas but taste more like potatoes). Then we have a little something else to go with it, like fish, chicken, or beef, or a hard boiled egg.

Several of my aunts, uncles and cousins live near us, and our families often get together.

My Uncle Roberto and Aunt Joelle live next door to us and they eat dinner with us during the week. Aunt Joelle says we're lucky because she and I both like to play games. Tonight we're playing Parcheesi.

Then we watch a little TV before bedtime. Tomorrow morning we're going to visit Grandma's grave and tomorrow night our village is having a dance after the soccer games. I can't wait!

It's Saturday morning and we're walking to the village cemetery. You might think that would be easy, but it's not! That's because the cemetery's on an island. When the tide's out, we can walk there without any trouble. But when the tide's in, like this, the water's too deep.

The trick is to plan to go at the right time. You probably know that tides are caused by the moon's gravity pulling the ocean water up and down as the moon goes around the earth,

and the tides go up and down twice a day.

So anyway, when we visit the cemetery, we'd better keep track of the time. A few people have forgotten to do that, and they had to wait about eight hours for another chance to walk off the island. It's just like missing the bus and having to wait a long time for the next one!

Uncle Roberto is watering a plant near Grandma's grave. He had to bring fresh water from home because salt water from the ocean is bad for most plants. He made a small hole in the bottom of this old soda bottle so that water will drip very slowly into the dirt next to the plant.

On the way back home Aunt Joelle and I decide to take a swim. When we see the water getting deeper, we know the tide has started to come in and it's time to head for home.

Our village divides itself into four soccer teams that play on Saturday nights! Dad and I are watching one of the soccer games with Shiloh, my cousin's son. The dance starts after the games are over. Most people in the village come either to dance or to watch.

Well, everybody's yawning so I guess it's getting late. Time to say 'goodnight' to our friends and go home to get ready for bed. Tomorrow Dad has the day off so we can all sleep late.

Good night!

Urban Script

I live in Costa Rica, in Central America. People come here from all over the world to see our beautiful country, and our animals, plants and birds.

The nice thing about my country is that we have mountains, plains, and jungles, and they're all pretty close together. You can be in the jungle in the morning and a few hours later you can visit a place that's almost a desert.

My mother, father, three-year-old brother, Gabriel and I live in a town called Escazu. Our town is on the side of a mountain high above San José, which is Costa Rica's capital city. More than half of Costa Rica's people live in this big valley surrounded by mountains and three volcanoes!

My name is José Andres Zeledon Oreamuno and I'm ten years old. I get up at six o'clock so I can be ready for school at 7.

Mom and Dad take turns making breakfast, and today it's Dad's turn, so Mom gets to sleep late. Once a month Dad gets up early, even though he doesn't have to, so he can go bike riding with his friends. Dad's group has been doing this for over twenty years and they even have a name for themselves...the coyotes. They always leave from the same

spot at exactly 6 in the morning.

While I'm putting on my school uniform, Dad gets breakfast ready for me. I'm having an egg sandwich and a cup of hot chocolate. While I'm eating, Dad packs some snacks for me to take to school.....usually juice, some kind of fruit and a cookie. Sometimes I take my lunch, too. When I don't, I just buy lunch at school.

When it's brushing time, I brush my teeth and Dad brushes my shoes.

Before I leave for school Dad and I read the Bible together. Costa Rica is officially a Catholic country, so religion is taught in all the schools. We're Evangelical Christians, which basically means we try to have a relationship directly with God.

On our way to school, we have to make a few stops. My family is building a new house, and Dad needs to pick up some building materials today. Since the car we're using is too small, Dad stops at Grandpa's to borrow his truck. When we get to my friend's house, his mother will drive us to school, and Dad can run his errands with the truck. It's kind of complicated, but that's the way we do it to save gas and people's time.

This is my school. I go to a private school, which means that Mom and Dad pay for me to go there. Getting a good education is important to Costa Ricans. We were the first country in the world to have free public schools and almost all Costa Ricans can read and write. In fact, the very first president of our country was a teacher!

Our first stop in the morning is our homeroom, where we start the day with a prayer. Then we head off to our first class, which is science. Today we're doing an experiment where we mix together ordinary baking soda and vinegar to find out what happens.

Today in art class our teacher tells us about some of the world's great artists. Then we paint with watercolors. Just before the class ends we hold our paintings under the ceiling fan so the paint will dry faster.

On my way to computer class I notice kids from another science class who are doing a cool experiment. They're cooking potatoes in an oven they made out of a box, a sheet of glass, and a mirror, and guess what they used for energy! If you guessed the sun, you're right. The sun made the box so hot that it cooked the potatoes, just like an oven! I guess they're really doing a hot experiment, not a cool one!

When we go into computer class our teacher stands by the door and checks our hands to be sure they're clean. Dad says that lots of Costa Rican students are learning new technologies so they can work in the high tech businesses here.

It's time for lunch, and today I'm buying a piece of chicken. Some kids skip lunch to play soccer. I like to eat lunch, but I still save a little time to play before classes start.

During lunch break these students practice an Irish dance for a performance in a couple

of months.

In math class we're working on algebra. The nice thing about math is that once we learn the rules it's almost like a game to find the right answer.

While I'm in class, Mom drops Gabriel off at day care, and Dad will pick him up at one o'clock.

Sometimes before she goes to work, Mom shops at the farmer's market. Every Saturday farmers come to Escazu to sell the things they've grown, and Mom likes to shop here because everything is so fresh. All kinds of fruits and vegetables grow in this valley, which is pretty high, but in lower areas where it's hotter, farmers grow lots of bananas and coconuts. And in the dry areas in the west, they raise cattle. We also have lots of pineapples, but I'm not sure where they grow.

If we get thirsty while we shop, we can buy fresh coconut water. They chop the top off a green coconut (that's one that's not ripe yet.) Then we drink the water inside with a straw. Or we can have fresh sugar cane juice from these guys, who are putting sugar cane through a press.

One thing we really love is coffee! Costa Rica sells a lot of coffee to other countries, and this is the area where it's grown.

Time for Mom to get to work. She has her own business...she runs a swimming school! Most women don't work outside their homes, but Mom says that's changing. As many women as men go to college now, and women are getting good jobs in business and government. Our country has even had two women vice presidents!

Mom says older people come to the pool to exercise and the water makes their aches and pains feel better.

Dad has his own business, too. He buys used cars in the United States. Then he has them put onto a big ship that bring them here to Costa Rica. When Dad gets the cars, he fixes them up and sells them for a profit. That means he sells them for more money than he paid for them. Dad likes to use the cars he's going to sell for a few days to be sure that they don't have any problems. So we never know what kind of car we're going to have when we go someplace.

It's time for Dad to pick up Gabriel at day care. He'll spend the afternoon with Nina, because she lives with us and helps with the housework and taking care of Gabriel.

Back at school, we've finished classes and I'm getting ready for soccer practice. Sports are a big thing in Costa Rica, and you can see all the things we can choose to do here at our school.

The first thing we do in soccer is exercise to loosen up and strengthen our muscles. Then we make up two practice teams that play together.

After that I practice trying to kick the ball into the goal net and the goalie practices trying to keep it out. We loosen up again for a few minutes before we pack up and head for home.

Today my aunt's taking us home. Sometimes my friend's mom picks us up, and sometimes it's my mom or dad. Everyone is busy, so whoever is free tries to help out.

When I get home I change my clothes and take our dog Sophie for a walk. Sophie's 4 years old and I'm trying to teach her to play soccer.

Then I do my homework. I usually have about 30 minutes of homework a night. Tonight I'm supposed to write about what I want to be when I grow up. I'm writing that I want to be a soccer player, I want to have money to buy music, and I want to play soccer for the best team in the world ...Barcelona!

When I show my paper to Dad, he says I should describe what I need to do to make those things happen, and how long each step will take.

While I do my homework, Nina fixes supper. Tonight she's making guacamole, an avocado dish that we eat with tortillas. Nina is from Nicaragua, and her mother works in a home nearby.

At around 6:30 we have supper. We're eating together tonight, but usually during the week we eat at different times. On weekends when we're not so busy, we have our main meal at about 3:00 in the afternoon. Nina's mother took a class on how to make sushi. That's a Japanese food made by rolling vegetables and fish in rice, and then in the leaves of a sea plant called nori. I love sushi, so Nina's mother taught her how to make it for us.

After supper Gabriel and I practice our band. Gabriel is learning to play drums and we're both learning the guitar.

Mom's putting away some clothes that she bought on her and Dad's last trip to Florida. She buys clothes there and sells them here. Sometimes she lets her customers pay a little each week instead of all at once.

Gabriel and I let off some energy for a few minutes before we get ready for bed.

From Escazu we can look down on San José at night and see the bright lights of the soccer fields where games are being played in different parts of the city. Sometimes teams even have fireworks after their games. Someday maybe I'll get to play in a game where there'll be fireworks afterwards. Of course, I can dream about it.

Good night.

Glossary

algebra: the area of math involving numbers and letters

business: a means of making money whereby one makes his own decisions

cemetery: a place to bury the dead

compost pile: a way of collecting vegetable matter and letting it break down to soil

corn meal: ground up corn used to make many dishes

eco-tourism: a travel business that tries not to hurt the environment

geography: the study of the Earth, including its people and their culture

glockenspiel: a musical instrument with metal bars that is played by hitting with a hammer

nature reserve: a place set aside in its natural condition and protected from construction

pharmacist: A person who is qualified to give out medicine

technology: the way people use the things in the world around them to get what they want

volcano: A mountain that has a channel to the center of the Earth and which can let the hot lava of the inside of the Earth out

Discussion and Activities After Viewing

1. Ask what things in the video indicate that the climate in Costa Rica is hot.
2. Have students name or draw several fruits and vegetables commonly found in Costa Rica that are familiar to them.
3. Discuss why Spanish is the national language of Costa Rica. (patio, bronco, ranch, tornado)
4. What Spanish words do we commonly use in the U.S.?
5. If students have family or friends from Costa Rica, ask the children to interview them about growing up in Costa Rica and bring in photos, items, and stories from Costa Rica.
6. Invite someone from Costa Rica to talk with the class about their life in Costa Rica, play a traditional instrument, or tell a Costa Rican story.
7. Ask students to draw a picture, make a list or write a paragraph on how their life and school are different and similar from those they saw in the video.

Questions

- 1 What are Catholics?
- 2 Why is there only a rainy season and a dry season?
- 3 Did corn and peanut only grow in the Americas?
- 4 Why does Costa Rica not have an army?
- 5 Why is it good to have free public schools?
- 6 Why are more women getting jobs outside the home?
- 7 How many different things from around the world are in the lives of Costa Ricans?

Answers to Questions

1 What are Catholics?

Roman Catholicism is one of the largest religions in the world, with over a billion members distributed all over the world. It has a large amount of literature and a large organization. Catholicism's history began when some people, initially all Jews, accepted Jesus Christ as not just a prophet, but as the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Roman Catholicism traces its beginning to the Apostle Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Catholicism, which means *universal*, received the adjective "Roman" due to the Church's adoption of the same governing organization as that of the Roman empire. The adjective was also used because of the tradition that Peter had founded the Church in Rome and that he and Paul were buried there.

Roman Catholics are found throughout the world, with high concentrations in southern Europe, South America and the Philippines.

2 Why is there only a rainy season and a dry season in Costa?

In the tropics, which is where Costa Rica is, the temperature is warm all year around, and there is no winter, spring or fall. The seasons are the rainy season from June through November and the dry season for the rest of the year.

3 Did corn and peanut only grow in the Americas?

The Amerindians domesticated chilies, corn, potatoes, cocoa, tomatoes, peanuts to use as food crops. The Spanish took these crops in to Europe and the rest of the Old World. Before that there were no Irish potatoes, spicy Korean kimchi, Malaysian ketchup or Dutch chocolates.

4 Why does Costa Rica not have an army?

Costa Rica used to have an army, but then after a brief civil war in 1948 they decided not to have one anymore.

5 Why is it good to have free public schools?

A country needs people who can read and write. People need to be able to read and write in order to take advantage of all the information that has been written down.

6 Why are more women getting jobs outside the home?

Women with education find they can make more money outside the home.

7. How many different things from around the world are in the lives of Costa Ricans?

The people of Costa Rica are connected to the rest of the world through trade and communications. Estibaliz's father works in the tourism industry, where visitors from around the world visit Costa Rica. José's father travels to the United States, their family hired a person from the neighboring country of Nicaragua, and they like to eat sushi, a food first used in Japan.

Quiz on Things We've Learned About Costa Rica

(Circle the correct answer).

1. T F The colon/colones is the national currency of Costa Rica.
2. T F San José is the capital of Costa Rica
3. T F Costa Rica is in South America.
4. T F Costa Rica grows a lot of coffee.
5. T F The people of Costa Rica live much as Americans do.
6. T F Many young people are learning English in Costa Rica.
7. T F There are volcanoes in Costa Rica
8. T F Rice and beans, tortillas and tamarindo are eaten in Costa Rican meals.
9. _____ is the national language of Costa Rica.
10. Draw pictures about the different parts of Estibaliz or Jose's story. Try to include as many details as you can remember about each part.

Quiz Answers on Things We've Learned About Costa Rica

(Circle the correct answer).

1. T The colon/colones is the national currency of Costa Rica.
2. T San José is the capital of Costa Rica
3. F Costa Rica is in South America.
4. T Costa Rica grows a lot of coffee.
5. T The people of Costa Rica live much as Americans do.
6. T Many young people are learning English in Costa Rica.
7. T There are volcanoes in Costa Rica
8. T Rice and beans, tortillas and tamarindo are eaten in Costa Rican meals.
9. Spanish is the national language of Costa Rica.

Introduction

Costa Rica is famous for its democratic traditions and its eco-tourism. It is the land of Óscar Arias, the Nobel Peace Prize winner.

The Land and the Climate

Costa Rica is bordered on the north by Panama and in south by Nicaragua. A series of mountain ranges, the northernmost extensions of the Andes, runs along the center of the country. To either side are coastal lowlands of lagoons and swamp lands. The climate is subtropical in the lowlands and temperate in the highlands.

Plant and animal life

The diverse environment includes mangrove swamps, coniferous forests, deciduous forest, tropical rain forests and grasslands. This supports one of the densest population of flora and fauna. In some places as many as 90 different species of trees may co-exist in one acre. About a quarter of the country has been set aside as wilderness preserves.

The People

There are approximately 4 million Costa Ricans. Costa Ricans call themselves ticos. Most Costa Ricans are descendants of the Spanish colonizers, with an unknown number having Amerindian blood. Three percent of the population is black, mostly descendants of Jamaican immigrants who came in the late nineteenth century to work on the railways. They were joined by the Chinese, whose descendants number about 40,000. About 40,000 Amerindians and mestizos live by the northwestern corner of the country. In recent years hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans have settled either legally or illegally in the country.

Cultural Life

Life in the villages revolves around the family and the church. Most people are Roman Catholics and celebrate the major passages of life in the church. The country boasts a 96% literacy rate, one of the highest in the world.

In the cities, where more than 60% of the population lives, people have many more choices and a modern urban cosmopolitan culture exists. Bullfighting is a pastime, and everybody loves dancing. Soccer is the largest participatory sport.

Daily Life

Costa Rica's economy depends on tourism, agriculture, outsourced back office operations and electronics exports. Agriculture is still important as ornamental plants and flowers and coffee are major export industries. Poverty has been reduced from 50% twenty years to about 20% today as more people have moved from the rural areas to the cities to get jobs in the service sector. Foreign investors remain attracted by the country's political stability and high education levels, as well as the fiscal incentives offered in the free-trade zones. Exports have become more diversified in the past 10 years due to the growth of the high-tech manufacturing sector, which is dominated by the microprocessor industry. Tourism continues to bring in foreign exchange, as Costa Rica's impressive biodiversity makes it a key destination for ecotourism

Other companies have taken advantage of the large English speaking population to outsource business back office operations to Costa Rica. Problems include inflation and government deficits which erodes the strong social safety net that had been put into place by the government.

History

Human artifacts dating to 9000 BCE have been found in Costa Rica. The area seemed to have been sparsely populated. The Spanish explorers in the early sixteenth century report over twenty tribes that warred upon each other. Most of the original inhabitants died when exposed to the diseases brought by the Spanish.

The initial attempts at colonizing Costa Rica proved unsuccessful due to a combination of factors, including: disease from mosquito-infested swamps, brutal heat, resistance by natives, and pirate raids. It was not until 1563 that a permanent settlement of Cartago was established in the cooler, fertile central highlands. The area remained a colony for some two and a half centuries. Because transport links were weak to Guatemala City, the major

Spanish outpost in Central America, Costa Rica developed in isolation. The land did not lend itself to plantation agriculture, so few African slaves were involved. In the early 1800s coffee was introduced to the country and created the first large scale export business. In 1821, Costa Rica became one of several Central American provinces that jointly declared their independence from Spain. Two years later it joined the United Provinces of Central America, but this federation disintegrated in 1838, at which time Costa Rica proclaimed its sovereignty and independence. Since the late 19th century, only two brief periods of violence have marred the country's democratic development. The country was one of the first in the world to offer free, tax-subsidized education as a constitutional right in 1869. It also eliminated the death penalty in 1882. Most famously Costa Rica abolished the army in 1948. Although it still maintains a large agricultural sector, Costa Rica has expanded its economy to include strong technology and tourism industries. The standard of living is relatively high and land ownership is widespread.

Costa Rica



Flag of Costa Rica

The flag of Costa Rica was officially adopted on September 29, 1848. The blue and white are the original colors used by the United Provinces of Central America, while the combined red, white and blue are modeled after the colors of the French Tricolore. The country's coat of arms is found on the red panel and features the three volcanoes in the country.



Map of Costa Rica

Recipes

Costa Rican Rice and Beans

Ingredients

1 cup cooked white rice
1 cup cooked black beans, drained and rinsed
1/4 cup broth from black beans
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 red pepper chopped
2 spoonfuls Olive oil
2 Teaspoons Sesame oil
3 Tablespoons Salsa Lizano (or spicy vegetable sauce)
Fresh cilantro
Salt & fresh black pepper to taste

Steps

Heat olive and sesame oil in a large skillet over medium heat.

Add spices (onion, sweet pepper, garlic) and saute for about 5 minutes, until brown.

Add the black beans and broth. Then add the rice.

Combine the rice and beans with the spices and simmer until broth is gone.

Finally, add cilantro, salsa Lizano, salt and pepper to taste.

Accompany the Gallo Pinto with eggs, cheese, or green salad

Preparation time: 30 mins

Serves: 4 - 6

Activities - Maracas

Watch a Costa Rican dance called the “Punta Guanacasteco” on Youtube to get a glimpse of traditional costumes and dance.

Listen to salsa, calypso and meringue on Youtube to get a taste of Costa Rican music or try

Appendix

Geography

Location: Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama

Geographic coordinates: 10 00 N, 84 00 W

Map references: North America

Area:

total: 51,100 sq km

land: 50,660 sq km

water: 440 sq km

note: includes Isla del Coco

Area - comparative: slightly smaller than West Virginia

Land boundaries: *total*: 639 km

border countries: Nicaragua 309 km, Panama 330 km,

Coastline: 1290 km

Climate: varies from tropical to desert

Terrain: coastal plains separated by rugged mountains including over 100 volcanic cones, of which several are major volcanoes

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Pacific Ocean -0 m Pacific Ocean 0 m

highest point: Cerro Chirripo 3,810 m

Natural resources: hydropower

Land use:

arable land: 4.4%

permanent crops: 5.87%

other: 89.73% (2005 est.)

Irrigated land: 1,000 sq km (2003 est.)

Natural hazards: active volcanoes, occasional earthquakes, hurricanes along the Atlantic coasts, and frequent flooding of lowlands at onset of rainy season and landslides

Geography - note: Two active volcanoes near San Jose, one of which erupted destructively in 1963-65

People

Population: 4,199,766 (July 2008 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.33% (2000 est.)

Life expectancy at birth: *total population*: 77.4 years

Total fertility rate: 2.17 children born/woman (2008 est.)

Ethnic groups: white including mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 94%, black 3%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian 1%, Chinese 1%

Religions: nominally Roman Catholic 76%, Protestant 15%, other 9%

Languages: Spanish, English

Literacy: *definition*: age 15 and over can read and write *total population*: 96%

Government

Country name:

conventional long form: Republic of Costa Rica

conventional short form: Costa Rica

local long form: Republica de Costa Rica

local short form: Costa Rica

Government type: democratic republic

Capital: San Jose

Administrative divisions: 7 provinces

Independence: 15 September 1821 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 15 September (1821)

Constitution: 5 February 1917

Legal system: based on Spanish civil law

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chancery: 2114 S Street NW , Washington, DC 20008

telephone: [1] (202) 234-294500

FAX: [1] (202) 265-4795

Diplomatic representation from the US:

embassy: Calle 120 Avenida O, Pavas, San Jose

mailing address: APO AA 34020

telephone: [506] 519-2000

FAX: [506] 519-2305

Economy

GDP - real growth rate: 6.1% (2007 est.)

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$13,500 (2007 est.)

GDP - composition by sector:

agriculture: 14%

industry: 22%

services: 64% (2006 est)

Population below poverty line: 16% (2007 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 9.3% (2007 est.)

Labor force - by occupation: agriculture 24%, industry 21%, services 55% (1997)

Unemployment rate: 5.5% urban (2007)

Industries: microprocessors, food processing, medical equipment, textiles, construction materials, fertilizers, plastics

Agriculture - products: bananas, pineapples, coffee, melons, ornamental plants, sugar, corn, rice, beans, potatoes; beef; timber

Currency: 1 New Mexican peso (Mex\$) = 100 centavos

Exchange rates: Costa Rican colones per US\$1 – 519.53 (January 2007),

Communications

Telephones - main lines in use: 1.35 million (2006)

Telephones - mobile cellular: 1.44 million (2006)

Familias de Costa Rica

Guión rural

Es muy tempranito aquí en Cabuya, Costa Rica. Son as 5:30 y es la hora de levantarme para ir a la escuela. Me llamo Estíbaliz y tengo diez años. Vivo con mi mamá y mi papá, y muchos perros, patos, gansos, y gallos y gallinas, que seguro sabes que son el macho y la hembra de los pollos.

Mientras me ducho, mamá prepara el desayuno. Mezcla harina de maíz con agua, le da palmaditas a la masa hasta convertirla en círculos planos, la cocina en una cazuela llamada comal... ¡y tenemos tortillas!

Mamá y papá se levantan a las 5 en punto. Casi todo el mundo se levanta a las 5 ó 6 de la mañana para hacer algunas cosas antes de que haya demasiado calor. Más tarde la temperatura se eleva a 95 o 100 grados.

Papá está afuera regando las plantas, porque estamos en la estación de seca. No llueve mucho de diciembre a abril. Pero la estación de lluvias lo compensa.

Mamá recogió los huevos que puso la gallina, y los está cocinando para ella y para papá. A mí me preparará un perro caliente. A veces comemos gallo pinto, que es un desayuno que se prepara mezclando el arroz y los frijoles que quedaron de la cena de la noche anterior.

Mamá me ayuda a desenredarme el pelo mojado, y después yo me lo peino. Tengo que salir de la casa a las 7 en punto para llegar a la escuela a las 8.

Me gusta llevar el desayuno a la sala donde papá oye las noticias. Como tortillas y perros calientes con mayonesa.

Antes de irme a la escuela, mamá me repasa la lección de geografía.

Le decimos adiós a papá cuando se marcha a trabajar. La mayoría de la gente de por aquí cría ganado, pesca o trabaja en el turismo, que es lo que hace papá. Él cuida el césped y los jardines de un hotel que está a cuatro millas. El camino que conduce al hotel es muy irregular, así que tiene que usar casco cuando conduce en motocicleta al trabajo.

Mamá prepara una cazuela de arroz para que yo la lleve al merendero de la escuela. Me acompaña a la esquina que es donde me recogen. Voy a una escuela privada que paga una de mis tías.

Allí está la amiga de mi mamá. Es farmacéutica, lo que significa que prepara las medicinas que la gente va a comprar a la farmacia. Nos deja en la escuela en camino a su trabajo. Éste es el mismo camino que toma papá. ¿No te decía que era muy irregular?

Aquí está la escuela. Tiene 45 alumnos de primero a sexto grado, y hay cinco niños en mi aula.

Mi primera clase hoy es inglés. Los estudiantes de la ciudad empiezan a aprender inglés en primer grado. Pero es muy raro que las escuelas rurales tengan maestros de inglés. Ése es uno de los motivos por los que vengo aquí en lugar de a una escuela pública. Estamos aprendiendo el abecedario con dibujos y cosas que empiezan con cada letra. ¿Ves? “Frog” empieza con la letra “F”. También estudiamos geografía, historia, ciencias, matemáticas y español, que es el idioma que se habla en mi país.

Hoy me toca trabajar en el merendero de la escuela. Estoy añadiendo un polvo al agua para preparar una bebida que vendemos.

El dinero que ganamos en el merendero lo destinamos a comprar artículos para la escuela. El dinero de Costa Rica se llama colón. Este trabajo me sirve para practicar la suma y la resta, y dar el cambio.

Ahora la banda va a practicar. Toco el glockenspiel desde segundo grado.

Uno de los héroes nacionales de Costa Rica es un valiente tamborilero llamado Juan Santamaría. Vivió hace 150 años, y murió defendiendo Costa Rica de los invasores. Muchos edificios, calles, y hasta nuestro aeropuerto más grande, llevan su nombre. El día de Juan Santamaría todo el país le rinde homenaje a su valentía. Hoy en día, Costa Rica es famosa por ser una nación pacífica. ¡Ni siquiera tenemos ejército!

A la hora del almuerzo, vamos a la casa que queda al lado de la escuela. Allí hay una señora que prepara comida que los alumnos pueden comprar. Casi siempre tiene arroz y frijoles, huevos, papas y ensalada de col.

Mis amigos y yo regresamos a la escuela para comer juntos.

Mientras estoy en la escuela, mamá limpia la casa de un vecino. Parece que nos pasamos el tiempo desempolvando, porque cuando los autos y las bicicletas pasan por el camino de tierra levantan grandes nubes de polvo que se asientan en el interior de las casas. Cuando mamá termina de limpiar la casa del vecino, regresa a limpiar la nuestra.

Papá también está muy ocupado. Riega las plantas del hotel y limpia el terreno. Pone las hojas que recoge en una pila de compost donde se convertirán en humus que puede usar para fertilizar los jardines. Al mediodía, el hotel prepara almuerzo para toda la gente que trabaja allí.

Cuando regreso de la escuela, me cambio de ropa. Recojo los mangos que se han caído de nuestro árbol, y se los doy a comer a las vacas del vecino.

Luego, mamá me revisa la tarea.

¿Recuerdas los patos y pollos que tenemos en el patio? Bueno, ahora tenemos una nueva familia. Resulta que una pata y una gallina pusieron huevos en el mismo nido. Y claro, se pelearon porque las dos querían sentarse en el nido a empollar los huevos. Bueno, la gallina ganó y se quedó en el nido, y la pata se fue e hizo un nuevo nido.

Pero por alguna razón los huevos de la gallina no se dieron, pero los de la pata sí. Ahora la gallina cree que los paticos son sus pollitos. Y los paticos creen que ella es su mamá. Pero parece que la gallina no se explica por qué sus hijitos siempre quieren saltar al plato del agua para nadar.

Vivimos cerca de la más importante reserva natural de nuestro país, que es Cabo Blanco. Aunque Costa Rica es pequeña, tiene muchos medio ambientes diferentes: zonas altas y bajas, húmedas y secas, cálidas y frías, y diferentes plantas y animales que viven en cada medio ambiente. Casi todas estas zonas están protegidas, así que mucha gente viene aquí a estudiar la vida salvaje. Papá dice que eso es ecoturismo.

Papá ha terminado su trabajo en el hotel. Cuando regresa a casa le enseño una canción que estoy aprendiendo.

Mientras practico, papá prepara fresco de tamarindo, nuestra bebida favorita, que se prepara con el fruto del tamarindo. Separa la pulpa de las semillas, que están en una vaina. Entonces mamá mezcla la pulpa con agua y azúcar. Ella dice que ha oído que el tamarindo es la fruta que tiene más azúcar, pero también es la más ácida. Así que es como una batalla en la lengua entre lo dulce y lo ácido, pero lo ácido gana.

Mamá nos prepara una comida rica. Siempre comemos arroz, frijoles, ensalada, y tortillas o plátano verde (que se parece al banano, pero sabe parecido a la papa). Y también comemos un poquito de pescado, pollo, carne o huevo duro.

Algunas de mis tías, tíos y primos viven cerca, y nos reunimos con frecuencia.

Mi tío Roberto y mi tía Joelle viven en la casa de al lado, y comen con nosotros entre semana. Tía Joelle dice que tenemos suerte porque a ambas nos gustan los juegos. Hoy vamos a jugar parchís.

Antes de acostarnos vemos televisión un rato. Mañana por la mañana iremos a visitar la tumba de abuela, y por la noche se celebrará un baile después de los partidos de fútbol. ¡Qué ganas tengo de ir!

Es sábado por la mañana y vamos de camino al cementario del pueblo. Puedes creer que es fácil, pero, ¡qué va! Es que el cementerio está en una isla. Cuando baja la marea, podemos llegar sin problema. Pero cuando sube, como por aquí, el agua es demasiado profunda.

Hay que planear la visita a la hora adecuada. Seguro sabes que las mareas son provocadas por la gravedad de la Luna, que hace que el agua de los océanos suba y baje a medida que la Luna le da vueltas a la Tierra, y que las mareas suben y bajan dos veces al día.

Así que, cuando visitamos el cementerio, tenemos que estar atentos a la hora. Hay gente que lo ha olvidado y ha tenido que esperar ocho horas para poder salir de la isla. Es como perder el autobús y tener que esperar mucho tiempo por el siguiente.

Tío Roberto está regando una planta cerca de la tumba de abuela. Tiene que traer agua dulce de casa porque el agua del océano es mala para la mayoría de las plantas. Hizo un agujerito en el fondo de una botella de refresco para que el agua gotee poco a poco en la tierra donde está la planta.

En el camino de regreso, tía Joelle y yo decidimos nadar un rato. Cuando vemos que el agua se pone cada vez más profunda, sabemos que la marea ha empezado a subir y es hora de irnos a casa.

Nuestro pueblo se divide en cuatro equipos de fútbol que juegan los sábados por la noche. Papá y yo vemos los partidos de fútbol con Shiloh, el hijo de mi primo. El baile empieza cuando se terminan los juegos. Casi todo el mundo viene a bailar o a mirar.

Bueno, todo el mundo está bostezando. Supongo que es muy tarde. Es hora de despedirnos de nuestros amigos y regresar a casa a acostarnos. Mañana papá tiene el día libre, así que nos podemos levantar tarde.

¡Buenas noches!

Guión urbano

Vivo en Costa Rica, en América Central. La gente nos visita de todas partes del mundo para ver nuestro hermoso país, nuestros animales, plantas y pájaros.

Lo bonito de mi país es que tenemos montañas, llanuras y selvas, muy cerca unas de otras. Puedes estar en la selva por la mañana y, unas pocas horas después visitar un lugar que es casi un desierto.

Mi mamá, mi papá, mi hermanito de tres años, Gabriel, y yo vivimos en una ciudad llamada Escazú. Nuestra ciudad está en la ladera de una montaña sobre San José, que es la capital de Costa Rica. Más de la mitad de la población de Costa Rica vive en este gran valle rodeado de montañas y de tres volcanes.

Me llamo José Andrés Zeledón Oreamuno y tengo diez años. Me levanto a las seis para estar listo para ir a la escuela a las siete.

Mamá y papá se turnan para preparar el desayuno, y hoy le toca a papá, así que mamá puede dormir un rato más. Una vez al mes, papá se despierta temprano, aunque no tenga que hacerlo, para montar bicicleta con sus amigos. El grupo de papá ha estado haciendo esto durante veinte años, e incluso se pusieron un nombre: los coyotes. Siempre sale del mismo sitio a las seis en punto de la mañana.

Mientras me pongo el uniforme de la escuela, papá me prepara el desayuno. Me como un sándwich de huevo y una taza de chocolate caliente. Mientras como, papá me prepara una merienda para la escuela: jugo, alguna fruta y una galletica. A veces, también llevo el almuerzo. Cuando no lo hago, compro el almuerzo en la escuela.

¡Hora de usar el cepillo! Yo me cepillo los dientes y papá me cepilla los zapatos.

Antes de irme a la escuela, papá y yo leemos la Biblia juntos. Costa Rica es oficialmente un país católico, y en las escuelas se enseña religión. Nosotros somos cristianos evangélicos, lo que básicamente significa que tratamos de establecer una relación directamente con Dios.

De camino a la escuela, nos detenemos varias veces. Mi familia está construyendo una casa nueva y hoy papá tiene que escoger algunos materiales de construcción. Como el auto que tenemos es demasiado pequeño, papá pasa por casa de abuelo para pedirle prestado el camión. Cuando lleguemos a casa de mi amigo, su mamá nos llevará a la escuela, y papá podrá hacer sus diligencias con el camión. Es un poco complicado, pero lo hacemos así para ahorrar gasolina y tiempo.

Ésta es mi escuela. Voy a una escuela privada, lo que significa que mamá y papá la tienen que pagar. Para los costarricenses es importante recibir una buena educación. Fuimos el primer país del mundo en tener escuelas públicas gratuitas, y casi todos los costarricenses saben leer y escribir. ¡De hecho, nuestro primer presidente fue un maestro!

Por la mañana nos reunimos en nuestra aula y empezamos el día con una plegaria. Después, nos dirigimos a la clase de ciencia. Hoy estamos haciendo un experimento en el que mezclamos bicarbonato de sosa y vinagre para averiguar qué pasa.

Hoy en la clase de arte la maestra nos cuenta sobre los grandes artistas del mundo. Después, pintamos con acuarelas. Antes de que termine la clase, sostenemos las pinturas bajo el ventilador de techo para que se sequen más rápido.

De camino a la clase de computación, veo a niños de otra clase que hacen un experimento fantástico. Cocinan papas en un horno hecho con una caja, un pedazo de vidrio y un espejo. Y, ¿adivinas qué usan como energía? Si dijiste el sol, ¡adivinaste! El sol hace que la caja se ponga tan caliente que cocina a las papas, igualito que un horno.

Cuando llegamos a la clase de computación la maestra está en la puerta y nos revisa las manos para asegurarse de que estén limpias. Papá dice que muchos estudiantes

costarricenses están aprendiendo nuevas tecnologías para poder trabajar en los negocios de alta tecnología aquí.

Es hora de almorzar, y hoy voy a comprar un pedazo de pollo. Algunos niños se saltan el almuerzo para jugar fútbol. Me gusta almorzar, pero dejo un ratito para jugar antes de que empiecen las clases.

Durante el receso del almuerzo estos estudiantes practican una danza irlandesa para una actuación dentro de un par de meses.

En la clase de matemática estamos estudiando álgebra. Lo bonito de la matemática es que una vez que aprendes las reglas, encontrar las respuestas es casi un juego.

Mientras estoy en clases, mamá deja a Gabriel en una guardería, y papá lo recoge a la una en punto.

A veces, antes de irse a trabajar, mamá pasa por el mercado campesino. Los sábados, los campesinos vienen a Escazú a vender lo que han cultivado, y a mamá le gusta comprar ahí porque todo es muy fresco. En este valle, que es muy alto, hay muchas variedades de frutas y verduras, pero en zonas más bajas, los campesinos cultivan mucho plátano y coco. Y en las zonas secas del oeste, se cría ganado. También tenemos mucha piña, pero no estoy seguro dónde se cultiva.

Si nos entra sed mientras estamos en el mercado, podemos comprar agua de coco fresca. Le cortan la parte de arriba a un coco verde (es el que todavía no está maduro), y nos bebemos el agua de adentro con una pajilla. O podemos tomar jugo de caña de azúcar. ¿Ves cómo esos hombres meten la caña en una prensa? Hay algo que nos encanta: ¡el café! Costa Rica vende mucho café a otros países, y es en esta zona donde se cultiva.

Es hora de que mamá se vaya a trabajar. Tiene su propio negocio: ¡una escuela de natación! La mayoría de las mujeres no trabajan fuera de su casa, pero mamá dice que eso está cambiando. Como la misma cantidad de mujeres que hombres va a la universidad ahora, las mujeres consiguen buenos trabajos en el campo de los negocios y en el gobierno. ¡En nuestro país dos mujeres han sido vicepresidentas!

Mamá dice que la gente mayor viene a la piscina a hacer ejercicios y que el agua les alivia los dolores.

Papá también tiene su propio negocio. Compra autos usados en Estados Unidos y los manda traer a Costa Rica en un barco grande. Cuando llegan, los arregla, los vende y obtiene una ganancia. Eso significa que los vende por más dinero del que pagó por ellos. A papá le gusta conducir los autos que va a vender por unos días para estar seguro de que no tengan problemas. Así que nunca sabemos el auto que vamos a usar.

Es hora de que papá recoja a Gabriel de la guardería. Se pasará la tarde con Nina, porque ella vive con nosotros. Ayuda en la casa y cuida a Gabriel.

En la escuela ya hemos terminado las clases y me preparo para mi práctica de fútbol. Los deportes son muy populares en Costa Rica, y puedes ver todas las cosas que podemos escoger para hacer aquí en la escuela.

Lo primero que hacemos es hacer ejercicios para relajar y fortalecer los músculos. Después formamos dos equipos que jugarán juntos.

Luego, practico el tiro al arco. Pateo el balón a la portería y el portero trata de impedir que entre. Nos relajamos otra vez durante unos minutos antes de empacar e irnos a casa.

Mi tía nos lleva a casa hoy. A veces, es la amiga de mi mamá la que nos recoge, y a veces es mamá o papá. Todo el mundo está ocupado, así que el que está libre trata de ayudar.

Cuando llego a casa, me cambio de ropa y saco a pasear a nuestra perra Sophie. Sophie tiene cuatro años y estoy tratando de enseñarle fútbol.

Luego hago mi tarea. Casi siempre tengo 30 minutos de tarea. Hoy debo escribir lo que quiero ser cuando crezca. Escribo que quiero ser jugador de fútbol, quiero tener dinero para comprar música, y quiero jugar fútbol en el mejor equipo del mundo... ¡el Barcelona!

Cuando le muestro la página a papá, me dice que debo describir lo que necesito hacer para lograr que esas cosas sucedan, y cuánto tiempo demorará cada paso.

Mientras hago la tarea, Nina prepara la comida. Hoy está haciendo guacamole, un plato de aguacate que comemos con tortillas. Nina es de Nicaragua, y su mamá trabaja en una casa cerca de aquí.

Cenamos a las 6:30. Hoy comemos juntos, pero entre semana casi siempre comemos a diferentes horas. Los fines de semana, cuando no estamos demasiado ocupados, nuestra comida principal es las 3:00 de la tarde. La mamá de Nina tomó una clase para aprender a preparar sushi, que es un plato japonés que se hace enrollando vegetales y pescado en arroz, y luego, con una planta del mar llamada nori. Me encanta el sushi, así que la mamá de Nina le enseñó a prepararlo.

Después de la cena, Gabriel y yo practicamos nuestra banda. Gabriel está aprendiendo a tocar tambores y ambos aprendemos guitarra.

Mamá está guardando algunas ropas que compró en su último viaje con papá a Florida. Ella compra ropa allí y la vende aquí. A veces deja que sus clientes se la paguen poquito a poco, en vez de en un solo pago.

Gabriel y yo gastamos un poco de energía antes de prepararnos para dormir.

Desde Escazú podemos contemplar San José abajo, por la noche, y ver las luces brillantes de los campos de fútbol donde se está jugando, en varios puntos de la ciudad. A veces, los equipos lanzan fuegos artificiales cuando termina el partido. Tal vez, algún día, jugaré un partido en el que se lancen fuegos artificiales al final. Por supuesto, puedo soñar con eso.

Buenas noches.