



**CAMP  
ZEN  
COMMANDO**

**TRAVEL PACKET**

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## 1.0 Introduction

How well you prepare will determine your overall travel success while visiting Costa Rica. We at Zen Commando are here to assist throughout all stages of your Costa Rica trip. Everyone has different degrees of travel experience, some more experience than others, so we understand any questions or concerns you may have about travel to Costa Rica.

The following information is provided to assist with planning and executing your travel. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY, particularly the section **Travelers Insurance**.

Any questions you may have, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

[todd@zencommando.com](mailto:todd@zencommando.com) or via Whatsapp for more immediate response at +19109860186.

## 2.0 About Camp Zen Commando (CZC)

Camp Zen Commando (CZC) is a mind-body adventure and performance camp located in the foothills near Dominical, Costa Rica on the Pacific Coast... one of Costa Rica's premier surf destinations. CZC rests on three acres and is surrounded by pristine beauty that includes lush tropical forests, flowing streams, and bountiful fruits and vegetables. What makes CZC special is the peace, beauty, and solitude of the location. Within a short distance, there is full access to numerous swimming holes and waterfalls and a nature preserve with countless hiking trails and scenic vistas. The camp amenities include a fitness facility with weights, wifi, the main facility for dining, and a guesthouse for lounging and sleeping.

## 3.0 Traveling to Camp Zen Commando

Traveling to Costa Rica and Camp Zen Commando is simple, and one of our goals is to make getting to CZC as easy as possible. The majority of U.S. airlines provide non-stop flights from major hubs. Miami, Houston, Los Angeles, Dallas, Charlotte, and New York / Newark are a few of the major U.S. cities that directly serve either San Juan Santamaria International Airport in San Jose or Daniel Oduber International Airport in Liberia in the northern part of Costa Rica. Because traveling to Costa Rica might be the first time for you, we will assist as much as possible to make your travel as simple as possible, but *please* keep in mind the infrastructure is not as developed and high-tech as in the U.S., Canada, and other places, so ***manage your expectations to avoid unnecessary anxiety.***

## 4.0 Pre-Travel

### 4.1 Plane Ticket Purchase

Due to logistics, you must plan your arrival and departure flights accordingly. If you are attending a training course or retreat, ensure you plan to arrive at Camp Zen Commando between 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm on the day before the course/retreat begins.

For planning your departure flight, please ensure you do not schedule a departure flight any sooner than 1:00 pm Costa Rica local time. This will provide enough time for ground transportation to get you from Camp Zen Commando to the airport for your check-in and security checks.

- *It is highly recommended your purchase additional insurance for your plane ticket in case of any extenuating circumstances that might arise which may prevent your travel.*

### 4.2 Passport and Visa Requirements

- You need to have at least six (6) months of validity on your passport to travel outside the continental U.S.
- ***Depending on the airline you travel and the agent checking into your flight the agent might ask to see your return flight details to the U.S. Please have them accessible.***
- Visa Requirements – All U.S. Passport Holders receive a 90-day Visa on Arrival (no action required).

### 4.3 Enroll in STEP

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll in their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

- STEP enrollment is **NOT mandatory** to visit Costa Rica, but it does provide the embassy with your information in case a situation arises, and you require embassy assistance
- Website to enroll is located [HERE](#)

### 4.4 Banking

- Ensure you notify your bank of your international travel, so there isn't a hold imposed on your card (s) when you use them for the first time in-country
  - Most banks offer this service online
- The number and type of cards are dependent on your needs and requirements.  
**CommandoTip:** A recommended guideline is to carry (1) x debit card, (1) x primary credit card, (1) x backup credit card

## 4.5 Travelers Insurance

It's important you purchase the correct type of travel insurance before coming to Costa Rica, or when traveling abroad. Basic insurance covers medical expenses, baggage loss, trip cancellation, accidents, and personal liability. Still, it's worth spending extra to make sure you're covered in the event of natural disasters. If you intend to take part in adventure sports, make sure that your policy covers those particular sports; for divers, some policies only cover you up to a certain depth.

***Please visit the Costa Rica Ministry of Tourism website located [HERE](#) for the latest Costa Rica entry requirements. You are responsible for ensuring you perform all the requirements to enter and depart Costa Rica.***

## 4.6 Helpful Mobile Device Applications

Downloading the below applications can assist with your travel throughout the country

- **Uber.** Uber does operate in more populated dense areas, so it is recommended that you use Uber when traveling in the vicinity of San Jose, especially to and from the airport. Rates do tend to be a bit more effective than taxi cabs.
- **WhatsApp.** WhatsApp is a communications tool that works on a wifi connection. Most people in Costa Rica rely on Whatsapp to communicate with one another. It is highly advised that you download Whatsapp before departing your point of origin and perform a communications check with a representative from Camp Zen Commando (See Points of Contact)
- **Currency convertor.** A currency converter will assist you in converting local currency into USD in a more timely manner. Most establishments accept USD, credit cards, and debit cards. ATMs are available throughout the country and offer English and Spanish options.
- **Waze.** Waze is a GPS navigation software app owned by Google. It works on smartphones and tablet computers that have GPS support. It provides turn-by-turn navigation information and user-submitted travel times and route details while downloading location-dependent information over a mobile telephone network. Many vendors in Costa Rica use Waze for navigation purposes.

## 5.0 Electronics

### 5.1 Mobile Devices

- Contact your cellular provider/carrier to determine the type of roaming and international services they offer
  - ATT offers a \$10 / day unlimited data and cell usage plan for Costa Rica travel and other areas in the world

- An ATT customer can access their wireless account online and easily enable this feature for the period traveling. Remember to disable the feature upon completion of travel or ATT will continue to charge you for the period enabled.
- Whatsapp is the most popular communication method in Costa Rica due to wifi access at most establishments.
  - **ProTip:** Download Whatsapp onto your mobile device and perform a communications check with the designated Zen Commando rep
- A SIM card can be purchased in-country and used with an *unlocked phone*. Ensure your mobile device is unlocked if you want to “pay as you go.”
- **Due to location, there is no cellular service at Camp Zen Commando wifi is available for you to use to communicate via WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, or other**

## 5.2 Computers and Tablets

- Avoid traveling with extra electronics unless necessary - they are just extra items you have to account for everywhere you travel. If you decide to bring your computer, ensure there is no sensitive information saved on your computer that a hacker may steal.
- Avoid accessing any type of sensitive account, e.g., bank accounts, business accounts, etc., while using public wifi hot-spots to reduce the risk of computer cyber-attack.
- DO NOT leave electronics unattended or in view in a locked vehicle

## 6.0 Currency

Costa Rica's currency is the colon (₡), named after Christopher Columbus. It comes in both paper and coin form. The paper money ranges from bills of ₡1,000 (called a “mil” (Spanish for 1,000) or “un rojo” because of the bill's red color) to ₡50,000. Coins range from an almost valueless ₡5 to ₡500 (“quinientos” (Spanish for 500)) and are quite heavy for the higher denominations.

### 6.1 Exchange Rate

The exchange rate fluctuates daily but usually factors to between ₡650-680 per USD. For example, if an item costs ₡1,250, it is slightly less than \$2.50. An easy way to think of it is to double the amount in colones and move the decimal point.

Here are the most common bills and their estimated USD equivalent using this method:

₡1,000 is about \$2.00

₡2,000 is about \$4.00

₡5,000 is about \$10.00

₡10,000 is about \$20.00

₡20,000 is about \$40.00

\*Note the higher the bill, the less exact the calculation with the above formula. For example, if the current exchange rate is ₡550 for each dollar, a ₡20,000 bill will equal only about \$35 instead of \$40.

In addition to colones, US dollars are widely accepted throughout the country, though it is best to have some local currency to use just in case.

ATMs are the most reliable method to get money. It is normal to get alarmed when using an ATM abroad, but the ATMs in Costa Rica are as safe to use as anywhere in the U.S. You can get local currency from an ATM as long as you've authorized your card for use internationally. ATM machines can be found throughout Costa Rica and in most tourist destinations.

**Some banks in Costa Rica recently started limiting ATM withdrawals for people with foreign ATM/debit cards.** Banco de Costa Rica (BCR) and Banco Nacional now allow foreign account holders to take out only ~\$100 per transaction or ~ \$200 per day if you do two transactions. You can still go into the bank to withdraw money, but this is less convenient. Either plan to bring a little more cash with you or use other banks' ATMs, which do not have the same limits. The other thing to keep in mind is foreign transaction fees. Most banks in Costa Rica, except for BCR, charge a fee for using their ATM. In addition to that, you might get charged by your home bank for using an out-of-network machine and also foreign currency conversion fees for taking out local currency. Check with your bank before you leave about the different fees.

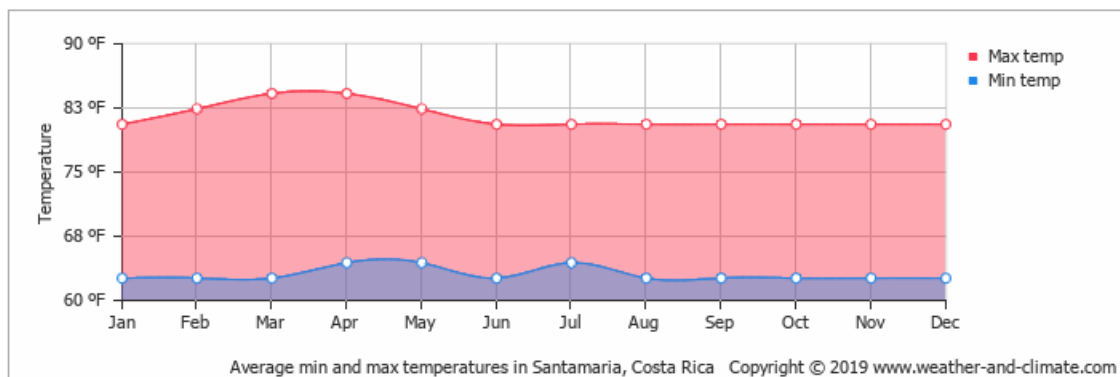
## 6.2 Credit Cards

One convenient aspect of traveling in Costa Rica is that credit cards are widely accepted. It is preferred to use a credit card (or debit card for purchases) whenever possible because you know you're getting the correct conversion and it's nice not to carry a lot of cash on your person. Many restaurants, hotels, gas stations, and tour operators accept credit so be sure to ask.

**ProTip: Be sure to authorize your credit card for international use so your bank doesn't flag your account for fraud when you use it. Also, ask your bank about its fees for foreign transactions so that you don't have any surprises when you return home.** These charges typically range from 1-3% of the total transaction amount. Credit unions tend to have the lowest fees. If you travel out of the country frequently, consider getting a travel credit card, which doesn't have fees for international purchases.

## 7.0 Weather

- On average, the temperatures are in the 80's and 90's with high humidity... typical of tropical weather
- The Rainy season is considered to be between late May and November with the heaviest rains occurring between September and November. Though these months are the rainy season, generally, the mornings are clear with rainfall beginning in the afternoon and lasting until the evening.
- On average, the warmest month is March.
- On average, the coolest month is October.
- September is the wettest month. This month should be avoided if you don't like too much rain.
- February is the driest month.





## 8.0 Airport Information

Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO) is located on the outer fringe of San Jose, Costa Rica's capital city. The airport has gone through plenty of improvements over the past few years and is renovated regularly to keep up with the increasing growth rate of the economy.

- Free WiFi is available for your convenience, but don't rely on it.
- There are ATMs located in the baggage claim area so you can withdraw cash to enable paying for services during your visit.

### 8.1 Arriving at SJO

- On Aircraft. On flights to some countries, you will receive a custom form to claim any items or articles you bring into the country. ***Effective as of 2019, Costa Rica does not require a customs form to be completed unless you bring more than \$10,000, carrying agricultural products, or other items required to be claimed.***
- At Arrival Gate. Debarb Aircraft
- Pass through Immigration Desk.
- Follow signs to Immigration checkpoints to get your passport stamped.
  - ***You will be required to show proof of exit from Costa Rica.***
  - Proceed through the Immigration checkpoint to Baggage claim
  - ***If asked where you will be staying, provide the following address:***
    - ***Laguna Savegre A La Par de Quebrada, Sea Breeze Farms, Savegre, Puntarenas***
- Retrieve and procure baggage at baggage claim
- ***ProTip.*** An ATM is located near the baggage claim. This is a good opportunity to withdraw local currency for possible forthcoming expenses. It is always good to have a little extra local cash on your person.
- ***ProTip.*** Log onto airport Wifi and if necessary or required, notify Zen Commando representative of your status
- Proceed to customs after retrieving baggage
  - Provide customs form to the attendant
  - Place luggage on the x-ray belt
- Pass through customs to Terminal Exit



## 8.2 Departing Airport to Follow-On location

- After going through customs, proceed to the airport exit
- Take either a taxi or Uber to your hotel, Tracopa Bus Terminal or other destination
- ***If meeting a Shuttle or Zen Commando representative, the location to meet is at the Airport Cafe which is located on the right-hand side after exiting the air terminal/baggage claim. A shuttle driver will have a placard with your name.***



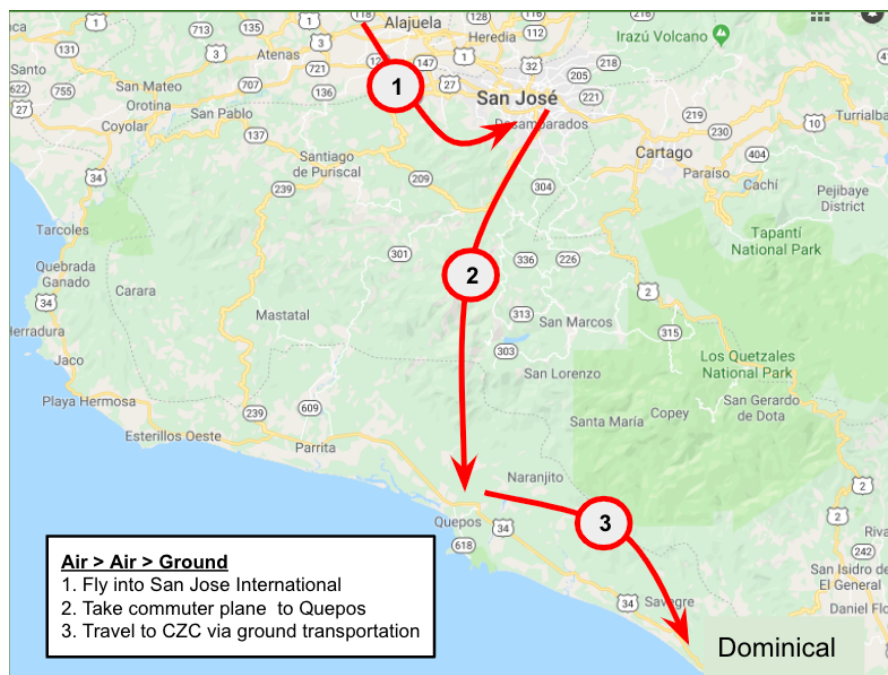
## 9.0 Getting to Camp Zen Commando

Dominical is the destination for follow-on transportation to CZC. Please remember, you are responsible for arriving at Dominical/CZC the day prior to the first training day, so give yourself plenty of time between movements and plan accordingly.

There are two primary options for getting to Camp Zen Commando:

### 9.1 Option 1: Air > Air > Ground - Fast & Efficient

Option 1 consists of three phases that involve traveling to San Jose, Costa Rica via a major air carrier, taking another commuter plane from SJO to Quepos, and then finally proceeding to Camp Zen Commando via ground.

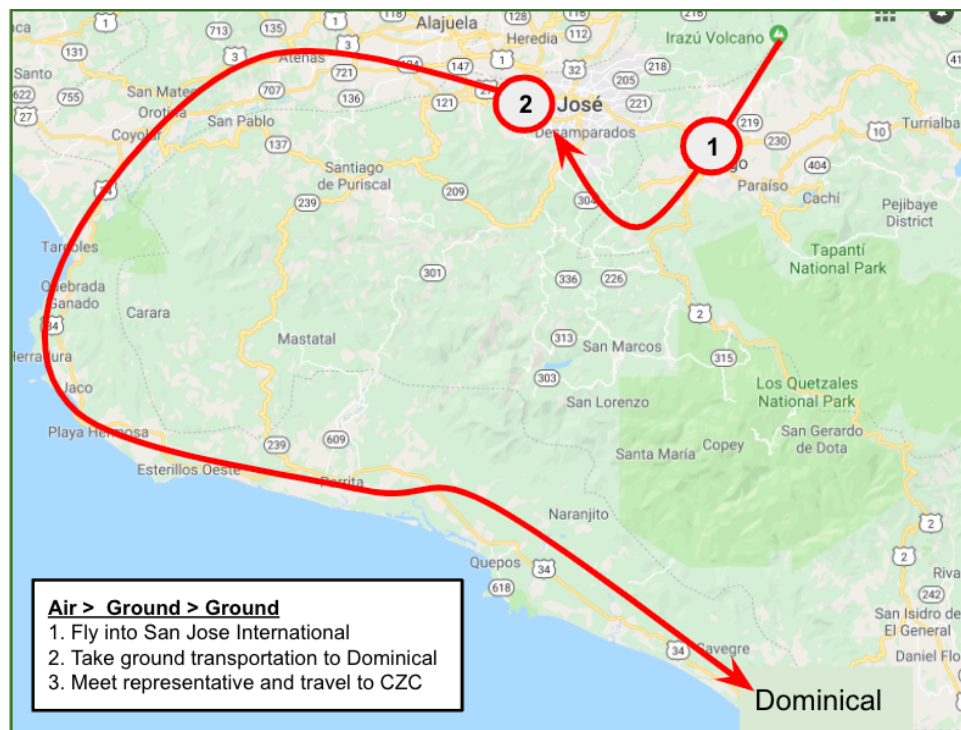


- Air. Fly into San Jose airport (SJO)
- Air. Take a commuter flight to Quepos via Sansa ([www.flysansa.com](http://www.flysansa.com)) or Nature Air ([www.natureair.com](http://www.natureair.com))
- Ground. Upon arriving in Quepos, you have three options to get to Dominical. You can take a taxi, rental vehicle, or bus to pick you up directly at the Quepos airport. Once at Dominical, a representative will meet you and bring you to the camp.
  - Taxi. Costs approximately \$40 and can be accessed in the vicinity of the Quepos airport. You can also use a transport provider listed in Section 14.0
  - Rental. You can rent a car in Quepos, but prices tend to be high due to insurance requirements. You will also be required to have a 4x4 to negotiate the road into camp. We do not recommend renting a vehicle if attending a course.

- Bus. Buses run regularly from Quepos to destinations all over Costa Rica. A bus stop is located near the Quepos airport and will cost approximately \$4 USD to get you to Dominical. Be advised, there is no set schedule listed for bus routes, but you can ask someone from a nearby store or another for possible times.

## 9.2 Option 2: Air > Ground - Slow & Scenic

Option 2 is a two-phase movement process that involves traveling to San Jose, Costa Rica via air and then taking ground transportation to Dominical for a follow-on movement to Camp Zen Commando.



1. Upon arriving at SJO you have three ground movement options to get to Dominical where a representative will meet you for travel to camp.
  - Bus. Most preferred. A bus ticket to Dominical costs approximately \$8.00 and departs from the main Tracopa Station at Plaza Viquez / Avenida which is located [HERE](#)
    - You will have to take a taxi, or uber, from the airport to the Tracopa Bus terminal. Traffic-dependent, it can take upwards of an hour to get to the bus terminal, so plan accordingly.
    - The Tracopa bus schedule is located [HERE](#). When using the site and finding times of departure, the name of the place of origin is "Saint Joseph" and the name of the destination is "Uvita." Plan on arriving at the bus terminal 45 -60 minutes before ensuring you get a ticket.

- Upon arriving in Dominical, a representative will meet you for a follow-on movement to CZC.
- The trip takes approximately 3.5 to 4.0 hours.
- Please remember to arrive at CZC the day prior to Training Day One
- Rental Car. Depending on your overall Costa Rica itinerary, you can rent a car and drive directly to Camp Zen Commando. Rental cars tend to be slightly expensive due to the insurance requirements imposed by rental agencies. You will also require a 4x4 variant to access the roads to get to Camp Zen Commando. This is not the preferred option unless you plan on touring the country before or after your stay at CZC.
- Shuttle. You can arrange for a shuttle arranged to take you from SJO to Dominical where you will then be met by a representative to take you to camp. Travel time to Dominical is approximately 3.5 to 4.0 hours and prices range vary from ~60.00 and higher per person. **A list of shuttle services is provided in Section 14.00**

## 10.0 Security and Safety

### 10.1 Background

Costa Rica is a safe and friendly country, but because it continues to be a developing Latin American country, conditions will be different from the US, Canada, and Europe. Costa Rica lies between the biggest drug-producing country (Colombia) and the biggest drug-consuming country (USA) in the Americas; therefore, a steady flow of drugs from South to North through Latin America does exist, but the majority of trafficking in the vicinity of Costa Rica is done offshore via maritime vessels and other methods.

Opportunistic theft and drug-related crime are the most popular types of crime, so remaining alert and vigilant is crucial. Below are general universal guidelines and measures that can be considered when traveling abroad, not only in Costa Rica.

### 10.2 Travel Guidelines and Best Practices

#### **BLUF, DO NOT LEAVE ANY VALUABLES YOU DON'T WANT TO BE STOLEN UNATTENDED.**

- Apart from cash, items such as iPhones, iPods, cell phones, credit cards, laptops, cameras, jewelry, and passports are the “hot” items. So carry as little as possible and leave your valuables in a safe where you are staying.
- After dark, it's much better to take a taxi instead of walking or using a bike
- Public intoxication or buying drugs will attract unwanted attention.
- Avoid carrying too much money on your person, and if you must, have a small amount in your pocket and put the main amount safely hidden
- Avoid wearing your expensive mobile device or camera around your neck.



- Leave your passport in your safe, carry a hard copy, or keep a photo on your mobile device
  - You do require a copy of the page with your photo and a copy of the page with the entry stamp
- Avoid bringing valuables to the beach. Select a location where you can have someone you trust to look after your belongings when going into the water. Theft of unattended belongings at public beaches is common.
- Avoid leaving valuables unattended in your car. Place valuable items in the trunk.
 

**ProTip.** Avoid others seeing you placing your valuables in the trunk.
- Don't buy drugs and if drugs are offered, avoid further engagement with the person - walk away to a safe and secure location
- Being intoxicated makes you an easy victim
- Travel in groups, avoid traveling alone; travel in pairs
- If you do become a victim, ask for help and take the help that is offered and report; every correctly made report will help make this a better destination
- **ProTip.** For your mobile phone, make sure you copy the IMEI code, which gives you the possibility to make your phone useless for a thief. The IMEI code will also assist authorities to track your device.
- **ProTip.** AVOID logging into sensitive accounts in public wifi areas. Cyber hackers prey on tourists and the acquisition of sensitive information over unsecured networks is simple to perform.

## 11.0 Helpful Tips

- Be RESPECTFUL to everyone. This includes being considerate, kind, helpful, and friendly
- Avoid being RUDE. You represent where you come from and *“what you project is what you reflect...”*
- Be PATIENT. In Costa Rica, everything happens SLOWLY!!
- Dress appropriately when conducting business in official locations, e.g., municipal buildings, banks, and government agencies, et al.

## 12.0 Pre-Travel Checklist

Pre-Travel Checklist	
1	Ensure Passport is current and has at least 6 months of validity remaining
2	Purchase airline tickets. Below are listed a couple guidelines if using a shuttle service.
	Plan your arrival time to be NO LATER than 1pm Costa Rica local time if planning a shuttle service
	Plan your departure time to be NO EARLIER than 12pm Costa Rica local time if using a shuttle service
3	Notify your bank of travel outside of the U.S.
4	Enroll in STEP (Optional). Use the below address for Camp Zen Commando:
	<p>Address:</p> <p>Address Line 1/Location Name:</p> <p>Laguna Savegre A La Par de Quebrada, Sea Breeze Farms</p> <p>Address Line 2:</p> <p>City:</p> <p>Savegre</p> <p>Province:</p> <p>Puntarenas</p> <p>Postal Code:</p> <p>Country:</p> <p>Costa Rica</p>
5	Check latest Costa Rica entry requirements at the Costa Rica Ministry of Tourism website
6	Check latest United States entry requirements at the Department of State International Travel website
7	Download the following helpful mobile applications (optional, but highly recommended)
	Whatsapp
	Uber
	Google Translator
	Waze
	Currency Convertor
8	Pack according to the Packing List
9	Complete and return any required forms as prescribed
	Application and Hold Harmless Agreement
	Pre-Course Questionnaire
10	Review the Camp Zen Commando Travel packet
11	Purchase Travelers Insurance as required
12	Ensure you have a hard copy of your return flight itinerary to present to Costa Rican immigration upon arrival

## 13.0 Packing List

Recommended Minimum Packing List		
Quantity	Item	Notes
1	Backpack	Used for carry-on; check with airline for size limitations
1 pr	Sandals	Teva-type sandals are recommended
1 pr	Running Shoes	<b>Expect shoes to get dirty.</b> Recommend shoes with good traction for negotiating wet surfaces
4 pr	Socks	<i>Majority of time will be spent in sandals or barefoot</i>
4 pr	Shorts	Recommend surf-type shorts that can be used for yoga, fitness, swimming, and casual wear
4	T-Shirts / Tanktops	Lightweight
1	Hygiene / Toiletries	Toothpaste, toothbrush, shaving items, etc
1	Sunscreen	
1	Mobile phone	
-	Charging Accessories	For mobile phone and electronic accessories
1	Wallet	Cash, Credit Card, Debit Card, Identification
1	Passport	
1	Sweatshirt, lightweight	Recommended for travel to and from Costa Rica
1	Headlamp, or flashlight	
As Req'd.	Undergarments	
1	Proof of return trip	This is required for Immigration
Optional / Not Required		
	Camera	
	Hat	
	Sunglasses	
	Swimsuit	
	Chapstick	
	Umbrella	
	Rain jacket	
	Water Bottle	
	Beach towel	Bath towels are provided
	Mosquito / Insect repellent	
	Extra batteries	



## 14.0 Transportation and Shuttle Services

The below services are local services that can assist with getting you from SJO to Dominical. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. We are here to assist.

\* All numbers listed are for use with Whatsapp

\* Monkey Ride is the most reliable and easiest to reserve

\* Be prepared to pay drivers in cash; the majority DO NOT take credit cards

Shuttle Services			
Name	Phone Number	Facebook Page	Other
Monkey Ride	(+) 506 8651 9090	<a href="#">Monkey Ride</a>	<a href="#">Reservations</a>
Transportes ML	(+) 506 8973 4582	<a href="#">Transportes ML</a>	
Charlie Shuttle Costa Rica	(+) 506 7106 0248	<a href="#">Charlie Shuttle Costa Rica</a>	
Domiloco Tours and Transportation	(+) 506 8615 3339	<a href="#">Domiloco Tours and Transportation</a>	
Byron Salas	(+) 506 8797 1722	<a href="#">Byron Salas</a>	
Costa Rica Dan	(+) 506 7172 9525	<a href="#">Costa Rica Dan</a>	
Godo Tours Shuttle	(+) 506 8636 1742	<a href="#">Godo Tours Shuttle</a>	
CR Tours and Travel	(+) 506 6019 3784	<a href="#">CR Tours and Travel</a>	
Transport Service (Eric)	(+) 506 8443 8651		
Individual Taxi Services (Can provide transportation to and from airport)			
Sergio	(+) 506 8832 9932	Highly Recommended	
<b>Elmer</b>	<b>(+) 506 8833 6830</b>		
Tommy	(+) 506 8720 0703		
Norman	(+) 506 8659 5959		
Daniel	(+) 506 8920 2322		
Walter	(+) 506 8779 3030		

## 15.0 Contact Information

**Zen Commando Representative:** Todd Opalski

**WhatsApp:** +1 910 986 1086

**Facebook:** Zen Commando

**Email:** [todd@zencommando.com](mailto:todd@zencommando.com)

**Address:**

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Savegre, Puntarenas, Costa Rica