

### ARRIVING TO SJO AIRPORT IN SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

Though it is referred to as the "San Jose airport," it is actually located in Alajuela, a city just a few miles northwest of the Costa Rica capital city of San Jose. SJO is relatively small in size, but quite nice. It's modern & air conditioned. Arrivals to and departures from Juan Santamaria are simple and straightforward.

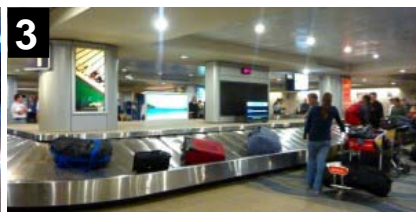
About an hour before you land on Costa Rican soil, a flight attendant will hand you 2 forms to be filled out: 1 is for Immigration, the other for Customs. Note that only 1 Customs form is required per family. Once you have landed and are inside, follow signs to "Migracion" or Immigration (Pic 1). If you arrive during an incoming flight lull, you can be in and out of the airport, bags in hand, in less than 30 minutes. High-traffic periods are usually between 12 pm and 2 pm and 8 pm and 11 pm.

As you wait in line for Immigration (Pic 2), make sure to have your forms filled out and your passport ready. Immigration officials are generally friendly, and usually speak some English. Your Immigration official will check your form answers against your passport information, swipe your passport through a machine, stamp your passport, and send you on your way. The entire process takes about 2 minutes.

After Immigration, head to baggage claim (Pic 3). Baggage arrives quickly, so if you waited at Immigration for more than 20 minutes, your bag will likely beat you to baggage claim. There are three baggage carousels, each marked with a digital display that indicates which flight's baggage is on each carousel. During peak traffic times, two flights might share a carousel. If you've checked overweight or large luggage like a surf board, follow the signs to the overweight baggage claim. Free baggage carts are available, so grab one if you have several bags (note: you cannot take the baggage carts outside).

Next, head to Customs. Have your Customs form ready (one per family), and hand it to the Customs official. You will need to place all items – checked luggage and carry-ons – onto the x-ray belt. After the official waves you on, proceed through the Customs exit then down the hallway and out of the airport through the large glass doors (Pic 4). **IMPORTANT: Once you exit the glass doors, you cannot re-enter.**

As you exit the glass double doors you will see an outdoor waiting area (basically a sidewalk with vendors). This is our Meeting Spot. **WARNING: YOU MAY BE APPROACHED BY STRANGERS TRYING TO "HELP" YOU WITH YOUR LUGGAGE. DO NOT FALL FOR THIS TRICK. DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW TO "HELP" YOU WITH YOUR LUGGAGE. THEY WILL SEEM FRIENDLY, BUT THEY CAN CAUSE MANY PROBLEMS FOR TRAVELERS SUCH AS STEALING ITEMS OR DEMANDING A LOT OF MONEY FOR THEIR SERVICE. POLITELY, YET FIRMLY, SAY "NO THANK YOU" & WALK AWAY FROM THEM.**



### DEPARTING FROM SJO AIRPORT (Picture 5)

Leaving from SJO Airport is generally a treat – short lines and fast service usually have you from check-in to your gate in less than 45 minutes. However, backups and problems do happen here, as in any other airport, so try to arrive at least 2-3 hours before an international flight.

As you enter the airport, **the first order of business is to pay Costa Rica's \$26 departure tax (you cannot check-in with your airline until you have proof that you have paid your departure tax)**. Group leaders can take everyone's passport to the payment area & pay for the entire group at one time. There is only one section for collecting departure tax, located against the wall opposite the airline check-in counters. It is easy to find, and all employees speak English.

After you've paid the \$26 departure tax, you'll be given a proof of payment and a form to fill out. Fill out the form immediately, and keep both it and your payment receipt handy. As you head into your airline check-in line, officials will make sure that you've paid the exit tax. Once you've checked your baggage and gotten your plane tickets, walk towards Airport Security.

Just like America's Airport Security you must deposit all metal objects (watches, coins, belts, etc.) in a plastic bin along w/ your shoes, laptops, etc. Once through, pick up all of your belongings, and continue to your exit gate. Gates are well-marked and easy to find. While waiting for takeoff, you'll find plenty to see and do. The airport has a food court, free wireless internet and plenty of duty-free shops. Enjoy!