



3-Month COSTA RICA

IMMERSION

experience **mission**



What is **IMMERSION?**

IMMERSION is an opportunity for young adults (age 18-30) to step outside of the normal cadence of their lives in order to gain a broader picture of: 1) the world around you, 2) the way God works in that world, and 3) the value of relationships and quality service alongside people whose lives are just as valuable as your own.

Simply put, **IMMERSION** is about focusing on the “how we do it” of international ministry and service rather than just “what we do.” Our central focus is on the importance of **authentic relationships** as the keystone to healthy ministry, and engaging in what it means to truly “love our neighbor” as people of privilege in the 21st century.

Teams spend their time equally split between service opportunities, cultural immersion in the community, and relationship building with community partners and host families. This means there is plenty of space to give your time and attention to others—a necessary part of doing missions well—prioritizing people over the simply seeking out projects to complete.



COSTA RICA *Partners*

Victor and **Sara Mayorga-Molina** are one of Experience Mission's longest-standing partnerships, serving together for more than 14 years. Over those years, Experience Mission and IMMERSION volunteers have had the privilege to build a deep relationship with them and their family, watching their kids grow up and their care for their community expand.

Victor and Sara live in the small town of **Shiroles**, in the Talamanca region of Costa Rica. They are members of the **Bribri** tribe, one of Costa Rica's indigenous people groups in the southern part of the country, near Panama.

Over the last 20 years of ministry together, Victor and Sara have dedicated much of their time to the youth of their town. They do their best to have an open-door policy, where young adults know they can stay with them as needed, and a hot meal can be prepared on a moment's notice. For many, they are seen as extended family, and a stable place where they are welcomed and loved.





PROGRAM

Schedule

Because you will be living in a remote indigenous community, **Spanish language** experience is a priority for this program. Your first two weeks will be spent in **San Jose** living with host families and learning Spanish through an immersive language program at the **Costa Rica Language Academy** (CRLA). During these two weeks, you'll learn Spanish *in Spanish*, practicing vocabulary and grammar in a classroom over the course of 40 lesson hours.

Upon completion of your two-week course, you and your team will travel to the

eastern coastline of Costa Rica, spending the remainder of your time living and serving in **Shiroles** alongside Victor and Sara.

Monday through Friday are dedicated to your local ministry project, with **Saturdays** set aside as both debrief days and time designated for outings with your host family. **Sundays**, you and the team will attend church locally. Many host families go to church throughout the week as well. Our hope is that you would join your host family in the rhythms of their daily life.



WEEKLY *Ministry*

Weekly ministry consists of a mix of **farming** and **local construction**. Previous teams have helped work on a local school, done repairs on local homes, helped dig a septic tank, and supported in the construction of a local church for a nearby pastor.

Whatever work project you and your team participate in, know that you will be blessing someone in the community who is also giving back to others! *(This is a*

major point of emphasis for Victor when he chooses work projects for the team.)

When not at your work project, you and your team will invest in your relationship with your **host families** in the community. This could look like helping around the house, babysitting their kids, going on outings around the town, and integrating yourself into the family. We see this as the best way to honor your hosts, who

have opened your home to you for these months.

Additionally, there will be many opportunities to engage with the **broadier community**, whether through joining in local soccer and volleyball games, spending time playing with kids at the local park, or organizing a community meal for fellowship and fun.



HOUSING & Accommodations

Upon arriving in **Shiroles**, you and your team will be split up between **local host families**. This is at minimum, two people of the same gender in a household.

While Shiroles is a more remote community, you can still expect to have running water, electricity, and occasional Wifi access. During the dry season, be prepared for frequent water outages (usually during the daytime hours).

On weekends, you and your team will spend time at **Victor**

and Sara's home, getting to know their kids and sharing meals together as a team.

Host families are an integral part of the Costa Rica program. It is vital for anyone looking to join this program that you invest wholeheartedly in being present with your family and integrating as best as possible. When done well, this can be the most impactful and meaningful part of the IMMERSION experience.



SAFETY

Measures

Safety is a huge priority for the IMMERSION program! We are up to date on all potential **safety concerns** in the countries where teams volunteer and would never send a team to a location where we have active concerns about their safety and wellbeing.

Experience Mission local staff and partners are **experienced residents** or welcome guests in the communities you are serving in, and they communicate to all team members the **safest way** to move about during their time on the program. Regular communication is also established between partners, team leaders, and EM U.S. Staff, allowing for quick responses to any emergencies should they arise.

For medical issues, IMMERSION team leaders are **CPR/ First Aid** certified, and carry **trauma medical kits** equipped to deal with a wide range of injuries and ailments.

In the case of a larger emergency, EM staff members will **support team members** by helping them communicate with home and making sure they get to a place to receive care.

Often, local **medical clinics** are a short distance from where team members are staying. However, outside of big cities, large hospitals can often be several hours away by vehicle. Team members would not be left to do this on their own.

To ensure medical care is readily accessible, EM secures **travel medical/ evacuation insurance** for all team members. Participants are also required to come with a **Personal Emergency Fund**—a debit or credit card with \$1,500 available and \$300 of reserve cash—in case they were to have a medical issue requiring upfront payment or need to **travel home** from the program unexpectedly. This amount may seem high, but it's

purely a precaution. Most team members do not touch their emergency funds while on the trip.

Preventatively, during initial training, all team members are encouraged to enroll with **STEP** (Safe Traveler Enrollment Program) through the U.S. State Department. This allows team members and staff to receive official travel alerts if there is an issue in the region including political protests, civil unrest, increased crime, weather alerts, natural disasters, terrorism, or specific threats for foreign travelers.

An **emergency phone line** is also available to all emergency contacts.