

I Am Here: obtaining your identification and vital documents

Costa Rica

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National Identification Cards

What type of document can youth seek which will allow them to move around the country?

National ID card (Cédula de Identidad)

The Costa Rican identity card is a plastic card containing personal information issued by the [Registro Civil](#) to each Costa Rican citizen. The document is used as a travel document while traveling within or outside of Costa Rica. It can be used instead of a passport to leave or enter the country by land, sea or air. It can only be used for air travel using the Costa Rican cédula in emergency situations and never for international flights.

Starting at age 12, youth can apply for a [Tarjeta de Identidad de Menores \(TIM\)](#).

What is the process for getting a National ID card?

To apply for a Costa Rican identity card (cédula) for the first time, you must personally submit the following documents:

1. Two color photographs (3.5 cm high by 3 cm wide) with grey background
2. Child Identification Card (Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores or TIM)
3. Birth Certificate from [Registro Civil](#)

If you do not have a TIM, you must provide:

- Birth certificate issued by the [Registro Civil](#)
- Witnesses: one witness if an immediate family member (father, mother, brother, sister or grandparent), two witnesses otherwise
- Each witness must bring their valid Costa Rican identity card (cédula) in good condition
- If the direct family member is a foreigner, they must bring a valid passport

You may request your first ID card from the moment you turn sixteen, but it will be given to you when you turn eighteen.

Where can I find information online about getting a National ID?

Additional information is available at:

[Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones \(TSE\)](#)

[TSE - Cédula Information](#)

[TSE - Services](#)

What documents do I have to have to get a National ID? Is there any document that I must have to get an ID?

To apply for a Costa Rican identity card (cédula) for the first time, you must personally submit the following documents to the Consulate:

- Two colour photographs (3.5 cm high by 3 cm wide) with grey color background.
- Child Identification Card (Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores or TIM)
- Birth Certificate from Registro Civil, also you can buy it on line: [Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones, República de Costa Rica](#)

If you do not have a TIM:

- Birth certificate issued by the [Registro Civil](#)
- One witness if immediate family member (parent, sibling, grandparent)
- Two witnesses if not immediate family
- Witnesses must bring valid Costa Rican cédula or passport (for foreign immediate family)

What if my documents do not have my correct name/address?

To update your address, follow instructions in [Solicitud de traslado electoral domicilio](#):

- Bring 2 new photos (4.5cm x 4cm)
- Apply at the Civil Registry
- Check opening times and directions in the document

For more details visit [TSE - Cédula](#)

What if I only have foreign documents?

For foreigners, there is a special ID (DIMEX) which is processed and handled by the [Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería](#). The DIMEX serves as identification for foreign residents in Costa Rica.

What happens if my documents are not accepted to get a National ID card?

If your documents are not accepted when applying for a Cédula de Identidad (National ID card) in Costa Rica, you will not be able to proceed with the application. According to the [Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones \(TSE\)](#), the process requires that all documentation meet the established legal and technical requirements.

If your documents are incomplete, incorrect, or do not meet the criteria (e.g., expired ID, invalid witness statements, or improper photographs), the TSE will not process your request. You must ensure that:

- You meet the minimum age requirement (18 years)
- You provide valid identification or appear with qualified witnesses (e.g., parents, siblings, or two individuals who can vouch for your identity)
- Any supporting documents (such as a Tarjeta de Identidad de Menores) are in good condition and within the acceptable validity period
- If your application is rejected, you will need to correct the issue and resubmit your request with the appropriate documentation.

For full details, visit the [TSE's official requirements page](#).

Do I have to be a resident of the country to get a National ID card?

Requirements for Costa Rican cédula:

- Be Costa Rican
- Have had a cédula previously (for replacements)
- The process is personal

The Costa Rican identity card is issued by the [Registro Civil](#) to each Costa Rican citizen. Costa Ricans who are non-residents can request the ID at local embassies.

Additional information is available at:

- [Trámite paso a paso - Reposición Cédula de Identidad - Costa Rica Paso a Paso](#)
- [Para que sirve la cédula de identidad de Costa Rica](#)
- [Embajada de Costa Rica en DC](#)

What does it mean to be a resident of this country? How do I prove residency?

For foreigners, a resident is defined by immigration rules and could be considered temporary or permanent. There are different categories for each type of residency.

Foreign residents must have:

- Valid DIMEX (Documento de Identidad Migratoria para Extranjeros)
- Legal residency status (temporary or permanent)

For more information on residency categories, visit [Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería](#).

What can I do if I do not have residency in this country?

In Costa Rica, the [Cédula de Identidad](#) (national ID card) is issued only to Costa Rican citizens. If you are a foreign national and do not have residency, you are not eligible to receive a national ID card. Instead, you must first obtain legal residency status through the appropriate immigration channels.

To apply for residency, you must meet the requirements set by the Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería or apply for naturalization through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) if you are eligible. The process includes:

- Submitting a valid birth certificate from your country of origin, legalized or apostilled and translated into Spanish
- Providing a valid passport
- Demonstrating legal stay and means of support
- Meeting the minimum residency period (typically 5 years, or 2 years if married to a Costa Rican citizen)

Once you are granted residency or citizenship, you can then apply for a national ID card through the TSE.

You can find more information on the official TSE site:

<https://www.tse.go.cr/pdf/requisitosytramites/Naturalizacion-por-residencia-ley-1155.pdf>

For Costa Ricans abroad: Contact the Costa Rican Embassy at your location for assistance with ID documents.

For foreigners in Costa Rica: Evaluate immigration options through [Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería](#).

Will I need a mailing address? What can I do if I am homeless?

Yes, when applying for a Cédula de Identidad in Costa Rica, the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) typically requires applicants to provide contact information, including an email address and a physical address for delivery or follow-up purposes.

If you are homeless and do not have a permanent mailing address, the TSE does not currently list a specific national policy for individuals without a fixed residence. However, it is recommended that you:

- Consult with local NGOs or shelters, which may be able to provide a care-of address or assist with the application process.
- Contact the TSE directly to explain your situation and request guidance. The TSE has a dedicated service for individuals who cannot travel to their offices due to health, age, or other limitations. While this service is not specifically for homeless individuals, it demonstrates the TSE's flexibility in accommodating special circumstances.

You can find more information and contact the TSE through their official page: <https://www.tse.go.cr/cedula.htm>

What is the application process? Can I complete it online?

To apply for a Cédula de Identidad (national ID card) in Costa Rica for the first time, the process must be completed in person. It cannot be completed online. The application is strictly personal, and the applicant must appear at a Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) office or a Costa Rican consulate if abroad.

- Two color photographs (3.5 cm x 3 cm) with a gray background (for consular applications)
- Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores (TIM), if available
- Birth certificate issued by the Registro Civil (can be purchased online via the TSE)
- If you do not have a TIM, you must appear with:
 - One witness if they are an immediate family member (parent, sibling, grandparent)
 - Two witnesses if not a direct relative
 - Witnesses must present valid Costa Rican ID cards (foreign witnesses are not accepted unless they are immediate family and present a valid passport)

You may begin the application process at age 16, but the ID will only be issued once you turn 18.

For full details, see the official TSE document: [Solicitud de Cédula de Identidad por Primera Vez \(PDF\)](#)

Is there an application fee? Is there a waiver option if I cannot afford to pay it?

No, there is no application fee for obtaining a Cédula de Identidad (national ID card) in Costa Rica. According to the [Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones \(TSE\)](#), the service is completely free for all Costa Rican citizens applying for their ID card for the first time.

Because the service is free, there is no need for a waiver or financial assistance to cover the cost.

How old do I have to be to apply for a National ID card by myself?

In Costa Rica, every citizen is required to carry a Cédula de Identidad starting at age 18. While you may begin the application process at age 16, the ID card will only be issued once you turn 18.

This is confirmed by the [Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones \(TSE\)](#), which also issues a Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores (TIM) for minors between the ages of 12 and 17. The TIM serves as a form of identification but the Cédula de Identidad is required starting at age 18.

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian who can go with me (and the application says I have to have one)?

If you are 18 years or older, you do not need a parent or guardian to apply for your Cédula de Identidad in Costa Rica. Instead, if you do not have a Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores (TIM) or other valid ID, you can bring witnesses to verify your identity.

According to the [Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones \(TSE\)](#), the process allows:

- One witness if they are an immediate family member (parent, sibling, or grandparent)
- Two witnesses if they are not immediate family

Each witness must present a valid Costa Rican cédula in good condition. If the family member is a foreigner, they must present a valid passport. No other foreign witnesses are accepted.

At what age can I get a National ID card by myself?

In Costa Rica, every citizen is required to carry a Cédula de Identidad starting at age 18. You may begin the application process at age 16, but the ID will only be issued once you turn 18.

For minors between the ages of 12 and 17, Costa Rica offers the Tarjeta de Identidad de Menores (TIM), which serves as an official form of identification but is not a substitute for the national ID card.

- To apply for a TIM:
- The minor must appear in person.
- They must be accompanied by a direct family member (parent, grandparent, sibling over 18, or uncle/aunt), who must present a valid ID.
- If no direct family member is available, the minor may be accompanied by two witnesses, preferably related by blood or affinity, who are legally identified.
- If the minor is under the care of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI), a legal representative from the institution or the person in charge of the center where the minor resides must accompany them.

This process is outlined in the official TSE document:
[Expedición de Tarjeta de Identidad de Menores \(PDF\)](#)

Are there any special provisions for foster youth (children in custody of the government)?

Yes. In Costa Rica, children under the custody of the government—specifically those under the care of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI)—are eligible to apply for the Tarjeta de Identidad de Menores (TIM), which is the official identification document for minors between the ages of 12 and 17.

When a child in foster care or institutional custody applies for a TIM:

- They must be accompanied by a legal representative from PANI or the director of the center where they reside.
- The representative must present valid identification and documentation confirming their legal authority to act on behalf of the minor.

This process ensures that children in state care are not excluded from obtaining legal identification. The requirements are outlined in the official TSE document:
[Expedición de Tarjeta de Identidad de Menores \(PDF\)](#)

For additional support, PANI provides guidance and assistance through its [Trámites y Servicios portal](#).

Are there any special provisions for homeless youth?

Yes. Costa Rica has specific provisions to ensure that homeless youth and those in institutional care can obtain identification documents, including the Tarjeta de Identidad de Menores (TIM) and the Cédula de Identidad.

According to Directive DC-3976-2014 issued by the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE), and supported by the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI):

- Youth who are institutionalized or in state custody must be accompanied by a legal representative from PANI or by the director of the center where they reside.
- The representative must present documentation confirming their legal authority and the youth's institutional status.
- For youth who report being abandoned by their parents and raised by third parties, a social report issued by PANI is required to certify this condition.

These measures ensure that youth without stable housing or family support are not excluded from accessing legal identification. The legal framework is grounded in the [Código de la Niñez y la Adolescencia](#), which guarantees the right to identity and documentation for all minors, regardless of their living situation.

For more information or assistance, you can visit the [PANI Trámites y Servicios portal](#).

Will I have to take a test?

No. There is **no test required** to obtain a **Cédula de Identidad** (national ID card) in Costa Rica. The process is administrative and based on verifying your identity and civil status through documentation and, if necessary, witnesses.

If applicable, do I have to make an appointment to take the test?

Not applicable. Since no test is required, there is no need to schedule one. However, you may need to schedule an appointment at the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) or a Costa Rican consulate to submit your application, especially if applying from abroad.

Driver's License

What organization issues a driver's license in this country?

The Consejo de Seguridad Vial (COSEVI) is the official agency responsible for issuing driver's licenses in Costa Rica. It operates under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MOPT) and manages all licensing, testing, and road safety education services.

What is the process for getting a driver's license?

To obtain a light vehicle driver's license (Licencia tipo B1) in Costa Rica, you must complete the following steps:

- Pass the theoretical exam administered by the Dirección General de Educación Vial.
- Pass the practical driving test.
- Present a valid Costa Rican ID (cédula) in good condition.
- Submit a valid digital medical certificate issued by an authorized doctor.
- Pay the license issuance fee of ₡4,000 and a bank commission of ₡2,000 at the time of your appointment.
- Ensure that any outstanding traffic fines are paid before your appointment.

The license is typically valid for 3 years.

Appointments for exams and license issuance can be scheduled through [BCR | Citas Auto Servicio](#).

What documents do I have to have to get a driver's license? Is there any document that I must have to get a driver's license?

To obtain a driver's license in Costa Rica, you must present several required documents and complete specific steps. These requirements apply whether you are applying for your first license or converting a foreign one.

1. Costa Rican cédula (for citizens) or DIMEX (residency card for foreigners)
2. Dictamen Médico – a digital medical certificate issued by an authorized doctor and uploaded to the COSEVI system
3. Proof of payment (entero) – a ₡5,000 payment made in advance at an authorized bank (Banco Nacional, Banco de Costa Rica, or BAC Credomatic)
4. Proof of INS insurance – required to take the practical driving test

5. Appointment confirmation – scheduled through the Dirección General de Educación Vial
6. Valid ID – must be in good condition and match the information used for registration

You will need:

- The Dictamen Médico and entero to take the written test
- The Dictamen Médico, entero, and proof of insurance to take the practical test

What if I only have foreign documents?

If you only have foreign documents and wish to obtain a Costa Rican driver's license, the process depends on whether you are applying for a first-time license or seeking to convert (homologate) a foreign license.

If you are applying for a first-time license:

You must meet the same requirements as Costa Rican citizens, including:

- Presenting a valid DIMEX (residency card) or Costa Rican cédula
- Completing the theoretical and practical exams
- Submitting a digital medical certificate (Dictamen Médico)
- Providing proof of payment (entero) and INS insurance for the practical test

Foreign documents alone (such as a passport) are not sufficient to apply for a license unless you have legal residency in Costa Rica.

If you are converting a foreign license (homologación):

You may be eligible to exchange your foreign license for a Costa Rican one if:

- Your license is from a country with a reciprocal agreement with Costa Rica
- You have legal residency (DIMEX)
- Your foreign license is valid and in good condition

You must:

- Schedule an appointment with Educación Vial
- Present your original foreign license, DIMEX, and certified translations if required
- Submit a Dictamen Médico and proof of payment

To view the official requirements for homologating (converting) a foreign driver's license in Costa Rica, you can visit the COSEVI (Consejo de Seguridad Vial) portal.

These pages provide detailed information on:

- Required documents for foreign nationals
- Legal residency requirements (DIMEX)
- Validity and condition of the foreign license
- Medical certificate (Dictamen Médico)
- Official translations if the license is not in Spanish
- Proof of legal stay in the country where the license was issued (if different from nationality)

What happens if my documents are not accepted to get a driver's license?

If your documents are not accepted when applying for a driver's license in Costa Rica, you will not be able to proceed with the process. According to the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV), all applicants must present a valid and physical identification document (such as a Costa Rican cédula or DIMEX) in good condition. Without this, no part of the licensing process—whether theoretical or practical—can be completed.

Do I have to be a resident of the country to get a driver's license?

Yes. According to the official guidance from the Dirección General de Educación Vial and the Ley de Tránsito 9078, foreign nationals must prove legal residency in Costa Rica to obtain a driver's license. This means you must have a valid DIMEX (residency card) or work permit.

Even if you have submitted your residency application, you cannot obtain a Costa Rican driver's license until your residency is officially approved and your DIMEX is issued. This requirement applies to both first-time applicants and those seeking to homologate a foreign license.

[Costa Rica Driver's License: Homologation vs. First-Time Licenses](#)

What does it mean to be a resident of this country? How do I prove residency?

Being a resident in Costa Rica means you have been granted the legal right to live in the country either temporarily or permanently under the country's immigration laws. Residency is a legal status that allows you to access services such as healthcare, banking, and obtaining a driver's license.

Types of Residency in Costa Rica:

- Temporary Residency: For individuals staying in Costa Rica for specific reasons such as work, study, or medical treatment.

- Permanent Residency: Granted after at least three years of continuous legal stay under temporary residency, or immediately if you have a direct family relationship with a Costa Rican citizen.
- Residency by Family Ties: For spouses, children, or parents of Costa Rican citizens.
- Investor Residency: For individuals who make a qualifying investment in Costa Rica.
- Retiree Residency: For individuals with a stable pension or retirement income.

More details are available at portalcostarica.org.

How to Prove Residency:

To prove you are a legal resident, you must present your DIMEX (Documento de Identidad Migratoria para Extranjeros). This is the official residency card issued by Costa Rica's immigration authority. It confirms your legal status and is required for many official procedures, including applying for a driver's license.

What can I do if I do not have residency in this country?

If you do not have legal residency in Costa Rica, you cannot obtain a Costa Rican driver's license. According to the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV), foreign nationals must present a valid DIMEX (residency card) or other proof of legal stay to apply for a license, whether for a first-time application or for homologating a foreign license.

However, if you are in Costa Rica as a tourist, you may legally drive using your foreign driver's license for the duration of your tourist visa stamp—typically up to 90 days. During this period:

- You must carry your passport with the valid entry stamp while driving.
- Once your visa expires, you must either leave the country and re-enter to renew your tourist status or obtain legal residency to apply for a Costa Rican license.

If you already hold a valid foreign license and later obtain residency, you may be eligible to homologate your license under Article 91 of Ley de Tránsito 9078, provided you meet the requirements.

Will I need a mailing address? What can I do if I am homeless?

Yes, when applying for a driver's license in Costa Rica, you are generally required to provide a mailing address as part of your application. This address is used for official correspondence, including notifications related to your license status, test appointments, and renewals.

If you are homeless and do not have a fixed address, here are some options:

- Use the address of a trusted friend or family member who can receive mail on your behalf.

- Seek support from local NGOs or shelters, which may offer assistance with documentation and may allow you to use their address for official purposes.
- Contact Correos de Costa Rica to inquire whether they offer mail-holding or general delivery services at a local post office: <https://correos.go.cr/contactenos/>
- Inform COSEVI or the Dirección General de Educación Vial of your situation. They may be able to provide guidance or accommodations depending on your circumstances.

What is the application process? Can I complete it online?

Yes, parts of the driver's license application process in Costa Rica can be completed online through the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV). However, the full process includes both online and in-person steps.

Online Steps:

You can complete the following actions online via the official DGEV portal:

- Schedule appointments for the theoretical test, practical test, and homologation procedures
- Check or cancel appointments
- Request certifications
- Update driver information

In-Person Steps:

Even though you can schedule and manage appointments online, you must still:

- Appear in person to take the theoretical and practical exams
- Submit required documents (e.g., medical certificate, ID, proof of payment)
- Complete the driving test at an authorized testing center

Is there an application fee? Is there a waiver option if I cannot afford to pay it?

Yes, there is an application fee. To take the theoretical driving test in Costa Rica, you must pay a fee known as the "entero," which is ₡5,000. This payment must be made in advance at one of the authorized banks: Banco Nacional, Banco de Costa Rica, or BAC Credomatic. You must bring the payment receipt with you to your appointment.

As of now, there is no publicly listed waiver program for individuals who cannot afford the fee. The official website of the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV) does not mention any exemptions or financial assistance options for the entero or related licensing fees.

How old do I have to be to apply for a state driver's license by myself?

In Costa Rica, the minimum age to apply for a driver's license independently depends on the license category:

- Minors aged 16 and older can apply for an A1 license (motorcycles up to 125cc), but they must meet additional requirements:
 - Present a Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores (TIM) or valid ID
 - Submit a parental authorization letter authenticated by a lawyer
 - Provide proof of an INS insurance policy covering the period until they turn 18
 - Fulfill all standard licensing requirements
- For all other license types, including the standard B1 license for light vehicles, you must be at least 18 years old.

This information is confirmed by the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV), which oversees all licensing and road safety education in Costa Rica.

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian who can go with me (and the application says I have to have one)?

If you are a minor in Costa Rica and the licensing process requires the presence or consent of a parent or guardian, but you do not have one available, you will likely need to be accompanied by a legal representative or court-appointed guardian.

For minors aged 16 or 17 applying for an A1 motorcycle license, the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV) requires:

- A parental authorization letter authenticated by a lawyer
- A valid Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores (TIM)
- An INS insurance policy covering the period until the applicant turns 18

If a parent or guardian is unavailable, the authorization must come from a legal guardian or institutional representative (such as from PANI, the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia, if the minor is in state care).

For more information or to confirm the appropriate procedure in your case, you can contact the DGEV directly or visit their official site.

At what age can I get a driver's license card by myself?

In Costa Rica, the minimum age to obtain a driver's license depends on the license category:

- At age 16, minors can apply for an A1 license (motorcycles up to 125cc). However, they must meet additional requirements:
 - Present a Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores (TIM) or valid ID
 - Submit a parental authorization letter authenticated by a lawyer
 - Provide an INS insurance policy covering the period until they turn 18
 - Fulfill all standard licensing requirements
- For all other license types, including the standard B1 license for light vehicles, you must be at least 18 years old to apply independently.

This information is confirmed by the official site of the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV), which oversees licensing in Costa Rica.

Are there any special provisions for foster youth (children in custody of the government)?

Yes. In Costa Rica, foster youth under the custody of the government—particularly those under the care of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI)—may access special provisions to support them in obtaining a driver's license.

- Legal Representation:** If a minor does not have a parent or guardian, PANI or another authorized institution (such as IMAS) can act as the legal representative. This representative can provide the necessary authorization and accompany the youth during the licensing process.
- Documentation Support:** PANI and other social service agencies can assist foster youth in gathering required documents such as identification, medical certificates, and insurance policies.
- Appointment Assistance:** These institutions may also help schedule and attend appointments with the Dirección General de Educación Vial or COSEVI.
- Financial and Logistical Support:** Some NGOs and charitable organizations working with foster youth may offer help with transportation, fee coverage, or legal support.

For more information, you can visit:

- [PANI – Trámites y Servicios](#)
- [PANI – Preguntas Frecuentes](#)
- [Programa de Acogimiento Familiar](#)
- <https://www.imas.go.cr/>

Are there any special provisions for homeless youth?

Yes. While there is no specific national policy exclusively for homeless youth applying for a driver's license in Costa Rica, support is available through government institutions and social programs that assist vulnerable populations.

- Legal Representation and Support:**
If a homeless youth is under the care of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI) or another state institution, a legal representative from that institution can assist with the licensing process, including providing the required authorization and documentation.
- Social Assistance through IMAS:**
The Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social (IMAS) offers programs such as IMAS Impulsa, which supports individuals and families in poverty or extreme vulnerability. These programs may help with:
 - Access to documentation
 - Transportation to appointments
 - Financial support for licensing fees or insurance

More information is available at <https://www.imas.go.cr> and <https://web.imas.go.cr/FormularioAtencion/>, where individuals can request assistance.

- Address and Documentation Challenges:**
If a youth does not have a fixed address, they should contact COSEVI or DGEV to explain their situation. In some cases, NGOs or shelters may provide a care-of address or help coordinate with authorities.

Will I have to take a test?

Yes. To obtain a driver's license in Costa Rica, you must complete three main evaluations:

1. Written (Theoretical) Test

- The test consists of 40 single-choice questions based on the official Driver's Manual.
- You have 50 minutes to complete the exam.
- A minimum score of 70% is required to pass.
- The test is available only in Spanish.
- You can schedule your test online through the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV)

2. Medical Test (Dictamen Médico)

- This is a digital medical certificate required before taking any driving test.
- It includes a basic health check: vision, reflexes, vital signs, and blood typing.
- The test is valid for 180 days and costs approximately ₡20,000.

- You can take the test at any authorized clinic or hospital, often without an appointment.

3. Driving (Practical) Test

- You must schedule the test online.
- On the day of the test, bring:
 - Your Dictamen Médico
 - Proof of ₡5,000 entero payment
 - INS insurance policy specific to the driving test
 - The test typically lasts 1–2 hours and evaluates your ability to operate a vehicle safely under real conditions.

If applicable, do I have to make an appointment to take the test?

Yes, it is mandatory to schedule an appointment to take both the theoretical and practical driving tests in Costa Rica. Appointments must be made through the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV), which manages all licensing procedures.

It is important to bring all required documents, including your ID, medical certificate, proof of payment (entero), and insurance (for the practical test)

Where can I take the driving test? What can I do if I cannot get to a testing location?

In Costa Rica, you can take the driving test at various official locations managed by the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV). These locations are spread across the country and include:

- San José (Uruca) – Calle Cementerio, Uruca Centro
- Alajuela – Near Juan Santamaría International Airport
- Heredia – In the city center
- Cartago – Near the city center
- Other regional offices – Available throughout the country

You can view and select your preferred testing location when scheduling your appointment online at:

<https://servicios.educacionvial.go.cr>

For more information and to view the full list of testing centers, visit the DGEV website:

<https://www.educacionvial.go.cr>

Do I need to get a permit or authorization to practice driving before I get my driver's license?

Yes. In Costa Rica, if you are a first-time driver, you must obtain a temporary driving permit (permiso temporal) before you can legally practice driving on public roads. This permit allows you to drive only when accompanied by a licensed driver who has held a valid license for at least five years and is authorized to drive the same type of vehicle.

Requirements for the Temporary Permit:

- Pass the theoretical exam
- Pay the permit fee (approximately ₡500)
- Present a valid medical certificate (Dictamen Médico)
- Obtain an INS insurance policy for the practice period
- Present a valid ID (Costa Rican cédula or DIMEX)

The temporary permit is valid for 3 months and can be renewed if needed. It is important to follow all regulations while using the permit to avoid penalties or disqualification.

You can find more information and manage your appointments through the official Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV) portals.

Birth Certificate

What is the document detailing a person's birth called in this country?

In Costa Rica, the official document that records a person's birth is called the **Certificado de Nacimiento**. It is issued by the **Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE)**, which manages all civil registry services in the country.

I'm not sure I have a birth certificate, what can I do to find out if I have one and where to get it?

You can check whether your birth is registered and request a certificate through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). There are two main ways to do this:

- In person: Visit the TSE headquarters at Calle 15, Av 1 y 3, San José, Costa Rica. Phone: +506 2287 5555.
- Online: Use the TSE's digital services portal to search by your full name or ID number:
https://servicioelectorales.tse.go.cr/chc/detalle_nacimiento.aspx

If the child's parents are unknown or have abandoned the child, the following documents are required:

- ID of the person presenting the child
- Hospital birth certificate (if applicable)
- Report issued by PANI (Patronato Nacional de la Infancia)

There is no fee for obtaining a birth certificate in these cases.

How do I get a copy of my birth certificate?

If you were born in Costa Rica, you can obtain a Certificado de Nacimiento (birth certificate) through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE).

In Person:

You can visit the TSE headquarters at:

- Calle 15, Av 1 y 3, San José, Costa Rica
- Phone: +506 2287 5555

Online:

You can also order your birth certificate online through the TSE's digital certification platform.

To complete the request:

- Follow the instructions on the site
- You can search by full name or ID number
- The cost is ₡1,575 colones
- The certificate is issued digitally and can be downloaded or emailed

For a step-by-step guide, you can also refer to the official PDF guide provided by the TSE: https://www.consulta.tse.go.cr/AppCDI/Documentos/Guía_para_realizar_compra_de_certificaciones.pdf

Can I order my birth certificate online?

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What documents will I need to get my birth certificate?

To obtain a Certificado de Nacimiento (birth certificate) in Costa Rica, you must request it through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). The required documents vary depending on the situation:

For individuals born in Costa Rica:

- A valid Costa Rican ID card (cédula) or Tarjeta de Identificación de Menores (TIM) for minors

- If applying online, you will need to provide your full name or ID number to search the registry

For children whose parents are unknown or who have been abandoned:

- ID of the presenting party (the person requesting the certificate)
- Hospital birth certificate, if the child was born in a hospital
- Report issued by PANI (Patronato Nacional de la Infancia)

In these cases, the certificate is issued free of charge.

More information is available in the TSE's official registry documentation:

https://www.tse.go.cr/pdf/lfed/registro_nacimientos_costa_rica.pdf

What happens if I don't have some or all of the documents that are required?

If you are requesting a birth certificate online in Costa Rica through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) and do not have all the standard documents, there are alternative ways to search and complete the request:

- If you are a Costa Rican citizen, you must enter your ID number (cédula), including any leading zeros.
- If you are a foreigner, you can search using your full name and surname.

This flexibility allows individuals who may not have their ID number readily available to still access their birth certificate through the TSE's digital platform.

You can find the full step-by-step guide in the official TSE document:

https://www.consulta.tse.go.cr/AppCDI/Documentos/Guía_para_realizar_compra_de_certificaciones.pdf

How old do I have to be to get a copy of my birth certificate by myself?

In Costa Rica, minors under the age of 18 typically require a parent, guardian, or legal representative to request a birth certificate on their behalf. However, individuals can self-register as Costa Rican citizens up to the age of 25 if they were not registered as minors.

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian who can go with me to get a birth certificate (and the application says I have to have one)?

If you are a minor and do not have a parent or guardian available, you can still request a birth certificate through a special process managed by the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). According to the official TSE procedure for minors without known or available parents:

- You must be accompanied by an adult who knows you, who can present a declaration and a valid ID.

You must provide:

- Hospital birth records (if available)
- A report from PANI (Patronato Nacional de la Infancia), if applicable
- A mailing or email address for notifications

You must go in person to the TSE's main office or a regional branch. The main office is located at:

- Planta baja, costado oeste del Parque Nacional, San José, Costa Rica
- Open Monday to Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

If you are outside San José, you can find your nearest regional office here:

<https://www.tse.go.cr/contactenos.htm>

The full procedure is outlined in the official TSE document:

[Inscripción de nacimiento de personas menores de edad sin padres conocidos o abandonados por ellos \(PDF\)](#)

What is the cost to get a birth certificate?

In Costa Rica, the cost of obtaining a birth certificate depends on how you request it (amounts current as of May 2025):

- In person: The cost is ₡17.50 colones, which includes:
 - ₡12.50 for tax stamps
 - ₡5.00 for National Archive stamps
- Online: The cost is ₡1,575 colones when requested through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) digital platform.

A step-by-step guide for purchasing certificates online is available here:

https://www.consulta.tse.go.cr/AppCDI/Documentos/Guía_para_realizar_compra_de_certificaciones.pdf

Is there a waiver if I cannot afford the fee?

There is currently no publicly listed waiver for the birth certificate fee on the official TSE website. If you are experiencing homelessness or financial challenges, consider contacting the TSE directly to inquire about possible accommodations. Additional information and contact information available at: <https://www.tse.go.cr/contactenos.htm>

Are there any special laws or provisions that can help get a birth certificate if I have been in the foster care system (children in custody of the government)?

Yes. Costa Rican law provides specific protections and pathways for children in foster care or under government custody to obtain a birth certificate.

According to Article 1 of the Ley de Opciones y Naturalizaciones (Law No. 1155), a child found in Costa Rica whose parents are unknown is considered Costa Rican by birth. This legal recognition ensures that abandoned or unregistered children can be granted nationality and civil documentation, including a birth certificate. You can read the full law here: <https://www.tse.go.cr/pdf/normativa/leyopcionesynaturalizaciones.pdf>

In practice, if a child has been abandoned or is in the custody of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI), a government representative or authorized adult can initiate the birth registration process. The Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) allows for this through its civil registration services.

You can find more information and instructions under the "Servicio de Atención Personal" section of the TSE's civil registration portal: <https://registrocivilcr.info/inscripcion-de-nacimiento-de-personas-menores-de-edad-sin-padres/>

Are there any special laws or provisions that can help get a birth certificate if I am homeless?

es. In Costa Rica, individuals without a fixed address—including those experiencing homelessness—can still obtain a birth certificate through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). The process does not require a physical mailing address; instead, you only need to provide a valid email address to receive the digital certificate.

If you are unable to complete the process on your own or lack access to a computer or payment method, you may:

- Seek assistance from local NGOs or shelters, which may help you complete the application or provide a mailing address if needed.
- Visit a TSE office in person and explain your situation. Staff may guide you through the process or refer you to social services.

For more information on how to apply, including step-by-step instructions, visit: <https://registrocivilcr.info/certificado-de-nacimiento/>

Where do I get my birth certificate if I was born in another country?

If you were born outside of Costa Rica but have at least one Costa Rican parent, you may be eligible to register your birth and obtain a Costa Rican birth certificate through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE).

Requirements for registration:

- Original birth certificate issued by the civil authority in the country of birth
- Apostille or authentication of the birth certificate by the issuing country
- Spanish translation of the document (if not originally in Spanish)

- Authentication by the Costa Rican consulate and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Email or mailing address for notifications

Who can declare the birth:

- If the person is under 18, the declaration must be made by the Costa Rican parent, who must present their original Costa Rican ID (cédula).
- If the person is 18 or older, they can declare the birth themselves with a valid ID.

Where to go:

- TSE Central Office:
Planta baja, costado oeste del Parque Nacional, Apdo. 10218-1000, San José, Costa Rica
Open Monday to Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

For full details, refer to the official TSE document:

[Inscripción de un nacimiento de una persona nacida en el extranjero, hijo\(a\) de padre o madre costarricense \(PDF\)](#)

Is there a way to get my birth certificate without going somewhere in person?

Yes, you can request and download your birth certificate online in Costa Rica through the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). You can search using your full name or ID number.

Where can I find information online about getting a birth certificate?

You can find official information and instructions on how to request a birth certificate on the TSE's website at: <https://www.tse.go.cr/certificaciondigital.html>

For a step-by-step guide on how to complete the online request, you can also refer to the official PDF guide: https://www.consulta.tse.go.cr/AppCDI/Documentos/Guía_para_realizar_compra_de_certificaciones.pdf

Making Changes to Government ID Documents

What vital doc should I start with to change my name? Is the process easier for one of the IDs?

The key document to begin the name change process is your Cédula de Identidad (national ID card) if you are a Costa Rican citizen. If you are a foreigner, you will need one of the following valid identity documents:

- Cédula de Residencia Permanente
- Cédula de Residencia Temporal
- Carné de Refugiado, Asilado Político, Pensionado Rentista, Dependiente Rentista
- Documento de Identidad y Viaje (issued by the Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería)

Steps to change your name:

1. Prepare your request: Submit a written request (escrito inicial) explaining the change you are requesting and the legal basis for it. You can find an example of this document in the official guide.
2. Submit your application: Deliver your request and supporting documents to the Sección de Actos Jurídicos at the TSE.
3. Review and publication: The TSE may require the request to be published in the official gazette or a newspaper to allow for public objections.
4. Resolution: If approved, the TSE will update your civil records and notify you. The process may take up to 100 business days.
5. Cost: The service is free of charge.

You can find the full procedure and requirements in the official TSE document: <https://www.tse.go.cr/pdf/requisitosytramites/Ocurso.pdf>

How do I change my name on my birth certificate?

In Costa Rica, changing your name on your birth certificate is handled through a formal process called Rectificación de Asientos (Ocurso), managed by the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE).

There are three main pathways depending on the type of name change:

1. Minor corrections (e.g., spelling adjustments like "Yanet" to "Janet"):
You can request this directly at the Sección de Actos Jurídicos of the Registro Civil. No court process is required.
2. Major changes (e.g., changing "Juan" to "Pedro"):
These require filing a case through the civil courts with the assistance of an attorney. Once the court approves the change, the resolution must be submitted to the TSE for the update to be reflected in your civil records.
3. Gender identity-related name changes:
Since 2018, this process has been simplified. Individuals can go in person to the Registro Civil, sign a consent form, and wait for a resolution. Once approved, the name and gender marker are updated in the civil registry, and a new ID can be requested.

General Requirements:

- A written request (escrito inicial) explaining the reason for the change
- A valid ID (Cédula de Identidad or DIMEX)
- Supporting documents (e.g., court order, medical certificate, or legal justification)
- A valid email address or physical address for notifications

The process is free of charge and may take up to 100 business days.

You can find the full procedure and example forms in the official TSE document: <https://www.tse.go.cr/pdf/requisitosytramites/Ocurso.pdf>

How do I change my name on my National ID?

To change your name on your Cédula de Identidad (national ID card) in Costa Rica, you must first complete the name change process through the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). Once the name change is legally approved and registered, you can request a new ID reflecting your updated name.

Steps to change your name on your National ID:

1. Initiate the name change
 - For minor corrections (e.g., spelling adjustments), you can submit a request directly to the Sección de Actos Jurídicos at the Registro Civil.
 - For major changes (e.g., changing your name entirely), you must file a case through the civil courts with the help of an attorney. This includes submitting:

- A criminal background certificate (hoja de delincuencia)
 - Documentation showing prior use of the name (if applicable)
2. For gender identity-related changes
Since 2018, individuals can request a name change based on gender identity by visiting the Registro Civil in person, signing a consent form, and waiting for a resolution. Once approved, the name and gender marker are updated in the civil registry.
 3. Receive the resolution
Once the name change is approved, the TSE will issue a resolution updating your civil records.
 4. Request a new ID
After the name change is registered, you can request a new Cédula de Identidad through the TSE. You can do this in person or request a reprint through their official services:
 - <https://www.tse.go.cr/cedula.htm>

For more detailed guidance, refer to the official TSE document outlining the name change process:
<https://www.tse.go.cr/pdf/requisitosytramites/Ocurso.pdf>

How do I change my name on my driver's license?

To change your name on your driver's license in Costa Rica, you must first complete the legal name change process through the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). Once your name is officially updated and reflected on your Cédula de Identidad, you can proceed to update your driver's license.

Steps to update your name on your driver's license:

5. Complete the name change process
 - Follow the appropriate procedure through the TSE, whether it's a minor correction, a court-ordered change, or a gender identity-related update.
 - Once approved, obtain your updated Cédula de Identidad and a marginal registration certificate from the Registro Civil showing both your old and new names.
6. Visit the Department of Control and Registration
 - Go to the Departamento de Control y Registro at the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV) or a regional COSEVI office.
 - Bring your updated ID, the marginal registration certificate, and any other required documents.
7. Submit your request
 - You may need to complete a form and pay a small administrative fee.

- Your updated license will be issued once the change is processed.

At what age can I change my name by myself?

In Costa Rica, you must be at least 18 years old to independently request a legal name change. This age requirement applies to all formal civil procedures, including requesting a name change through the Registro Civil and updating your Cédula de Identidad (national ID).

Minors under 18 must have the support of a parent, legal guardian, or court-appointed representative to initiate a name change. This is consistent with Costa Rican civil law and the procedures outlined by the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE), which oversees all civil registry matters.

For more information on the name change process, including requirements and forms, you can consult the official TSE document:
<https://www.tse.go.cr/pdf/requisitosytramites/Ocurso.pdf>

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian with me to change my gender marker and do not have anyone else who can help me?

If you are a minor in Costa Rica and wish to change your name but do not have a parent or guardian available to assist you, there are legal pathways and institutional support available:

- Judicial Authorization: According to Costa Rican civil law, minors can request a name change through a non-contentious judicial process. This must be initiated with the help of a legal representative, such as a court-appointed guardian or curador ad litem. The courts may assign a guardian if none is available, especially in cases involving vulnerable youth.
- Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI): If you are under state protection or in foster care, PANI can act as your legal representative and assist with the name change process. Visit <https://pani.go.cr> for more information.
- Ministerio Público: If you are without legal representation, you can contact the Public Ministry (Ministerio Público) to request assistance. They may help initiate the legal process to assign a guardian or provide legal aid. Visit <https://ministeriopublico.poder-judicial.go.cr> for contact details.

What vital doc should I start with to change my gender marker? Is the process easier for one of the IDs?

To change your gender marker in Costa Rica, the process is managed by the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). You should begin with your Cédula de Identidad (national ID). The first step is to go in person to the Registro Civil and sign a consent formalization document. This initiates the process of updating your gender marker and name in the civil registry. Once approved, the TSE will issue a resolution, and you can request a new ID reflecting the change.

More information is available at the official TSE website: <https://www.tse.go.cr>

How do I change my gender marker on my birth certificate?

In Costa Rica, once you complete the gender marker change process through the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE), your Cédula de Identidad (national ID) will no longer display a gender marker. However, the civil registry system still retains a gender designation for administrative and medical purposes.

As of now, the printed birth certificate may still reflect the original gender assigned at birth, even after a legal gender change. The TSE has not officially confirmed whether the gender marker is removed or updated on the printed version of the birth certificate following a gender change. The general registry retains this information for internal use, particularly in contexts such as healthcare.

For the most accurate and up-to-date information, you can contact the TSE directly or visit their official certification portal: <https://www.tse.go.cr/certificaciondigital.html>

How do I change my gender marker on my National ID?

In Costa Rica, once you complete the gender marker change process through the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE), your updated Cédula de Identidad (national ID) will be reissued without displaying a gender marker. This change reflects the simplified administrative process introduced in 2018 for individuals seeking to align their legal documents with their gender identity.

Steps to update your gender marker on your National ID:

1. Visit the Registro Civil in person and request the gender marker change.
2. Sign a formal consent document acknowledging the change.
3. Wait for the TSE to issue a resolution approving the update.
4. Once approved, request a new Cédula de Identidad that reflects your updated name and omits the gender marker.

You can find more information and access services through the TSE's official website: <https://www.tse.go.cr>

How do I change my gender marker on my driver's license?

To change your gender marker on your driver's license in Costa Rica, you must first complete the gender and name change process through the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). Once your updated Cédula de Identidad is issued, you can proceed to update your driver's license through the Dirección General de Educación Vial (DGEV).

Steps to update your driver's license:

1. Complete the gender marker and name change
Visit the Registro Civil in person, sign the consent form, and wait for the resolution. Once approved, you will receive a new ID with your updated name and no gender marker.
2. Obtain a marginal registration certificate
This document, issued by the Registro Civil, confirms the change and includes both your old and new identity details.
3. Visit the Department of Control and Registration
Go to the Departamento de Control y Registro at the DGEV or a COSEVI office to request the update.
4. Submit the required documents
Bring your updated ID and the marginal registration certificate. You may also need to complete a form and pay a small administrative fee.

At what age can I change my gender marker by myself?

In Costa Rica, you must be at least 18 years old to independently request a change to your gender marker in the civil registry. This age requirement aligns with the general legal standard for initiating civil procedures, including name and gender changes, as managed by the Registro Civil under the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE).

Minors under 18 must have the support of a legal guardian or a court-appointed representative to initiate such changes. The simplified process introduced in 2018 allows adults to request a gender marker change by signing a consent form in person at the TSE, but this process is only available to those who have reached the age of majority.

For more information, you can visit the TSE's official site: <https://www.tse.go.cr>

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian with me to change my gender marker and do not have anyone else who can help me?

If you are a minor in Costa Rica and wish to change your gender marker but do not have a parent or guardian to assist you, the process becomes more complex, as current procedures for gender marker changes are only available to individuals 18 years or older.

However, if you are underage and in a vulnerable situation, there are legal and institutional pathways that may support you:

- Judicial Authorization: A non-contentious judicial process may be initiated to appoint a legal guardian or representative (curador ad litem) who can act on your behalf. This is typically handled through the Ministerio Público or the family courts under the Poder Judicial. You can learn more about this process in the judicial article on name and gender identity changes: <https://pjenlinea3.poder-judicial.go.cr/>

judicial.go.cr/biblioteca/uploads/archivos/articulo/puede%20alguin%20cambiar%20su%20nombre%20alvarez.pdf

- Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI): If you are under state protection or in foster care, PANI can act as your legal representative and assist with the process. Visit <https://pani.go.cr> for more information.
- Legal Aid and NGOs: You may also seek help from nonprofit organizations, legal clinics at universities, or community groups that support LGBTQ+ youth. These organizations may help you access legal representation or advocate on your behalf.
- School Support: If you are enrolled in school, a school counselor or administrator may be able to help you connect with legal or social services.

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Please note that the I Am Here Platform is in development and does not represent the final version of the work product. We will continue to update this I Am Here Platform as updates and edits are received across the globe.

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