This is general information only. Check with your health care provider to determine your specific needs. Cornell’s Gannett Medical Center has a travel medicine department which is well equipped to handle the needs of world travelers. The CDC web site contains health information at http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/costa-rica.htm

To have the most benefit, see a health-care provider at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for your vaccines to take effect and to start taking medicine to prevent malaria, if you need it. Even if you have less than 4 weeks before you leave, you should still see a health-care provider for needed vaccines, anti-malaria drugs and other medications and information about how to protect yourself from illness and injury while traveling.

**Required Vaccinations**

Although yellow fever is not a disease risk in Costa Rica, the government requires travelers arriving from certain countries where yellow fever is present to present proof of yellow fever vaccination. Travelers from the United States with a United States passport are not required to have any vaccinations to enter Costa Rica.

**Recommended Vaccinations**

Routine - Recommended if you are not up-to-date with routine shots such as, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine, etc.

Hepatitis A - Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in Costa Rica where exposure might occur through food or water. Cases of travel-related hepatitis A can also occur in travelers to developing countries with "standard" tourist itineraries, accommodations, and food consumption behaviors.

Hepatitis B - Recommended for all unvaccinated persons traveling to or working in Costa Rica, especially those who might be exposed to blood or body fluids, have sexual contact with the local population, or be exposed through medical treatment (e.g., for an accident).

Typhoid - Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in Mexico and Central America, especially if visiting smaller cities, villages, or rural areas and staying with friends or relatives where exposure might occur through food or water.

Rabies - Recommended for travelers involved in any activities that might bring them into direct contact with bats, carnivores, and other mammals. These travelers include wildlife professionals, researchers, veterinarians, or adventure travelers visiting areas where bats, carnivores, and other mammals are commonly found.

**Staying Safe and Healthy**

Malaria - Only prevalent in Limon province on the Caribbean side of the country. Cornell’s Tree Climbing class will not be in this province. If you will be visiting an area of Costa Rica with malaria, you will need to discuss with your doctor the best ways for you to avoid getting sick with malaria. For Limon province in Costa Rica, primaquine is the preferred antimalarial drug.

Dengue epidemics have affected most countries in Central America in the past 5 years. Other insects borne diseases also occur in this region, mostly in rural areas. Myiasis (botfly) is endemic in Central America. Protecting yourself against insect bites will help to prevent these diseases. Minimize the chance of insect bite by: wearing long sleeve shirts and long pants; using insect repellent; remain in a protected area at dusk and dawn.

Rabies is always fatal if left untreated, and may not be easily treated in remote parts of the world. **Do not touch or feed any animals**, including dogs and cats. Even animals that look like healthy pets can have rabies or other diseases.

Diseases from food and water are the leading cause of illness in travelers. Follow these tips for safe eating and drinking: **Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating**; Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles, or water which has been properly treated; Do not eat food purchased from street vendors; Make sure food is fully cooked; Avoid dairy products, unless you know they have been pasteurized.

Vehicle accidents are the leading cause of injury among travelers. Protect yourself by: always wearing a seatbelt; hiring licensed local drivers; avoiding overloaded vehicles; traveling during daylight hours; **being exceptionally careful as a pedestrian**.

Crime is a concern for any traveler perceived to be more affluent than average. The most common crime perpetrated against tourists is theft, with thieves primarily looking for cash, jewelry, credit cards, electronic items and passports. Valuables and luggage even
momentarily unattended are at risk of being stolen.

Costa Rica has beautiful beaches, but not all are safe for swimming. Every year eight to twelve American citizens drown in Costa Rica due to riptides or sudden drop-offs while in shallow water. Extreme caution is advised.

**Risks Specific to the Tree Climbing Class**

Climbing trees in a relatively remote part of the country has inherent risks. While there is no way to eliminate or even enumerate all of these risks, we do want you to be aware of the risks and actions you can take to minimize them. Medical assistance in the event of injury or illness may be slow to arrive and may not be up to the standards of medical care in the United States. Therefore, we try to minimize risk whenever possible. There are two major categories of risk: environmental hazards and the climbing itself.

Environmental hazards consist primarily of poisonous animals. Snakes, scorpions and stinging insects are among the creatures sharing the jungle with us. The best way to minimize bite risk is to be cognizant of where you put your hands and feet. Reaching under rocks and logs, tromping through the brush, and walking carelessly at night all make it more likely that you will have an unfortunate encounter. None of the animals in the jungle want to attack humans. Give them a wide berth and they will have no cause to bite or sting. Our tree climbing class will be accompanied by a local resident who will help identify hazards.

Climbing trees has both objective and subjective hazards. The objective hazards are those which are inherent in the activity. Trees are living, changing organisms and branches do sometimes break. We mitigate this risk through careful branch selection, redundant anchoring when possible, and conscientious use of helmets. Subjective hazards are those we introduce ourselves. Mistakes can be very dangerous when working high above the ground. Our excellent instructor-student ratio means that instructors will always be with you in the trees. We ask that you always operate slowly and methodically in the trees. We ask that you work closely with your instructors, especially when changing ropes or working with the safety systems. Our connections to the safety systems will be redundant when possible, both to protect us in the unlikely event of equipment failure and to protect us in the case where human error causes a connection to fail. We also want to emphasize that safety concerns are the responsibility of the entire group. Everyone -- instructors and students -- should take primary responsibility for themselves, and always double check the rest of the group.