

Costa Rica Firearm Ownership & Licensure Overview

Costa Rica law allows for possession of most personal self-defense items other than firearms without licensure or permit. Products such as pepper spray, collapsible batons, stun guns, tasers, etc. are all available for purchase by the general public from a variety specialty stores. Legal use of any such item is limited to self-defense from a credible threat of physical harm.

As for firearms, everything from the types of weapons allowed to whom can purchase/import, own and carry with an appropriate license is regulated by the Ministry of Public Security's Department of Control of Weapons and Explosives Law #7530 (Ministerio de Seguridad Pública, Departamento de Control de Armas y Explosivos Ley 7530).

If an individual desires to legally purchase/import and own/posses a firearm in Costa Rica they must:

- a) be a **Citizen** or **Permanent Legal Resident** *and*;
- b) be authorized to posses a firearm via a **Certificate of Theory and Practice** (Certificado de Curso Teórico Practico de Armas de Fuego) from the Departamento de Control de Armas y Explosivos **or**;
- c) hold a valid Costa Rica **Permit to Carry a Concealed Weapon** (Licencia para Portacion de Armas Particulares)



Costa Rica Firearms Concealed Carry License

According to Lic. Raúl Carvajal, Asesor Legal de la Dirección General de Armamento del Ministerio de Seguridad Pública de Costa Rica, purchasing or importing a firearm can be done as either an individual or a corporation.

Per Mr. Carvajal, many foreigners utilize a Costa Rica company to purchase or import a firearm with the implicit goal of keeping the weapon in their residence for self-defense. Other foreigners utilize a Costa Rica company to initially purchase or begin the importing process while proceeding with their residency and other individual firearm possession qualifications.

Note: I am not an attorney and don't play one on the Internet ... that said, the very reason for most corporations is to one-distance the individual from the company's business or assets. However, when it comes to firearms a corporate shield would be of little use due to the personal liabilities inherent by the use and/or possession of a firearm.

It is my opinion that owning a firearm within a Costa Rica corporation should only be done as a short-term solution and as the sole purpose of the corporation so as not to risk other assets or business. A firearm originally purchased or imported via a corporation can easily be removed from the corporation and transferred to individual ownership as soon as all other personal firearm possession qualifications are met.

Qualification Process for Firearm Purchase/Importation & Ownership

In order to purchase or own a firearm in Costa Rica as a citizen, permanent legal resident or as an officer of a C.R. corporation; an individual must pass a **Written Book Test** (Examen Teórico) **and Practical Shooting Test** (Examen Práctico). These tests are given on the same day in both Spanish and English.

The written book test is based almost entirely on the provided six page study guide covering five different areas:

1. General knowledge of Firearms and Explosives Law # 7530
2. General self defense knowledge
3. Safety measures
4. General characteristics of firearms allowed by Law # 7530
5. The five steps for making a good shot

The practical shooting test requires the applicant to fire either a provided 9mm semi-automatic pistol or 38 caliber double-action revolver at 7 meters placing at least 7 of the 10 rounds within the target paper.

For more information, testing dates and test registration contact: Poligono de Tiro "Civil Defense Center" in Pavas at 2290-3024. Ask for owner José Ojeda or manager Joshua if English is necessary. Required Item: Costa Rica Cedula. Cost: ₡25.000,00.

IMPORTANT: Successful completion and receipt of a **Certificate of Theory and Practice** (Certificado de Curso Teórico Practico de Armas de Fuego) from the Departamento de Control de Armas y Explosivos will **ONLY** permit the holder to own and keep a firearm(s) within their domicile. The holder of this certificate is **NOT** permitted to transport a fully assembled firearm outside their home.

Qualification for Firearm Concealed Carry

In order to transport an assembled firearm or carry a concealed firearm in Costa Rica as a citizen or permanent legal resident, an individual must be found competent via a **Psychological Certificate of Mental Appropriateness To Carry Firearms** (Certificado Psicológico de Idoneidad Mental Para Portar Armas de Fuego) by a licensed psychologist.

For more information and test registration contact: Dr. Millie Hoepker A. at 8388-6349. Required Items: Costa Rica Cedula & original Costa Rica Background Check (Certificación de Antecedentes Penales) provided by the Registro Judicial. Cost: ₡33.000,00.

IMPORTANT: Successful completion and receipt of a Psychological Certificate and a subsequent **Permit to Carry a Concealed Weapon** (Licencia para Portacion de Armas Particulares) issued by the Departamento de Control de Armas y Explosivos will **ONLY** permit the holder to possess and carry weapons expressly registered to that person. Both the original Permit to Carry & Registration documents must be carried at all times as proof (no copies allowed).

Buying a Firearm in Costa Rica vs. Importing

Retail prices for firearms are considerably higher in Costa Rica than in the United States or elsewhere due in part to the associated import taxes. However, importing firearms into Costa Rica takes time, paperwork, patience and comes with its own costs.

My own decision to import firearms as opposed to buying in Costa Rica resulted in the following cost savings – due in part to the fact that one of my firearms was already owned and paid for many years ago:

Import: U.S. -> Costa Rica via Airline Checked Baggage		Costa Rica Retail Comparison
Berretta 92F w/Night Sights	\$ (existing)	\$ 1,190.00
S&W 642 w/Laser Grips	736.38	1,100.00
Import & Attorney Fees	230.06	
Customs Storage Fees	+ 20.87	+ _____
Total	\$ 987.31	\$ 2,290.00

Feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions or want additional information on the steps required for firearm importation. –**Bill Clanton** (Bill@CostaRicaBlogger.com).