

International Selective: Costa Rica

Speaking Spanish has become a quintessential part of health care in the United States. Whether you are a native speaker or know very little if no Spanish at all, improving and mastering this language is beneficial for health care providers and patient communication.

Costa Rica is a very educated country that prides itself on its many eco-systems, its use of natural resources, and its loving people, who live by the motto, “Pura Vida,” which means the “pure life.” This is a very friendly country that has recently become a very popular travel destination for Americans and the like.

I heard about this program from previous seniors in our residency, whom highly recommended it. CPI (Centro Pan-Americano de Idiomas), the Pan-American Language Center is well-known throughout the country and its students boast many benefits and accommodations. The program is available in three cities: San Jose, MonteVerde, and Flamingo. Participants may stay at one or all of these locations, based on their requests.

San Jose is the country’s capital. It is located in the eastern part of the country and is a decent sized metropolitan city. Monteverde is in the country’s northern, middle portion, in the mountainous and forested region. The weather here can be cool most of the year and it is the sight of the largest zip line in the country. It is a very small and hilly town, and a lot of walking is required to navigate through the streets.

Flamingo is a beach town, located 20 minutes north of the famous Tamarindo beach resort town, best known for its world-class surfing. I spent my entire three weeks here. In all of the locations, students have a choice of staying with a host family or, for a slight more expense, in a shared studio apartment. I chose to stay in an apartment. The

program will pair you up with someone of the same gender or you can chose to share a room with someone if you are traveling with a partner. The studio accommodations were nice and there is bus transportation provided to and from the language school, however, I chose to walk along the beach for about an hour each morning to arrive to class.

CPI is very accommodating and you can stay for as long as you'd like at any of the locations. You may begin classes on any Monday after taking a placement test. There is a brief orientation and then you are placed into a class with no more than 4 students, based on your level of Spanish. The classes focus on conversation and they are 4 hours long with a break in between and snacks provided. There are small homework assignments to practice grammar and workbooks are given as well as handouts with grammatical lessons. All of the instructors are wonderful!

There are certain times of the year when medical Spanish courses are offered, so students should inquire ahead of time to participate in these seminars.

The school is great about arranging after school activities that involve culture, language, and tours. Two weekend tours I enjoyed were my trip to Monteverde, where I zipped on the largest zip line in the country and enjoyed a weekend of cool weather away from the beach. Another weekend involved a trip to their most active volcano, Arenal, which erupts nearly every hour.

Although I minored in Spanish in college, I feel this program greatly improved my Spanish and was invaluable to my communication skills. The grammar review and additional vocabulary and phrases I used have been extremely helpful. I enjoyed my time in Costa Rica and hope we continue to have an interest in learning more about Spanish-speaking cultures.

For information about CPI, you may contact through their website: www.cpi-edu.com



