

Frequently Asked Questions



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Arrival and Departure

1. What will happen when I first arrive at the airport?
2. Will we be met by ILISA at the airport?
3. What if my luggage is lost?
4. Where can we change money after arrival
5. What day should I plan on arriving in San José?
6. What time should I arrive at the school?
7. What do I need to know about leaving Costa Rica?

1. What will happen when I first arrive at the airport?

When traveling by plane, you'll arrive at Juan Santa María International Airport in Alajuela. Your first stop after getting off the plane will be at Immigration. The flight attendants should have given you two forms, one for Immigration, and one for Customs. If you are only bringing personal belongings into the country, just write down "personal belongings" on the customs form. The immigration form asks for your intended address in Costa Rica. Write: "familia ILISA." Have both forms ready along with your passport.

After passing Immigration, you will arrive in a hall with 2 baggage transport belts. You should be able to find your luggage on one of these. Occasionally this can be difficult because several flights sometimes use the same baggage transport belt. You should be prepared to search around a little to locate your luggage. If there is too much congestion, baggage handlers occasionally will remove luggage from the belts. This means that if you don't see your items on the belt they are probably already on the floor.

Your next stop is Customs. If you have two bags or less you can usually just walk on through. For those with more than two bags there is an area where you must push a button. If after pushing the button, the light turns green, proceed on through Customs. If the light turns red, you will have your luggage examined. (note: Customs can check any bag or individual they desire.)

After passing through Customs, take the stairs on the right which will bring you to the airport exit (note: there is a conveyer belt on your right-hand side to transport heavy pieces of luggage upstairs). Have your baggage claim tags ready because the baggage handlers at the top of the stairs will often ask to see them (you should have received the tags from the airline during check-in: they are normally stapled onto your ticket envelope).

Finally, you can step out into the light of Costa Rica. The whole process should take less than a half an hour.

2. Will we be met by ILISA at the airport?

Airport pick-up is included in the homestay fee. No matter what time you arrive, somebody with a white and blue ILISA sign stating your name will be outside the airport building waiting to bring you to your host family.

It's about 25 minutes by car from the airport to your host family. If you stay in a hotel, you can either take a taxi or request pick up service and we will pick you up for an additional \$18 fee.

3. **What if my pick-up doesn't show up?**

Although we always double check your arrival time before sending a driver to pick you up, there is a slight possibility that we may get caught in a traffic jam, that something unforeseen may happen or that your flight may arrive a little early. In the unlikely event that you don't find anybody waiting for you ... **don't despair!** Just stand **outside** the exit doors, our driver is not allowed inside to look for you, with you luggage and wait for about 15 minutes while scanning the crowd and looking for the ILISA sign with your name on it. If you mix with the crowd it will be harder for us to spot you. If after 20 minutes nobody has shown up, we suggest you call the school (280-9424) or, if outside office hours, Monday-Friday 7:30-4:30, call Thorwald, the director at 234-8694 or 383-5875. In case nobody answers, call the host family. Please don't take a taxi without informing anybody (leave a message on the school's answering machine) because you can be sure somebody is on his or her way to pick you up.

4. **What if my luggage is lost?**

In case your luggage is lost and you have to fill out the baggage claim forms, it would be a good idea to have a look outside and tell the person waiting for you that you have arrived but have to do some paperwork.

5. **Where can we change money after arrival?**

You can always find money changers immediately outside the airport terminal building. Ask your driver if they can locate one of these moneychangers "para cambiar dolares en colones." We have never heard of anyone being cheated, but just to stay on the safe side, only change what you think you will need for the first few days. You will be able to change dollars at ILISA on Monday or Thursday. (Do **not** change money on the streets in downtown San José.)

6. **What day should I plan on arriving in San José?**

You should plan to arrive on the Saturday or Sunday prior to the start of your program, and to depart on the Saturday or Sunday afterwards. Our homestay week is calculated Saturday to Saturday or Sunday to Sunday. If you wish to arrive earlier or to extend your stay after finishing classes, contact us and, if possible, we will accommodate you.

7. **What time should I arrive at ILISA?**

You should arrive at 7:30 a.m. on the day you are scheduled to begin class. We will conduct a placement evaluation first thing and then you will begin class at 8 a.m. Your family will show you the way to ILISA (walking and/or by bus) the first day.

8. **What do I need to know about leaving Costa Rica?**

Costa Rica charges an exit tax of \$17 per person payable at the airport. In addition, you will have to pay transportation to the airport. We can arrange for one of ILISA's drivers to take you for \$15 (\$18 before 6 a.m.) or you can take a taxi for about the same.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Can I send or receive faxes at ILISA?**

2. **Can I send or receive e-mail at ILISA?**

3. **Can you tell me something about international calls from Costa Rica?**

4. **What about the local telephones?**

1. **Can I send or receive faxes at ILISA?**

ILISA provides fax service for all of our students. Students can receive faxes free of charge, directed to 011-506-225-4665, at any time. The sender should indicate who the fax is to and we will put it the student's mailbox. To send a fax at ILISA, please ask the office staff for one of our cover sheets. The current fax rates can be found in the reception area.

2. **Can I send or receive e-mail at ILISA?**

ILISA offers this service for all students. Each student can write and send e-mail from the lab's computers. You can either create a personal account using the ILISA server or access your own web-based account (i.e. yahoo or hotmail). E-mail and internet access is free.

3. **Can you tell me something about international calls from Costa Rica?**

To make collect calls ("llamada a cobrar") or credit card calls ("llamada con tarjeta de credito"), dial 116 to get the operator who speaks English upon request. For person-to-person calls, dial 09 followed by the complete phone number without pausing. After dialing, the operator will ask you to whom you wish to speak, and whether it is a collect call or a credit card call. For calling card calls to the US, dial 0-8000-114-114 for the AT&T operator; 0-8000-122-222 for the MCI operator; or dial 0-8000-130-123 for the Sprint operator. For collect calls to Denmark dial 0-8000-451-045. For collect calls to Germany call 0-8000-491-049.

The local phone company (ICE) has an office in downtown San Jose where you can make international calls 24 hours a day by paying with your credit card.

4. **What about the local telephones?**

All local calls in Costa Rica are time-charged, including those within the city of San Jose. Pay telephones take ¢5, ¢10 and ¢20 coins (just the silver ones, not the newer gold coins), so bring a stack of them if you are going to make any sort of long distance call. Pick up the receiver and dial. The phone will start to beep. When the person answers the coin drops in and your call starts. Unfortunately, sometimes the call is cut off. Don't fight with the phone. Go to another with a line of people in front of it, all of whom already know that the phone you tried is *malo*.

Card phones are another type of public pay phone in Costa Rica. You can purchase a card (Tarjeta CHIP) that has a value of ¢500, ¢1000, or ¢2000. These are extremely convenient to use and eliminate the need for a pocket of change. There is a public card phone right in front of ILISA. Cards are for sale at ILISA and at many local businesses.

You can also purchase pre-paid phone cards from the phone company's office in San Pedro. They are available in larger denominations and are designed specifically for tourists wanting to make international calls.

ILISA's Cultural Activity Program

1. **Do you offer a cultural activity program?**
2. **What types of activities does your program include?**
3. **Are there evening activities?**
4. **What else can you tell me about the activities?**

1. **Do you offer a cultural activity program?**

Yes. Each week we offer activities and lectures to provide additional exposure to the Spanish language, Costa Rican culture and to inform you about Costa Rican and Central American history, environment, society and culture.

2. **What types of activities does your program include?**

The following visits and classes are included: latin dance class, visits to the National museum and National theater, cooking class and more. Our program includes lectures on: Costa Rican history, economics, the role of women in society and the national park system, non-verbal communication and several movie presentations. These activities are all included in the course cost.

3. **Are there evening activities?**

Yes, every Tuesday, starting at 4:30 pm we have Happy Hour at our on-site restaurant *Entre Amigos*. You can also check with other students, teachers and the Viva section of La Nación (the local newspaper) for news on night life.

4. **What else can you tell me about the activities?**

The programs begin in the afternoon no earlier than 3:15 p.m., which allows all students, even those who have afternoon classes, the opportunity to participate. All activities are optional and we occasionally ask that you sign up in advance so that we can estimate how many participants will be attending.

Tours and Travel

1. **Is it worth the money to hire a Tour Operator?**
2. **Do I receive anything special because of my student status at ILISA?**
3. **Can we book tours to other parts of Costa Rica at ILISA?**

4. **What if I don't have the money for guides?**
5. **What is the situation with rental cars?**

1. **Is it worth the money to hire a Tour Operator?**

One of the best ways to see the many beautiful sights in Costa Rica is through the use of a tour operator. They are capable of pointing out things along trips that you would probably never see if you went alone. They are also used to running tours and have grown accustomed to the wants of their clients.

2. **Do I receive anything special because of my student status at ILISA?**

Many tour operators in Costa Rica will give you a discount upon showing your student card that we will give you. The discounts range from 10-20% which are very welcome. If one agency will not give you a discount, go and find another. Upon your arrival at ILISA we will give you a discount card that is valid at many restaurants, hotels, car rental agencies, etc. throughout Central America.

3. **Can we book tours to other parts of Costa Rica at ILISA?**

Costa Rica is a beautiful country and we want you to have the opportunity to explore it. ILISA does not run any tours, but we do have a good relationship with a select group of quality tour operators. These companies provide first class service and offer an excellent value for all of our students.

4. **What if I don't have the money for guides?**

If you don't want to pay for a tour, the staff in our office can provide information and help you with your travel plans. Our employees have much experience with travelling and they are more than happy to share their experience. We also have listings of bus schedules, hotels and destinations.

5. **What is the situation with rental cars?**

We work with an agency that offers a \$46 dollar a day rate including insurance and free mileage. The company will even drop the car off at the school, and when you are done with it, pick it up!

General Information on ILISA

1. **How many years has ILISA been in business?**
2. **What is ILISA's Mission?**
3. **What is ILISA's approach to language training?**
4. **Can you tell me something about ILISA's facilities?**
5. **What is the size of the school in terms of number of students?**
6. **What are the dates of the courses?**
7. **Where is ILISA located?**
8. **What else can you tell me about San Pedro?**

1. **How many years has ILISA been in business?**

ILISA was founded in 1987. We have many years of experience in teaching and have a reputation of being a school with a personal and professional approach that allows students to have both a rewarding and enjoyable time learning Spanish.

2. **What is ILISA's Mission?**

From the beginning, ILISA's mission has been clear: to let you reach your learning goals by creating the ideal conditions in which to learn.

3. **What is ILISA's approach to language training?**

Our group classes are limited to a maximum of four students and our private, one-on-one, classes offer tailor-made programs. At ILISA, we use a communicative approach rather than a 'method'. This approach creates a dynamic classroom atmosphere and encourages students to speak as much as possible. You will be able to use your new language skills immediately, both in- and outside the classroom.

4. **Can you tell me something about ILISA's Facilities?**

In addition to our excellent location, our brand new facilities, which were built with the student in mind, are unmatched by any language school in the region. Unlike most schools, our classrooms are purpose-built for small groups, providing optimum conditions for a language school. Our classrooms have an abundance of natural light, are well-ventilated and comfortably furnished.

The entrance level contains the reception desk, administrative offices, a teacher's planning area, a large lobby with a skylight, an interview room for entrance exams and private conferences with our staff members. The interview room also serves as a classroom for students who have difficulties in climbing stairs. The next level houses classrooms, a library for student use, a computer lab with space for four computers and a meeting room for teachers. The library houses our ever growing collection of books, Spanish language newspapers, and other resources for students. Students who are looking for a quiet study area can head there after class. Computers are equipped for writing e-mail, for general use, and for building Spanish skills using multi-media CD-ROM Spanish programs. This is a particularly convenient way for students who need to keep up with business at home while they're studying. The top floor houses two additional classrooms, the marketing director's office and the director's office. We put excellent insulation in the roof to keep these classrooms and offices cool and comfortable. In addition, our facilities feature an ample terrace area and a full service restaurant, *Entre Amigos*, with a great view of the surrounding area. Students can often be found on the terrace, relaxing after classes, chatting with other students, reading the newspaper or doing homework. With over a 100 square meters (1,000 sq. ft.) of terrace we have ample space for gathering before, between and after classes as well as for certain cultural activities such as musical events and dance classes. Since many schools operate from converted homes, you can't take such amenities for granted. Our combination of a comfortable study environment and a convenient location offers you the ideal circumstances for serious yet enjoyable language study.

5. **What is the size of the school in terms of number of students?**

We receive about 700 students a year. During the high season (June-August) there are about 90 students here at one time while during the off season (all other months of the year) on average there are 35 students at one time.

6. **What are the dates of the courses?**

The following are the starting dates for beginners in 2000: January 3, January 31, February 28, March 27, April 24, May 22, June 19, July 17, August 14, September 11, October 9, November 6 & December 4. Intermediate and advanced students can start any Monday.

7. **Where is ILISA located?**

ILISA is located in San Pedro, an eastern suburb of San José. It's about 15 minutes by bus to downtown. Since Costa Rica's main university is also located in San Pedro (and buses are the primary means of transportation for students) buses to downtown pass by every 5 to 10 minutes. There is also a lot of bus traffic from buses passing through San Pedro on the way to suburbs farther east of San Jose.

8. **What else can you tell me about San Pedro?**

San Pedro is also a very dynamic commercial area, both in retail as well as office space. Since it's one of the oldest residential areas, it has a lot of big houses with nice gardens that are converted to office space. ILISA is located about 4 blocks (400 meters) from the main avenue in a quiet residential area. ILISA is located on a hillside and has a wonderful view of the mountains in the south as well as part of the city. One of the largest malls in Central America (about 80.000 m²) is located 7 blocks from our school. Apart from many retail outlets it features a 5 screen cinema, restaurants, banks and a popular nightclub. San Pedro offers all the goods and services you will need during your time here so you don't even have to go San José except to take advantage of the cultural opportunities and a few lively night spots. Due to the university's vicinity, we have an ample choice of restaurants for every budget and taste with musical performances in some of them during the weekends. You can get a decent lunch starting at \$4 or go 'expensive' with a great lunch/dinner for no more than \$15 (including aperitif and dessert). Also, the University is a constant hub of activity with two theaters that show different 'art' films every day, weekly concerts and dance performances. The Universidad Latina also has concerts with some of the best Costa Rican bands and excellent foreign groups playing nearly every weekend.

Health and Safety

1. **Do I need to worry about getting inoculations?**
2. **Is the water safe to drink in Costa Rica?**
3. **What if I get sick? Is good medical attention hard to find?**

4. **Is Costa Rica a safe country?**
5. **What are the types of crime that I should worry about and what precautions can I take to avoid them?**
1. **Do I need to worry about getting inoculations?**
Of course you should see your doctor before taking any foreign journey to be sure you are up to date on your regular vaccinations. You probably won't need to get any special vaccinations or inoculations before traveling to Costa Rica, but it's a good idea to check with the Traveler's Clinic at your local hospital for current recommendations.
Malaria is not a problem in Costa Rica. It only occurs in extremely isolated areas, principally in the banana plantations in the Valle de la Estrella in inland Talamanca. Unless you are planning to visit this area, there is no need to worry.
The cholera epidemic that has taken so many lives in Latin America has been eliminated in Costa Rica. Some victims die from dehydration. You can be sure that if there is even a single case of cholera in Costa Rica it will be announced profusely in the media.
2. **Is the water safe to drink in Costa Rica?**
Water is safe to drink in San José. However there are places in Costa Rica where bottled water is recommended such as in Puntarenas and Limón. Dehydration is also something to be concerned about in Costa Rica. Take a two hour hike through a rain forest and you will need water. Also the strength of the sun in the low-land areas and the coasts is incredibly strong. Make sure you always have a large bottle of water with you if you are going to be away from civilization for a while.
3. **What if I get sick? Is good medical attention hard to find?**
Not at all. There are excellent doctors in the San José area, several of which will be able to make you feel comfortable by speaking your language. Addresses and phone numbers of doctors and dentists and the major hospitals are available through our office staff. If you need a dentist, we recommend Andres Furtchgott Barrios (224-7703), and for a doctor, Rogelio Pardo, located in Clinica Americana 222-1010, or Dr. Cabezas, or Dr. Longworth at Clinica Biblica at 221-3922.
4. **Is Costa Rica a safe country?**
It's fair to say that Costa Rica is a very safe country, compared to some of its neighbors and even when compared to countries like the United States. Violent crime is almost non-existent and middle class neighborhoods are predominant: it's unlikely that a student will get into 'the wrong neighborhood' by accident.
5. **What are the types of crime that I should worry about and what precautions can I take to avoid them?**
Take precautions to avoid theft. San José is much safer than most other cities, except for this type of crime. The whole downtown area of San José has become a mecca for pickpockets and chain-snatchers. The zippered compartments of backpacks are excellent targets. Purses should be zippered and have short shoulder straps. Wallets and passports shouldn't be carried in your back pocket. Most times, it is a good idea to keep with you only a photo copy of your passport. Leave your real passport in your room. If you feel yourself being jostled or pinched between several people at once, don't just be polite. Protect your things and elbow your way out of the situation immediately.

Homestay

1. **What is a typical Costa Rican breakfast?**
2. **What is a typical Costa Rican dinner? Is it always a hot meal?**
3. **What drinks will my family offer me?**
4. **How does the family normally dress?**
5. **If we choose the homestay option, will we be able to stay together as a couple?**
6. **How many students will be staying with my family?**
7. **Can I change my family if I am not happy?**
8. **How far is the school from my family's house?**
9. **How do we get from our homestay to the school?**
10. **Do we get our own key?**
11. **At what time do we need to be home?**
12. **Can I do my laundry at my host family's house?**

13. **After my courses are finished, can I stay longer with my host family?**
14. **How does ILISA select the families?**
15. **Can you describe the average room?**
16. **Do the host families have hot water?**
17. **What are the alternatives if I don't want to stay with a family?**

1. **What is a typical Costa Rican breakfast?**

A typical Costa Rican breakfast includes fruit, gallo pinto (which is rice and beans and spices), and coffee or tea. Of course your family can also provide you with cereal, toast, bacon and eggs if you prefer.

2. **What is a typical Costa Rican dinner? Is it always a hot meal?**

Instead of having a large dinner, Costa Ricans often have coffee with bread, pastries, cheese and jam, also known as *cafecito* around 3:00 p.m. and have a light, hot dinner around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. The dinner usually consists of rice, black beans, meat and salad. In Costa Rica lunch is the main meal.

3. **What drinks will my family offer me?**

Your family will usually serve you fruit juice or a soda. They may serve beer or wine as well.

4. **How does the family normally dress?**

Though Costa Rica is not a rich country, people always take care to be well dressed when they go out in public. All clothes are ironed, sometimes even underwear! It would be a good idea to leave your torn clothes at home even if they are your favorites. Bring comfortable clothes and shoes for school and travel and something nice for a night on the town or a business meeting.

5. **If we choose the homestay option, will we be able to stay together as a couple?**

Yes. Let us know when you register that you are a couple that would like to stay together and we will find a family willing to accommodate you. Of course, if you feel it will be better for your Spanish, we can put you with separate families within walking distance from each other.

6. **How many students will be staying with my family?**

It's ILISA's policy to put no more than one student per family unless students request otherwise.

7. **Can I change my family if I am not happy?**

We do our best to find a family that meets your specifications, but if for some reason, you think that your family is not suitable, we will look for an alternative family. Normally, changing families is no problem. In some cases, we may have to wait a few days before we can make the change.

8. **How far is the school from my family's house?**

Some families are within walking distance but the majority are within a short bus ride from ILISA. Students never have to cross San Jose nor take more than one bus. Many times students decide to walk to school (25-30 minutes) in order to enjoy the morning air and get to know the areas around them.

9. **How do we get from our homestay to the school?**

This depends on where your family lives. Most students walk to the school or take a bus or taxi. Costa Rica has a well-maintained and inexpensive bus system in San José and the nearest bus stop is always within a few blocks. Taxis are also inexpensive and easy to hail except during rush-hour in the rainy season.

10. **Do we get our own key?**

You will get your own key to the house.

11. **At what time do we need to be home?**

You can stay out as late as you like as you have your own key, but please be courteous and notify your family if you decide to go out so they do not plan on you for dinner, etc.

12. **Can I do my laundry at my host family's house?**

Yes. Laundry service is included in your homestay. Your bed sheets will be changed every week by your host. Your family will also wash your clothing although they may not wash underwear.

13. **After my courses are finished, can I stay longer with my host family?**

Normally this isn't a problem but you will have to check with our homestay coordinator first to make sure there are no scheduling conflicts. If not, you can make the necessary arrangements with the homestay coordinator. No arrangements should be made directly with the family as this may cause conflicts in the homestay planning and it also violates the agreement we have with our host families.

14. How does ILISA select the families?

Costa Ricans have a very high sense of hospitality and like to have guests in their homes. At ILISA we look for families that have a nice and clean house, a well ventilated room with enough light, and family members that like to make a student feel part of the family. All houses are inspected personally by our homestay coordinator and families are interviewed before being accepted as a host family. In addition, all our students fill out evaluations of their families to ensure that we maintain our high standards.

15. Can you describe the average room?

The average room contains a bed, a closet, a desk, a desk lamp and chair. Many students end up doing their homework in the living room or dining room, aided by their family members.

16. Do the host families have hot water?

All the host families have hot water in the shower. Water is usually heated by a electric heating device incorporated in the shower head. A few houses have a central hot water tank.

17. What are the alternatives if I don't want to stay with a family?

There are several so-called 'apartotels' which is a combination of a hotel and an apartment, in the San Pedro area, two of them are within walking distance. Apartotels are serviced apartments that can be rented by the day, week or month. They include a fully equipped kitchen and laundry service. In addition, there are several nearby hotels. Please request our alternative accommodation information if you are interested in staying at a hotel.

Travel insurance**1. What kind of medical insurance for travelers is available in Costa Rica?****2. What about insurance against theft or loss?****3. Will my insurance cover me in Costa Rica?****1. What kind of medical insurance for travelers is available in Costa Rica?**

Costa Rica's national insurance institute offers an insurance package for travelers covering: - accidental death - total permanent accidental disablement - repatriation of body - medical expenses. The maximum coverage will cost about \$35 for 3 weeks of coverage and pay up to \$55.000 in cases 1. and 2. and up to \$ 5.500 in cases 3. and 4. (at CURRENT exchange rates, figures subject to change). There is also a 5% deductible for medical expenses. For foreign standards, the coverage offered is of course quite low, but by the same token, so are the costs of the insurance. And as long as treatment is received in Costa Rica, this insurance should cover most of the expenses. ILISA will be glad to help arrange coverage should a student desire.

2. What about insurance against theft or loss?

Unfortunately, no insurance against theft or loss of personal belongings exists at this time in Costa Rica. Fortunately, Costa Rica is as least as safe or safer than most places in the US or Europe though students should always take care to carry all important items close to their body and never leave their belongings unattended. A safety orientation is part of our general orientation for students.

3. Will my insurance cover me in Costa Rica?

Unfortunately, we cannot answer that question for individual insurance companies. We certainly suggest that you clear up this question before you arrive in Costa Rica. We can tell you that many companies in Europe and some in the United States do provide overseas coverage, but usually you have to pay something more. Just be sure to consult with your company before you arrive.

About the Spanish Programs**1. How many hours per week is the course?****2. What are the levels offered?****3. What are the average costs including accommodation?****4. What are the teachers qualifications?****5. What are the teacher-pupil ratios?****6. What is the teaching methodology?**

7. **How long does it take to learn Spanish?**
8. **I'm too old to learn a language, what do you think?**
9. **We Americans are no good at learning languages, are we?**
10. **What is the average age of the students?**
11. **What nationalities are represented in the students?**
12. **Are standard texts used or do you write your own material?**
13. **What is the hourly fee for instructions?**
14. **How would you describe the first day at ILISA?**
15. **What's the class schedule?**
16. **If I am feeling that I am placed in the wrong group, can I change?**
17. **Do you change teachers during the course?**
18. **Do you have other teaching aids available?**

1. **How many hours per week is the course?**

We offer programs of different durations and intensity. Classes run Monday through Friday. The Group-4 program is 4 hours a day. In group Group-4 Plus, 4 hours a day in group is combined with 2 hours private classes in the afternoon. Our One-to-one private classes are 4 or 6 hours daily. The different elements of the above programs can be combined if necessary.

2. **What are the levels offered?**

On the first day of your course at ILISA the program director will interview you to determine your language proficiency. Based on this interview you will be placed in a group of your level and language skills. We maintain 6 levels of instruction but also look at age, background and previous language experience when making groups.

3. **What are the average costs including accommodation?**

As we have different programs and duration, with or without homestay, prices start at \$435 for 2 weeks of group classes without homestay. Including homestay it would be \$ 745. Prices for the same example programs in 1999 will be: \$500 without homestay and \$835 with homestay. Consult our price list for full information.

4. **What are the teachers qualifications?**

For ILISA a good teacher is a person that is not only qualified in his/her profession but also has the personality elements to be a good teacher like: patience, imagination, creativity, flexibility and a sincere interest in other people. Such characteristics don't come with a university degree, but with the person itself and his or her experience. ILISA also continuously provides in-house training and support for its teachers. We have 12 full-time teachers and 10 associated part-time teachers, allowing us to form all the groups we need to meet students' levels and learning styles.

5. **What are the teacher-pupil ratios?**

We never have more than 4 students per group, even during the high season! Our average group size is 2 to 3 students. With this student-teacher ratio, your active participation is guaranteed.

6. **What is the teaching methodology?**

ILISA's communicative approach is based on many years of teaching a combination of applied grammar and practice of the target language. Constant interaction with teachers whose native tongue is Spanish allows you to develop flexibility and fluency in the language without mechanical memorization. Our teachers, and the use of audiovisual aids keep the learning process fresh and exciting, and assure maximum retention of the subjects covered. Because of this communicative approach, our classes have a dynamic impact. You will be able use your new language skills almost immediately, both inside and outside the classroom.

7. **How long does it take to learn Spanish?**

This is different for every person. It depends, of course, on your previous knowledge and language learning experience. For instance, if you have studied one or two other languages in addition to your native language, learning another one will be easier. As a guideline we say that somebody with no knowledge at all needs approximately 100 hours to reach a basic conversation level and another 100 hours to obtain a limited working proficiency, provided that he or she lives with a family and puts in the required effort. At ILISA, we don't promise miracles like instant Spanish through a super crash course. That's just marketing hype. What we do is provide the ideal circumstances to let you learn. So, how long should you study? As much as your

schedule and budget permits; the more the better. It's a never ending book, well worth reading and very exciting and a passport to a new world.

8. **I'm too old to learn a language, what do you think?**

Age can be a factor to but not the most important one. Of course younger people may have an advantage because they're still students, used to being in a classroom situation and comfortable with it. But you have the experience of age, goal setting, and organization. Whatever your age, it's important to feel comfortable with what you're doing and to not be afraid to make mistakes. Never think I'm too old for this. That's just not the case.

9. **We people from the United States are no good at learning languages, are we?**

Nationality itself is NOT a factor in the capacity to learn a language more quickly or not. Americans are not less capable of learning languages than, for instance, Europeans. But since many times they have no foreign language experience, they don't have the advantage of speaking one or more foreign languages already. Probably the most important factor that will influence the results of your training program is your motivation and dedication. We can give you the best teachers, a well designed program and very small groups, but without your effort and the right attitude the results will be below average. But we expect you come to ILISA with the right attitude to learn, and if you do, you will.

10. **What is the average age of the students?**

Most students are between 25 and 45 years old.

11. **What nationalities are represented in the students?**

60% of our students come from the United States, the remainder mostly from Europe with the Germans and Swiss making up the majority. However, we regularly receive small groups from Denmark, Holland and other small northern European countries.

12. **Are standard texts used or do you write your own material?**

ILISA uses material designed by its teaching staff. This way, we have materials that are fully adapted to the intensive learning situation in Costa Rica. It also allows us to prepare more materials in accordance with different student's interests.

13. **What is the hourly fee for instructions?**

The price for private tutoring is \$22 per hour. In the case that a student books classes in addition to their original registration of a four or six hour a day class, the price per hour is \$20.

14. **How would you describe the first day at ILISA?**

If you start at the beginning of a new course cycle, this day is a little different from other Mondays. It's the day when most new students start their classes and we have a lot of new faces. The program director, assisted by one or more teachers, first interview the new students (except absolute beginners) to assess their levels. As soon as they have tested all the students, there will be a short orientation and then the groups will be formed, professors assigned, and classes will start. Remember that the group placement interviews are just an aid to get you in the right group. If during the first few days of classes you or the teacher feel you are in the wrong group, a change is possible. On normal Mondays, students who have already been taking classes can start right away with their new teacher.

15. **What's the class schedule?**

Classes normally are from 8 a.m.-noon. There is a coffee break from 10-10.20 a.m. For those who take 6 hours/day programs, classes continue from 1.15 to 3.15 p.m., with a break from 2.10 to 2.20. During peak seasons, some group classes may be moved to 1:15-5:15 p.m. and afternoon sessions to 3:30-5:30 p.m.

16. **If I am feeling that I am placed in the wrong group, can I change?**

If you feel you are in the wrong group you will of course discuss this first with the program director who will talk with the teacher. If in their professional opinion you are right, you will change groups. But sometimes you will find out it's not as bad as it looks. Sometimes students have very specific interest that can't be dealt with in a group situation: in such cases we suggest they take additional private instruction if possible.

17. **Do you change teachers during the course?**

You will have a different teacher every week. This will allow you to experience new voices, accents and personalities. Of course, the basic methodology does not change. Remember that the language learning process is different for everybody: you all have your own learning style, just like teachers have their individual teaching styles. Consequently, what may be a good teacher for one student may not be the best for you. By changing teachers weekly we minimize the risk of a student being 'stuck' with a teacher that doesn't fit his

learning style. However, in case of private classes, when student and teacher get along very well, students may opt to extend their classes for another week. This can be coordinated with the program director normally very easily.

18. Do you have other teaching aids available?

We have 13 computers available to students with software that helps you practice your Spanish, build vocabulary and practice reading and comprehension. All three are fast CD-ROM (4x) equipped 486/66 MHz multimedia computers. We offer a variety of interactive CD-ROM based software as well as hard disk based software. A CD-ROM based multimedia encyclopedia in Spanish is also available. ILISA has incorporated computer-based training through a unique partnership with 'Transparent Language Inc.', a major US educational software maker. Transparent Language's advanced multimedia software will complement your regular classroom instruction with 2 hours per week of computer-based practice tailored to your individual needs. Together with our language lab teacher, you select a theme to work on and start polishing your skills. You can review grammar topics, explore new vocabulary, work on reading comprehension, or practice pronunciation. Regardless of the activity you select, you can move at your own pace.

Travel to Costa Rica

1. **Is it difficult to get to Costa Rica?**
2. **What are the best airline options from the United States?**
3. **What about the best options from Europe for flights?**
4. **Can you recommend a travel agency to work with?**
5. **What is the best day to arrive at ILISA?**
6. **Can you suggest some things that I should bring?**

1. **Is it difficult to get to Costa Rica?**

Traveling to Costa Rica has become easier during the last few years due to the increased number of airlines that offer more flights to Costa Rica.

2. **What are the best Airline options from the United States?**

You have many good travel options, depending on your preferences and where you live. To travel from the US, LACSA, Costa Rica's national airline, offers direct flights from Miami, Los Angeles, New York and New Orleans. If you don't live in or near any of these cities or prefer a North American airline, American Airlines is probably the next best choice because it has the most flights to Costa Rica and an extensive route net within the US. If you live near Houston or Dallas, Continental Airlines is also a good choice. United is a possibility if you live near Los Angeles or Washington, DC. Delta Airlines also recently began daily flights to San José from Atlanta.

3. **What about the best options from Europe for flights?**

From Europe your best choice is most likely Iberia which flies to Costa Rica from Madrid with a layover in Miami. If you are looking for bargain rates you might try Condor and LTU from Germany, each offering direct flights from Frankfurt and München, or Martinair from Holland who flies to Miami from where you'd connect with LACSA.

4. **Can you recommend a travel agency to work with?**

You can make travel reservations by contacting airlines directly or through your favorite travel agency. Or contact Exito Latin America Travel Specialists, an agency that specializes in travel to Latin America and offers expert advice and bargain prices. See <http://www.wonderlink.com/exito/>

5. **What is the best day to arrive at ILISA?**

In general we recommend to arrive on the Saturday or Sunday before the start of your classes. If you need to arrive a few days early, usually it's no problem to accommodate you with your host family for a few extra days.

6. **Can you suggest some things that I should bring?**

Musts: Film and camera equipment, sunscreen (SPF 8 or 15+), pocket alarm clock or watch, comfortable shoes, beach towel, soap/shampoo/toiletries, umbrella, comfortable clothes, dictionary, pen and paper, valid passport, sweater. **Optional:** Insect repellent, swiss army knife, cassette tapes, snorkel and mask, a cotton sheet or two, aspirin, a cup, flashlight, daypack, hiking boots, ziploc bags, gortex parka and pants or rain poncho, sun hat, sunglasses, small first aid kit, washcloth.

