

Group Spanish Immersion Programs

Partnership & Coordination Guide

Live The Culture, Learn The Language!

Intercultura
Costa Rica
Spanish Schools

www.interculturacostarica.com

Latest Revision: November 2025

¡Bienvenidos!

Dear Group Leaders,

As Founding Directors of Intercultura Costa Rica, we invite you to partner with us in planning your next transformative group immersion trip.

For over 30 years, our mission has been to foster social awareness and cultural understanding through language. We are committed to providing a secure, enriching, and flawlessly coordinated experience for your students.

Intercultura is not just a language school; we are an internationally recognized cultural center committed to delivering authentic and impactful programs. We were proudly named one of the 7 Best Language Schools in the World in 2024 by Global Scholarships, reflecting our commitment to unparalleled excellence and global citizenship.

We provide the expertise and deep local knowledge to bring your vision to life safely and meaningfully. Our team is here to support you at every stage of planning.

We look forward to collaborating with you and welcoming your students to Costa Rica.

With warm regards,

Laura Ellington and Adelita Jiménez
Founding Directors, Intercultura Costa Rica



Intercultura at a Glance

Two Campuses
Beautiful Tropical Beach and Historical City locations for unique immersion experiences.

Academic Excellence
Custom Communicative Approach Spanish Programs led by Credentialed Professors in small groups (6 Max).

Professional Support
Dedicated assistance from our Expert, Multilingual Team, available every step of your journey.

Core Values & Safety
Dedicated to diversity, inclusion, sustainable development, and Strict Safety Protocols.

Global Recognition
Certified by the UN Global Compact and named one of the 7 Best Language Schools in the World by Global Scholarships.

Enriching Experiences
Our programs include engaging cultural activities and varied, nature-rich excursions around the country.

¡Empezamos!

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Why Intercultura?

Our Distinct Advantage

Our Values and Support

At Intercultura, we believe learning thrives in an environment rooted in respect, equality, and inclusion. Our anti-discrimination policies are not just statements—they guide our daily actions, decisions, and community relationships. We welcome students and staff of all backgrounds and perspectives, and ensure that every classroom, activity, and interaction reflects our commitment to dignity, cultural sensitivity, and equitable treatment. By actively fostering a space where diversity is celebrated, and everyone feels safe, heard, and valued, we live our mission: to build global awareness, empathy, and responsible connection through immersive education.

We prioritize personalized attention and thoughtful guidance. Students consistently highlight our warm, welcoming staff as key differentiators. As former travelers and language learners ourselves, we ensure every student feels supported to adapt, connect authentically with the local community, and fully enjoy their immersion experience.

Our Expertise

Intercultura Costa Rica is a leading language school and cultural center, specializing in designing authentic and impactful group programs for Middle & High Schools, Colleges & Universities, and Specialty Groups since 1993. For over 30 years, we have integrated rigorous language learning with deep cultural exposure, striving to cultivate global citizenship and social responsibility.

Our success is guided by an exceptional, long-tenured team of Costa Rican and international education professionals. Our founders, Adelita Jiménez and Laura Ellington, instilled a vision carried forward by a staff who brings deep expertise and genuine passion to every program.





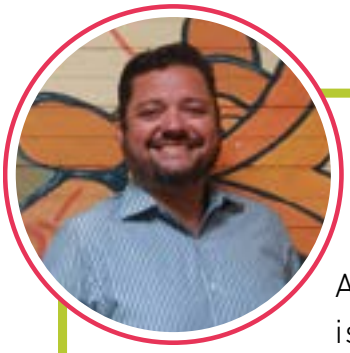
Our Program Model

Our core offering is a holistic immersion experience built on three essential components designed for deep connection and learning:

- Intensive Spanish Classes: Structured, communicative-focused instruction for maximum progress.
- Homestay Accommodations: Daily, real-world language practice, fully integrated with local families (includes breakfast and dinner).
- Cultural Activities & Excursions: Designed to unlock local experiences and discover the beautiful landscapes of Costa Rica.

Meet our Experts

Our Dedicated Team



Marcelo Arroyo, MA, M.Ed
Executive Director & Head of Spanish
Heredia Campus

As Executive Director and Head of the Spanish Department, Marcelo is the academic cornerstone of Intercultura, having been with the school since 1994. He manages teacher training and co-authors our S.L. textbooks, bringing over 30 years of expertise to our curriculum. With two Master's degrees from the top teaching college in Costa Rica, his deep knowledge of linguistics and pedagogy ensures our academic excellence. Beyond his executive role, he remains a passionate teacher and national folk artist.



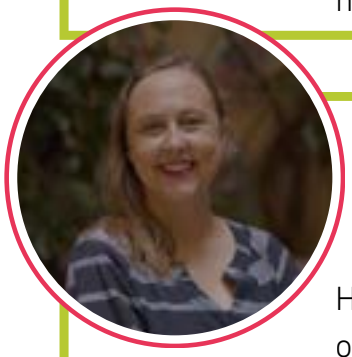
Estefanía Vargas, Lic., J.D.
General Manager
Samara Campus

Estefanía is the heart of the Sámara Campus, where she has served as General Manager after beginning her journey in Student Services in 2009. A proud local of the region, she oversees all campus operations and is a warm, familiar presence for every student. Her dedication to excellence is strengthened by her Law Degree, which enhances her leadership and her ability to guide the school's operations with confidence and clarity. Estefanía ensures that the Sámara Campus delivers a smooth, enriching, and well-managed experience for all who study here.



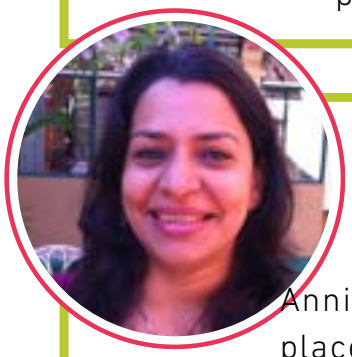
Amy Schmidt, M.A
Groups Coordinator
Samara Campus

Amy specializes in student adjustment and empowered intercultural communication. She serves as a key resource, drawing on her experience as a former Spanish student to ensure groups feel comfortable and included as they settle in. She integrates her knowledge—gained through an M.A. from the UN-mandated University for Peace—into workshops, helping students navigate their new environment successfully.



Holli Barrett, BA, BS
International Programs Coordinator
Heredia Campus

Holli manages and coordinates our study abroad program design, operations, and partner relations. With over two decades of experience in multilingual and multi cultural education, she brings a vital perspective as both an educator and a long-term resident of Costa Rica, ensuring seamless, high-quality experiences for our partners and students.



Annia Delgado
Homestay & Volunteer Coordinator
Heredia Campus

Annia guides students through their host family placements and community projects, having been with Intercultura since 2006. She has extensive experience and a patient nature in supporting students. Her past experience living in the U.S. gives her unique insight into cultural exchange, ensuring reliable support and seamless integration for students and host families alike

Costa Rica

The Pura Vida Way



Beyond the stunning scenery, Costa Rica offers an ideal environment for study abroad. Recognized as one of Latin America's safest and most stable democracies, we provide peace of mind for administrators, faculty members, teachers, and parents. The famously friendly Tico people are eager to share their culture, providing students with authentic, daily conversation practice. This unique combination of vibrant culture, unparalleled natural beauty, political stability, and accessible infrastructure makes Costa Rica the perfect, inspiring setting for deep language and cultural immersion.













Two Campuses

One Unforgettable Immersion

We offer the exceptional advantage of choice and diversity, allowing Group Organizers to design a truly comprehensive Spanish learning journey. You may select one dedicated campus or combine both locations for your group, transitioning seamlessly from the mountains to the coast. (Note: Combining both campuses requires a minimum program duration of two weeks.)

Heredia: Colonial City Campus

Design an urban itinerary focused on historical and cultural immersion at our original Heredia campus. Located in a charming small city, Heredia offers a vibrant blend of colonial heritage and modern life, with easy access to the capital, San José, for culture, museums, and transportation. This setting provides a year-round, temperate mountain climate (average 25°C 77°F) surrounded by nature.





Sámara: Tropical Beach Campus

Choose this stunning location to immerse your students in authentic beachfront beauty. Our custom-designed, air-conditioned facilities boast ocean-view classrooms and direct access to the beach. We offer a relaxed, tropical experience that uniquely combines our dynamic Spanish classes with nature and outdoor learning. When class is done, students can immediately enjoy the sun, sand, and waves right beyond our garden.

Heredia Campus













Downtown Heredia













Sámara Campus













Sámara Beach













Academic Excellence

Our Unique Communicative Approach

Our program is built on an integrated model that seamlessly blends communicative-based language learning with deep cultural exposure. We utilize a professionally developed, balanced, and engaging curriculum designed to meet the academic needs of all learners, with differentiated programs according to the groups' age and needs. To maximize individual attention and speaking opportunities, instruction is delivered in small groups, with a maximum class size of 6 students. Our dynamic, fun approach fosters students' ability to rapidly advance, cultivate lasting language acquisition, and build speaking confidence through consistent communication in a supportive atmosphere.



Student Placement

Students take a Spanish level placement test that typically includes a virtual placement interview prior to arrival and/or a one-on-one oral evaluation with our academic staff upon arrival. Students are then grouped according to their demonstrated proficiency level, using the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In addition to the levels, classes are separated according to age ranges (13-17 and 18+). Groups may choose to have closed groups or allow their students to mix with other learnersin their age range. Should a student feel they have been placed too low or high, they may request a re-evaluation in order to change levels.









Class Format & Structure

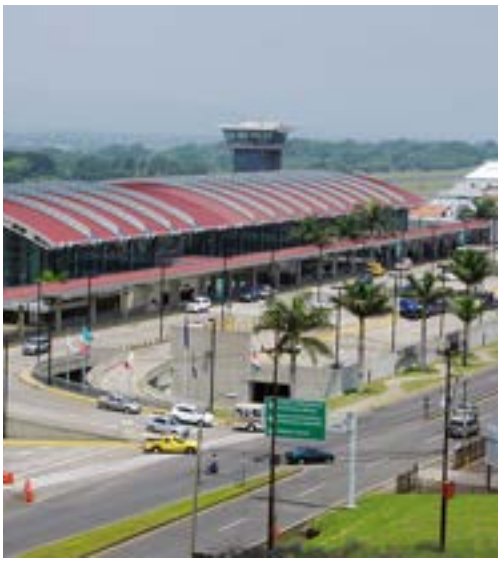
A typical program usually includes 20 hours of intensive group Spanish classes per week, running Monday through Friday (4 hours of instruction per day, scheduled either in the morning or afternoon). We can tailor this total amount of in-class time as needed to match your program's specific credit requirements and educational objectives.

The typical 4-hour session is carefully structured to encourage maximum focus and retention, beginning with a 1.5-hour period of instruction. This is followed by a 15-minute break, after which students return for an additional 1 hour of instruction. A second 15-minute break provides further rest before the final 1 hour of instruction concludes the session.

The Immersion Experience

Life as an Intercultura Student

Arrival Processes and Transfers



Upon arrival at Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO) (Heredia Campus) or Daniel Oduber Quirós International Airport (LIR) (Sámara Campus), students are met immediately outside customs by an authorized representative (either the vetted host family or a dedicated Intercultura transportation representative). Transportation is arranged for the group directly to their accommodations or to the Intercultura campus, depending on arrival times and Group Organizer preferences.

Note: Arrivals and departures typically occur on Sunday to align with the Monday start date, though alternative arrangements can be made to align with group needs and travel dates.

All essential welcome information, including host family details, local emergency contacts, local maps, and the final itinerary, will be provided to the group organizer prior to departure, ensuring a smooth and prepared arrival.

The First Full Day

The day starts in the morning with students arriving on campus, personally escorted by their homestay families. Homestay accommodations at both campuses are within easy walking distance, typically 5–20 minutes. Students are welcomed by dedicated staff who address initial questions and provide an updated itinerary before activities begin.

First-day activities typically include the first Spanish class session, starting after a brief welcome from the Academic Director. This is followed by a comprehensive orientation covering essential safety guidelines, emergency contacts, local neighborhood information, and school services. The day also features a guided walking tour of downtown Heredia or Sámara, accompanied by Intercultura staff, ensuring students are comfortable and familiar with their new surroundings and learning local, historical, and cultural facts. Often, the program's first day ends with a fun Latin dance class before students return to enjoy the evening and dinner with their homestay families.













Classes and Daily Activities

Classes typically begin in the morning at 8:00 AM or 8:30 AM, but the schedule may shift to the afternoon depending on weekly departmental needs.

Students enjoy a flexible, independent lunch break. Both the Heredia and Sámara campuses are located near numerous restaurants, offering ample chance to practice Spanish and sample local cuisine.

Intercultura fosters a true global learning environment. Students have daily opportunities to meet and interact with others from around the world, as well as local Costa Rican students who study English on campus, ensuring a rich intercultural experience.

When not in class, students enjoy enriching on-campus and local cultural activities. These complimentary activities are designed to immerse students fully in Costa Rican culture and provide practical language application outside the classroom, making them a core part of the Intercultura experience.

Exploring the Community

Exploring the surrounding areas of Heredia and Sámara is highly recommended and a fantastic way to discover local life:

Daytime Exploration: Walking around town and exploring during daylight hours is always safe, enjoyable, and encouraged. This is the best time to run errands, visit local shops, and simply observe daily Costa Rican life.

We recommend using trusted taxis or a reliable ride-sharing service like Uber (available in Heredia) when traveling after dark. Homestay families and Intercultura staff provide guidance on safe travel practices during the orientation.

Weekends

Weekends are typically a time for adventure and deeper cultural connections. Many students and groups spend weekends on excursions discovering the incredible biodiversity of Costa Rica, visiting volcanoes, beaches, rainforests, and national parks. These can be pre-arranged or organized independently.

Alternatively, students may choose to spend quality time with their homestay families, participating in weekend activities, relaxing, and experiencing authentic family life.

Your Home Base

Comfortable & Safe Accommodations

Homestay Program

Our popular family homestays offer invaluable daily Spanish practice, greatly accelerating language acquisition and cultural understanding. Our dedicated Homestay Family Coordinator ensures that the program is a positive and rewarding experience for all involved, providing culturally sensitive assistance, a skill developed over our many years of operation.

Host Family Profile

The host family mother, often affectionately referred to as a "Tica mom," is the official head of the homestay and participates in our mandatory orientation and yearly workshops. Our "Tica moms" are invariably described by students as being friendly, warm, excellent communicators, and taking exceptional care of their students.

Commitment to Community

We are deeply committed to supporting the local communities in which we operate. Our homestay program is a cornerstone of this commitment: nearly all fees charged for the homestay program go directly to the host family, making this component a community-focused, non-profit section of our organization.

Alternative Accommodations

For Group Organizers seeking maximum flexibility or independent lodging, furnished apartments and shared student residences are also available at both the Heredia and Sámara Beach locations, just steps away from our campuses. These options accommodate group leaders and students, subject to group size, needs, and availability.

Quality and Safety Assurance

Host families are selected and maintained through a rigorous, ongoing quality assurance process:

- Initial Vetting: Potential hosts submit detailed applications, undergo in-person interviews, and all adult members undergo a background check.
- Property Inspection: Staff inspect the premises, meet the family, and confirm the home is appropriate and within 1 mile of Intercultura.
- Trial Period & Evaluation: Approved families enter a three-month trial period and must maintain 90% or more in student evaluations to join permanently.
- Continuous Monitoring: We conduct weekly student surveys to swiftly address any concerns. Families falling below 85% receive coaching and probation to ensure high standards. Staff regularly inspects homestays for cleanliness and safety.

Heredia Homestays

















Sámara Homestays









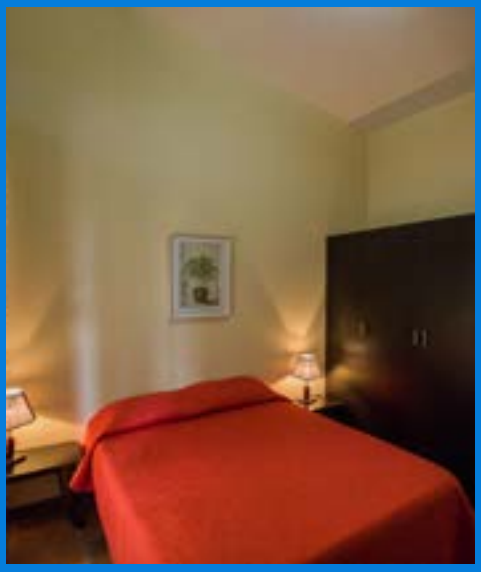




Heredia Apartments











Sámara Residence













Beyond the Classroom

Cultural Activities & Curated Excursions

Cultural Activities

Your students experience deep cultural immersion and maximize language practice with our FREE, daily cultural activities program. Perfected since 1993, we offer the most varied program in Costa Rica, providing your group ample opportunities to use Spanish and connect with local Tico students.

Activities run daily, Monday through Friday, at our campuses and in town. (Note: Specific offerings may vary weekly and between our Heredia and Sámara campuses.)

Group Organizers can also arrange optional, closed cultural activities for just their group (additional cost) and service learning volunteer placements for students.



Language Practice & Conversation

- Structured Intercambios with local Tico students and La Tertulia Conversation Hour focused on specific Spanish topics.

Latin Dance

- Daily classes in salsa, merengue, and bachata, including a weekly night out at a local salón to practice with locals.

Cultural & History Tours

- Walking Tours to discover the local town and organized tours of Colonial Towns, plus monthly Museum & Arts Tours in the capital.

Costa Rican Cuisine

- Weekly hands-on Latin Cooking Class, where students prepare and enjoy authentic dishes.

Wellness & Sports

- Options include outdoor Yoga sessions, high-energy Zumba classes, Soccer Games, and Beach Volleyball.





Curated Excursions

We offer a wide range of curated excursions and can fully customize unique experiences based on your group's specific academic needs and interests. Excursion options are designed to showcase the best of Costa Rica. Safety and Professionalism

All tours and activities are managed, led, and chaperoned by our trained, dedicated tour operators. For transportation, we rely exclusively on licensed, insured, and trusted providers, ensuring safe and comfortable travel for every outing.

Iconic Natural Wonders
- Excursions to towering Volcanoes and vibrant National Parks.

Biodiversity Encounters
- Guided wildlife viewing opportunities for close observation.

Historical & Cultural Museums
- Visits to prominent institutions like the Pre-Columbian Gold and National Museum to explore history, art, and artifacts.

Adrenaline Rush
- Thrilling Canopy Zipline Adventures through the forest.

Farm-to-Cup Insight
- Educational Coffee Tours exploring Costa Rican agriculture.

Tropical Coast Exploration
- Stunning beaches where the jungle meets the sea.

Indigenous Culture
- Visits to learn about local native groups and Pre-Columbian sites.

...Plus, custom excursions and activities designed around your group's unique interests and needs!









Cultural Activities













Curatated Excursions















Student Welfare

Risk Management and Procedures

Our commitment to student welfare begins with our support team. Our warm, dedicated, prepared, and multilingual staff and on-site support personnel are available at all times to facilitate an excellent experience. Facilities on both campuses are spacious, clean, and comfortable, with state-of-the-art learning equipment, providing a secure and welcoming base during the program. For many students, Intercultura is their home away from home, and they often choose to spend their free time on campus enjoying time with other students or relaxing in our gardens.

We take a proactive, multi-layered approach based on five key components to ensure student safety, recognizing that meticulous risk mitigation is a top priority for us and our clients.

Coordination & Supervision
Our highly experienced, bilingual group coordinators communicate constantly with group leaders before, during, and after the program. An English-speaking staff member is available via WhatsApp for immediate after-hours and emergency response. Multilingual staff (French, Portuguese, German) are also on-call. Our staff-to-student ratio is approximately 1:8, with an Intercultura representative present during all scheduled activities and excursions.

Communications
Group leaders have emergency cell phone contacts for the group coordinators, the founding directors, the academic directors, and the homestay families. Our homestay coordinator is also in direct communication with the group leaders and the homestay families for the duration of the program.

Safety & Orientation
During the initial orientation, students receive a comprehensive briefing on safety protocols, including practical instruction on local public transportation (where applicable), safe walking routes, and neighborhood awareness. Additionally, all students are thoroughly briefed on local customs, program rules, and strictly enforced group curfew guidelines.

Partners & Health
We partner with trusted, reliable, and bilingual healthcare professionals to tend to students with minor medical issues or prescription needs. In the event of an emergency, the student is transported to a pre-identified private hospital, and the group leader is notified immediately.

Quality Assurance and Training
We maintain rigorous quality control through ongoing training, supervision, and regular observations for our homestay partners, teachers, tour guides, and all Intercultura representatives. This commitment to excellence is reinforced by participant evaluations to ensure consistent, high-quality, safe support.

Partner Planning

Scheduling - Pricing - Next Steps

Our school is open year-round, with the exception of the holiday closures outlined below. We are happy to arrange a program for your students at the time that best suits their schedule. Our programs typically begin and end on a Saturday or Sunday, and can last as little as one full week or extend for several weeks or months.

High Season Dates and Planning

Our high season, which coincides with international travel and optimal climate conditions, is typically:

- Heredia City Campus: Mid-January through February and again from mid-May to mid-August.
- Sámara Beach Campus: Early January through March, and mid-June to mid-August.

During these months, space is limited, particularly for homestay accommodations, apartments, and external excursions. Advanced planning, confirmation, and timely deposits are crucial to guarantee your group's preferred dates and arrangements during these periods.

Program Closures and Holidays

- Christmas/New Year's: We are closed for two weeks over the Christmas and New Year's holidays.
- Easter Break: We are closed for Easter week (Semana Santa).
- National Holidays: If a Costa Rican national holiday falls Monday through Friday, we reduce the weekly schedule to 4 days of Spanish class. A small discount is applied for this day, and the homestay program/excursions are unaffected.



Our programs are fully customizable, with duration ranging from one week up to several months. The minimum group size is 6 students.

Pricing Reference

The investment for a standard program week begins at $555 (Heredia) or $595 (Sámara) per student. This covers our standard Spanish Immersion Program, which includes:

- 20 hours of intensive Spanish classes.
- Homestay accommodation with daily breakfast and dinner (B&D) and laundry service.
- A dedicated group coordinator.
- On-campus cultural activities.

Note: These prices do not include international travel, private transport, health and travel insurance, additional cultural activities, excursions, or group leader(s) costs.

Factors Affecting Final Cost

The cost increases based on several factors, including:

- Duration and Scope: Program length and combining both the Heredia and Sámara campuses.
- Accommodations: Opting for alternative accommodations outside of the standard Homestay.
- Logistics: Requiring specific transportation needs, transfers, or including additional meals.
- Activities: Adding external excursions or opting for closed, custom cultural activities.
- Meals: Additional meals, beyond the standard breakfast and dinner included in the homestay program, either on campus, at restaurants, or during activities or excursions.



Our dedicated coordinators will partner with you from day one to develop, manage, and implement your custom program, ensuring it aligns with your educational objectives and budgetary requirements.

We recommend beginning the planning process 6 months to a year in advance to ensure adequate time for:

- Student recruitment and final enrollment.
- Arranging financing and securing funding.
- Securing ideal dates and reserving all included accommodation and excursions.

What We Will Need From You

- Final approval of program itinerary and budget.
- Completed registration form for each applicant (2.5 months prior).
- 20% deposit on total group invoice amount (2 months prior).
- Signed Minor Participant Commitment Form & Parental Consent Forms (for applicable students).
- Student Support Details: Comprehensive information regarding any needed accommodations, allergies, health needs, or mobility challenges.
- Division of housemates
- Spanish levels (where applicable).
- Any special requests concerning classes, tours, or activities.

What We Will Send You

- Student Handbook. and Packing List
- Minor Participant Commitment Form & Parental Consent Forms (if applicable)
- Program Invoice with bank transfer details
- Homestay family assignments and maps
- Airport Arrival Instructions
- Final Itinerary with any updated changes.
- Cell phone contact information for your on-site coordinator(s).





Intercultura
Costa Rica
Spanish Schools