

# In Transit



**A Guide to Intelligent Travel**

**The New York Times**

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## Q&A: Spanish Study Abroad

By [RUSHA HALJUCI](#)



Sandra

Sebastian/European Pressphoto Agency

**Q.**

I am a recent college graduate teaching elementary school in a predominantly Spanish-speaking community in San Jose, Calif. I am hoping to find a Spanish language school in

Central America where I can both learn a significant amount of Spanish and also take time to relax after a challenging (and rewarding!) first year of teaching. Being close to the ocean would be ideal. After two weeks of school, I would like to travel (for one or two weeks) and practice my Spanish.

***Kim Segall, Palo Alto, Calif.***

## A.

According to Frommer's, the Travel section's online content partner, [Guatemala](#) is a major destination in Central America for learning Spanish because "Guatemalan Spanish is considered one of the most pure, in terms of clarity and pronunciation, in the Americas." Most of the schools are concentrated in the highland city of Quetzaltenango, 125 miles northwest of Guatemala City, and in [Antigua](#), 25 miles southwest of Guatemala City. Frommer's recommends several schools, including Spanish Academy Antigüena, ([spanishacademyantigua.com](#)) in Antigua and Celas Maya Spanish School in Quetzaltenango ([celasmaya.edu.gt](#)).

Schools offer both one-on-one and group classes, which vary in length and degrees of intensity; many include cultural activities and day excursions, including [Tikal](#), above. Most schools can arrange for home stays with families for "total immersion." Quetzaltenango is a good base for visiting nearby towns and attractions, which include hot springs, small villages and volcanoes. Antigua, which sits in a small valley surrounded by volcanoes, is a beautiful town with restored colonial-era [architecture](#) and cobblestone streets. From Antigua, you can travel across the border to [Honduras](#), with the Hedman Alas bus company ([hedmanalas.com](#)); the Tica bus line ([ticabus.com](#)) can take you to [Mexico](#), [El Salvador](#), Honduras, [Nicaragua](#) and as far away as [Costa Rica](#).

For schools near the beach, Costa Rica is a better option. Most language schools are located in the inland city of San José, but several are along the water. Centro Panamericano de Idiomas ([cpi-edu.com](#)) has three campuses: one in the quiet suburban town of Heredia, another in Monteverde, and one at the beach in Playa Flamingo. A one-week program, with four hours of class per day, costs \$350. (Longer course options are also available.) A home-stay with a Costa Rican family is \$150 more, and includes a private room, breakfast, dinner and laundry. Fly into Liberia, one hour away from the school, or into San José; from there you can take a five-hour bus ride to Playa Flamingo (the school recommends arriving in San José on Saturday and staying overnight; the school will arrange a pick-up on Sunday morning for \$40).

*Share your suggestions about Spanish language schools and travel experiences in Central America here. |*