

Centro Panamericano de Idiomas
Heredia, Monteverde, Flamingo, Costa Rica

Dawn Cohen
Dlc80@po.cwru.edu
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I paid \$945 for three weeks of classes (8am-12pm) plus home stay. I was able to divide each of those weeks up so that I could do one week at each of the school's 3 locations (Heredia, Monteverde, Flamingo). The cost does not include transportation between the locations. As a convenience to the students, the school provided a private shuttle between the locations, since there are usually enough people that switch sites each week. It's a lot nicer and safer than public transportation, but cost around \$20/person (compared to \$5 or so for public).

Some other "hidden" costs came mainly in the after-class activities that the school sponsors. In the brochures, it says just that the school provides many after-class trips and excursions and the like- I never realized they weren't included in the cost and would have such a high price tag with them! For example, CPI provided a shuttle to one of the volcanoes. The actual park admission was only \$6 if you were to go on your own. However, we had to pay CPI \$20 or \$25 a person to go! This was to cover transportation and tour guide; however, there were about 10 people who went – enough to defray the cost of transportation that an extra \$15/person was ridiculous. And the van driver was our "tour guide" (although he certainly didn't do anything in terms of "guiding" us there) so it wasn't like we had to pay extra for someone else. But there was no other way to get there so we didn't have a choice.

Another problem in these situations was that you had to pay CPI in cash for all these activities. There were several times where I wanted to save my cash and charge admissions prices on my credit card wherever I was going, but couldn't because I had to pay CPI up front.

But overall I had a great time and it was a great experience. I'd highly recommend it to anyone who wants to study/learn Spanish. Some people weren't very happy with their home stay families. I didn't have any problems until the last week in Flamingo, but I let CPI know about my dissatisfaction. How much you get out of the language part depends on how much you put into it. I already had a pretty good Spanish base to start, so unfortunately I didn't study nearly as much as I could have and didn't expand my vocabulary much. But I definitely felt more comfortable with grammar and just general conversation. I felt very safe while I was there and didn't get sick at all.