



## A Spanish Education In Costa Rica

BY MARGARET MILLER

**E**ach year Centro Panamericano de Idiomas in Costa Rica (CPI) welcomes many student groups from community colleges, universities, high schools, organizations, and agencies in the United States and other countries who want to improve their Spanish language skills. CPI educates students of all ages, including middle school, high school, and university students individually and in groups along with professionals, families, and retirees. Skill levels range from low beginner through advanced.

“Sometimes we host individual university professors coming to study on their own,” says Jonle Sedar, manager of CPI Groups. Their goal isn’t only for linguistic acquisition for their staff but also for increased cultural awareness. The rate for a home stay is \$150 per week, which includes breakfast, dinner, and laundry service. Off-campus apartments range in price from \$350 to \$375 per week. The weekly cost for Spanish class (four hours per day) is \$350. Recreational activities, such as horseback riding, sailing, and snorkeling expeditions, are available for an additional fee.

“The experience at CPI helped me remember what it feels like to be a second-language learner in the classroom,” says Sahalie Hashim, an English instructor at El Paso Community College in Texas. “It’s easy to forget how different the learning experience can be from the student’s point of view,” Hashim admits. “By inverting that relationship and assuming the role of the second-language learner, I gained a compassion that I plan to implement into my own classes this fall.”



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—Sahalie Hashim, English instructor, El Paso Community College

“There’s nothing like seeing the students learn in an immersion situation where they live with a family of a Spanish-speaking country and are bombarded with Spanish 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” says Kurt Kemp, Spanish professor at Mt. San Antonio Community College in California. “In the summers of 2009 and 2010, I had the good fortune of being able to take a group of community college students to Costa Rica and observe them as their Spanish fluency took off and their cultural understanding expanded exponentially. What made it a special situation for me as a professor was my ability to give them tasks to do within the culture of Costa Rica. The interaction my students had with their host families was unique because they had

to use the language every day and learned to interact better with others, all in the native language. The experience of teaching Spanish in Costa Rica has given me a deeper appreciation for the value of oral communication in a practical setting, which has motivated me to incorporate more facets of Latin culture and oral practice into my Spanish courses at Mt. SAC.”

Butte College in California, Harrisburg Area Community College in Pennsylvania, and San Diego City College are just some of

the other institutions that have participated in this unique language school.

For more information about bringing a group from your community college to CPI, contact Jonle Sedar at [jonle\\_sedar@cpi-edu.com](mailto:jonle_sedar@cpi-edu.com).

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