



*Puerta Principal of Fort Sta. Bárbara in Trujillo, Honduras.*

## *Tips On Easing Cultural Adjustment*

Whenever you study abroad, you experience some cultural adjustment. However, when you are participating in a language immersion program, this cultural adjustment is normally greater because you are living with a family of strangers who don't speak your native language. By immersing yourself in the culture, you will learn much more than vocabulary and verbs, you will learn how to communicate.

The four golden rules of an immersion program are as follows:

- 1. Standards of living vary:** Most of you are coming from a country with a higher standard of living where modern day conveniences are taken for granted.
- 2. Keep your expectations realistic:** The number one reason for unsatisfactory experiences is unrealistic expectations. If you are unsure of something or have a special request, check with us. We'll give you a straight yes or no answer.

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## *College Credit: Easier Than Ever*

Over the last few years, AmeriSpan has been working with the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) to make it easier for our students to earn college credit for our Spanish programs. USM's international and foreign language programs are nationally recognized for their excellence. USM is a fully-accredited, comprehensive state university and credit received from USM is transferable to most universities.

Generally, students must complete a minimum of 40 hours of study (not including activities) for each three hours of academic credit granted. Students attending USM-approved AmeriSpan schools **must register for this credit prior to starting the program.** USM has approved a total of 11 AmeriSpan programs for academic credit. These AmeriSpan partner schools are located in Buenavista, Cuernavaca, Mazatlán and Oaxaca (México); Alajuela and San José (Costa Rica); Antigua and Quetzaltenango (Guatemala); Buenos

Aires (Argentina); Mérida (Venezuela) and Quito (Ecuador). For more information about academic credit through USM contact:

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## Letter From The Editor:



Hello Friends,

Welcome to issue VI of *The Translator*. *The Translator* is a newsletter published periodically for the customers and friends of AmeriSpan. Each issue is full of news, tips and hard-to-find information. Whether you are a seasoned language traveler, or new to the language travel concept, *The Translator* is required reading.

This fall we took a hard look at ourselves and our partner school network. Quite frankly, we are proud of AmeriSpan, our staff, our service and our partners. If you talk to any of our language travel specialists, you'll realize that we know Latin America and our programs better than anyone. However, we identified the following goals to improve our overall service:

1. Additional programs where academic credit can easily be obtained.
2. Additional "exotic" program locations (near beaches or in the mountains)
3. Additional locations for Executive Intensive Programs.
4. Upgrading particular programs where we felt the program was lacking.

I am happy to say that we have been successful in all areas. Throughout this newsletter, we explain just what has been done to accomplish these goals. In addition, we profile our partner schools in Honduras, feature Argentina in our regular *Country Close-Up* section, help you cope with the "cultural adjustment" associated with living abroad and much more.

We hope you enjoy this issue and *Hasta Pronto*.

Sincerely,  
John Slocum  
President



John Slocum relaxing in a hide-away in Montezuma, Costa Rica

### *AmeriSpan Web Site Update*

In June, AmeriSpan activated its World Wide Web site on the Internet. This was a mammoth project and includes our complete program catalog, back issues of our newsletter and a large amount of other information. In January, we began a major update aimed at simplifying the navigation, increasing the information offered and speeding everything up. Come take a look, our web address is <http://www.amerispan.com>

### *Help Us With Our Web Site*

We are looking for someone who is a top-notch web-surfer and a talented HTML editor to help us expand our online Travel Resource Center. Everyday we find more information that is relevant to our customers. We want to index it and make it easy to retrieve. The pay? Lousy! But, oh the satisfaction and the glory! Of course, we'll put your name in lights so all our visitors will know you are the best around.

### *Volunteer at AmeriSpan Guatemala S.A.*

To meet the summer crunch, we are looking for 2 volunteers to work in the AmeriSpan Travel Resource Center in Antigua, Guatemala. We are looking for individuals with a strong background in Spanish willing to commit for at least 2-3 months. AmeriSpan will pay round-trip airfare, travel insurance and a monthly stipend for housing and meals. Volunteers will work in the AmeriSpan office, primarily supporting the many needs of AmeriSpan students.

### *Program Catalog-Always Current*

AmeriSpan has decided to keep the same program catalog cover but we update the content about every 4 months to keep it current.

### *Local Sales Reps Wanted*

AmeriSpan is seeking individuals or organizations that are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about travel to Latin America, study abroad programs and intercultural experiences. If you possess these attributes and have access to or contact with a large number of people trying to learn Spanish, we may be interested in having you represent AmeriSpan's programs. For more information request a Local Sales Rep package.

## Country Close-up: Argentina

### Public Safety: safe.

Pickpocketing and robberies, attributed to the large number of unemployed are the most common forms of crime. At night, in the peripheral neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Rosario as well as the central Buenos Aires districts of San Telmo, La Boca, El Abasto and the train stations are best avoided. The downtown core of the capital is quite safe, day and night, and the countryside (including beaches) remains very safe. Do not take unofficial (pirate) taxis when arriving at Ezeiza international airport

### Health Risk: very low.

No recent developments

### Travel Costs:

Daily travel budget: luxury \$446, 1st class \$199, economy \$67, basic \$26.

**Hotels:** luxury \$164, 1st class \$58, economy \$29, basic \$9.

Restaurants: luxury \$50, 1st class \$31, economy \$14, basic \$6.

Airfare \$0.10/km, \$0.16/mi. Bus \$0.049/km, \$0.079/mi. Train \$0.035/km, \$0.057/mi. Taxi \$0.89/km, \$1.43/mi. City bus fare \$0.50.

Gasoline \$0.61/liter, \$2.32/gal.

### The Economy:

US\$1=1 Peso (official cash), 0.98 (official TCs). Inflation 0.3%/mo = 3.6%/yr. Unemployment 18.6%. Minimum wage \$313/mo. Cost of living index \$958/mo. Although unemployment remains Argentina's most serious problem, the first signs of economic recovery may be in sight. Consumer credit is up by 40% over last year, there was a 14% increase in the stock market share price index in the last 2 weeks of November, and higher international grain and beef prices are encouraging for the important argo-export sector. The budget deficit of US\$2.4 billion (instead of a surplus) and the 2.5% decrease in GDP for 1995 are of major concern, however, the government is planning a second economic reform package. The anticipated austerity measures include eliminating certain public services, increasing the sales tax from 18% to 21%, and improved tax collection. Provincial and municipal administrations have been especially hard hit by budget shortfalls. These were either forced to cut services or

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## Yucatán Summer Spanish Institute

Are you an advanced or superior level Spanish speaker? Are you looking for more than the traditional Spanish program? Our partner in Mérida, México offers the Yucatán Summer Spanish Institute, a special program, every summer. The 1996 program is from July 1st - July 26th, costs \$1,199 and includes the following:

- 18-25 hours/week of sessions on Mayan History and Latin American literature
- Meetings with contemporary authors and related professionals
- Private room and board with a Mexican family
- Option to take Spanish language classes
- Exploring Ruins (Dzibilchaltún, Uxmal and Chichén Itzá)
- Excursion to Progreso Beach
- Visit to the colonial town of Valladolid
- Visit to the agricultural village of Yaxcaba
- Airport pick-up
- AmeriSpan Services

**Special Offer:** Register before May 1st and you will be guaranteed a homestay with air-conditioning at no extra charge.



Northern Caribbean Coast of Honduras

## Beach Options

We receive many calls requesting programs near beaches. The programs in Mazatlán, Mérida (Mex.), Montevideo, La Ceiba, Manuel Antonio, Trujillo and Panama City are either at the beach or within 30 minutes. Destinations within 2-3 hours of beaches include Buenos Aires, Santiago, Caracas, and all programs in Costa Rica. In addition, our partner in Heredia offers the option of classes at Jacó Beach one week per month.

## Size Makes A Difference

As one of the largest language travel agents registering students for programs in Latin America, AmeriSpan has a considerable amount of influence with our partner schools. Unlike other language travel companies, we choose to work with our partner schools to improve programs and services rather than extracting higher commissions. During this past fall, we have all worked hard. The following is a quick summary of the many changes:

### San José-Forester, Costa Rica

The overall program has been improved in two ways. Class sizes will never exceed 8 students (average size is 3-6) and the homestays will only host one foreigner. These improvements are guaranteed only to AmeriSpan students.

### Oaxaca, México

The overall program has been improved in two ways. From a maximum of 10 students/class and only breakfast at the homestay, families will now provide 3 meals/day and class size will be limited to a maximum of 6 students. These

improvements are guaranteed only to AmeriSpan students.

### San Salvador, El Salvador

A group of teachers from our old school (Salvador Miranda Spanish School) has formed a new school. The overall program is superior to our former partner offering 4 hours/day (20 hours/week) of private instruction, 2-3 activities/week, private room and only one foreigner per family. In addition the staff has recruited a number of families within walking distance of the school (many with private bathrooms).

### Buenos Aires, Argentina

The overall program has been improved in two ways. Families will be providing 2 meals each day and the language program has increased to 4 hours/day (20 hours/week). Last year, no meals were included. Airport pickups are now available, though at an extra charge.

### Santiago, Chile

The overall program has been improved with the addition of an activity program and a reduction to

one half of last year's maximum class size (now 4 students/class is the maximum). At least two days/week, the school will organize "out-of-class" activities during the afternoon.

### Huancayo, Peru

The language program has increased the amount of instruction to 4 hours/day (20 hours/week) of private instruction.

### Caracas, Venezuela

The overall program has been improved in two ways. The homestay has been upgraded to a private room and the activity program has been expanded to 3 afternoons/week.



## Country Close-up: Argentina

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were unable to pay public servants' salaries, which led to violent protests in several parts of the country.

**Political Situation:** very stable. Constitutional democracy. President Carlos S. Menem (term 7/95 to 7/99). Victories by the opposition *Union Civica Radical (UCR)* and the center-left *frente para un Pais Solidario (FREPASO)* in September provin-

cial and municipal elections were considered a warning to the government. President Menem was also embarrassed by a message from Pope John Paul II to Argentine bishops in which he expressed concern over the country's growing socioeconomic crisis. Unpaid provincial employees and other labor unions have staged rallies to protest against high unemployment and the government's economic policies.

**Country Close-Up is provided by:**  
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## Tips On Easing Cultural Adjustment

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- 3. Respect Your Hosts:** If you are going to miss a meal, inform your Señora before she has cooked the meal. If you will be out late, tell your family so that they don't worry.
- 4. Take the differences in stride:** If everything were exactly the same as what you are used to, where would the fun be? A few weeks or months with some inconvenience makes you appreciate your own life in a different way. More important, think of all the great stories you'll have!

Here is a quick synopsis of some of the most common cultural differences in

Latin America versus the United States and Canada:

- **Never say "I don't Know" mentality:** In general people in Latin America try to be as helpful as possible. They don't like to say they don't know. The most common example is when you are asking for directions and get pointed in the wrong one. *This is not intentional, the person is only trying to be helpful.*
- **Quiet and Peaceful Households, a rarity:** Whether it is dogs barking, roosters crowing, street noise, neighbors or relatives visiting or a señora banging around the kitchen making a meal, much of Latin America is just plain noisy. *Get*

*used to it, and if you are a light sleeper bring earplugs.*

- **Reality Check: Things Don't Always Work:** Telephones are still a rarity in much of Latin America and reliable telephones are practically unheard of. Don't throw toilet paper in the toilet because it will get clogged. *Be patient because, "hey", you are on vacation.*
- **Family that stays together, lives together:** It is common for three generations of families to be living together under the same roof. It is a way to increase the household income and to help one another. *Can you imagine living with all of your relatives every day?*
- **Macho, Macho Man....:** Most men in Latin America are proud of their machismo and view whistling at women as a compliment. *Ladies, take it in stride or see above... about earplugs.*
- **Different Schedules & Routines:** In much of Latin America, lunch is the big meal of the day which causes business to close for an hour or two each afternoon. In some countries like Argentina, dinner is eaten at 10:30 or 11:00 at night. *When in Rome do as the Romans do.*
- **Cash Is King, What's Plastic?:** Sure, credit cards are accepted in Latin America, but not everywhere and usually with a 5-10% surcharge. *If you want to live off plastic, use your credit card to get cash advances at the bank or at the ATM machines popping up everywhere.*
- **Certain Topics Are Taboo:** Although nosiness is common, certain subjects are taboo e.g. abortion, casual sex, social politics, etc. *Listen first to get the norms.*

And don't forget . . .

- **Time Takes Time, Lots of Time:** Punctuality may be a concept of the future. *"Hora Latina" is different, enjoy it, don't take it personally.*

### Conference for FL Teachers in Costa Rica

A chance to share your ideas with your peers from around the world! Instituto de Cultura y Lengua (our partner in Alajuela) will be hosting the fourth Annual International Conference on Teaching Second Languages. Each participant will receive a special package of teaching materials (tapes, videos, etc.). The program consists of lectures and workshops while the final three days of the week are filled with excursions to many exciting places in Costa Rica. Lodging is with local Costa Rican families and most meals are included. The 1996 program is from July 2 - 9 and costs \$800/person (3 or more only \$720/person).

Here is what some of 1995's participants had to say:

*"The teacher's conference was excellent: enough material to make you want to throw away your text book and just use what they provided; enough ideas to last a year or two. The presenters and presentations were varied and interesting, ingeniously woven into a detailed pattern."*

—Nancy Zechiedrich, AR

*"Director and Co-Director were excellent in leading, organizing and setting a comfortable ambiance."*

—Gloria Ryskind, CT

*"Very high quality in all areas."*

—Jeanne Cochran, PA

*"It was a wonderful experience all around. The Costa Ricans were wonderful."*

—Leigh Gray, NY

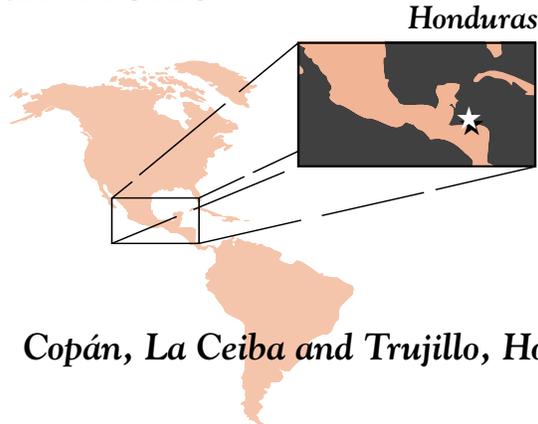
*"It was much, much, much more than I expected."*

—Veronica Rodriguez, PA

*"Phenomenal! No need to improve anything."*

—Alexandra Hrab, NJ

## Program Profile



### Copán, La Ceiba and Trujillo, Honduras

#### **Schools:**

Ixbalanque Escuela de Español  
Eco Escuela de Español  
Centro de Idiomas Internacional

#### **Location:**

Possibly, the best kept travel secret in the Americas is Honduras. Despite a stable political situation and low cost of living, Honduras is largely undiscovered by tourists. The country is home to the Bay Islands and the second largest reef in the world attracting scuba divers from everywhere. With a seemingly endless stretch of deserted beaches, jungles, mountains, Garífuna villages and fascinating Mayan ruins, Honduras has a lot to offer. The magazine, *International Living*, even rated it as one of the Top Five Retirement Destinations in the world.

La Ceiba and Trujillo are located along the tropical Northern Caribbean Coast offering beaches and close proximity to interesting Garífuna villages. La Ceiba is the largest of the port towns and is known as the city that has fun - with movies, dancing and restaurants. The Bay Islands are just off the coast of La Ceiba. For \$15 you are able to fly round-trip for world-class diving. The coastal town of Trujillo is surrounded by thick jungle, mountains, lagoons and rivers. Overlooking a beautiful bay of crystal blue water and white sandy beaches, it is one of the oldest cities in Central America and still has a colonial look.

Copán is located only 8 miles from the Guatemalan border and less than a mile from the Mayan ruins of Copán. Although there were larger Mayan cities in México and Guatemala, Copán was the Athens of the Mayan world, where art and astronomy flourished. These ruins have contributed more about the learning of the Mayan civilization than any other site in the Americas. Copán is a small, quiet town with a population of less than 10,000.

#### **Language Program:**

All of our Honduran partner schools provide a relaxed and intimate setting in which to learn Spanish.

Each program focuses on one-on-one instruction which allows students to move at their own pace and address their own special needs. The Ixbalanque school in Copán has been operating the longest and possesses the strongest language program. However, students should note that teachers in Honduras like Ecuador and Guatemala generally receive less education and training than their peers in other countries where AmeriSpan offers language programs. Based upon our experience, the Honduran teachers tend to make up for this by bringing a high level of enthusiasm to the class everyday.

#### **Homestay**

Generally, homestays are simple when measured by creature comforts. Students should be prepared for more cultural adjustment than in many other

AmeriSpan programs. Usually, only one student is placed in each home leading to a great deal of family interaction and a strong immersion experience. The homestays in Copán tend to be a bit nicer in terms of creature comforts, while La Ceiba's tend to be more cramped with less privacy. Trujillo offers more of a range of homestays.

#### **Activities/Excursions**

None of our partner schools in Honduras offers a formal activity program. However, it is common for students to take their classes and their teachers outside of the classroom, perhaps visiting a museum or a nearby town. These outings permit students to learn a great deal, unaware that they are studying. In addition, all the schools arrange impromptu outings and activities.

#### **Volunteer Projects**

Our partner school in La Ceiba is actively involved in various conservation efforts within Honduras and will happily assist in arranging volunteer work. Some options include:

- Volunteers can work on the Bay Islands on a variety of conservation projects such as identifying and protecting wild-life. (only basic Spanish skills because most people on the Bay Islands are bi-lingual).
- In a nearby mountain village, the Peace Corps assists a women's group with economic development through the marketing of produce and traditional crafts (intermediate Spanish skills).
- A project with local school youth to maintain the beaches along a 6 mile trail to a nearby Garífuna village. (basic Spanish skills).

#### **Other Comments**

Some programs are geared to certain people. The Honduran options are more appropriate for the fairly well-traveled, open-minded, and easy-going individual. Please note that all of our Honduran schools have small capacities and fill-up fast year round.



## AmeriSpan: Off The Wire

### AmeriSpan Discount Card Arrives

We have introduced the AmeriSpan Discount Card in Antigua, Guatemala. The card offers discounts at over 50 different establishments in Antigua, Panajachel and Quetzaltenango. All students registering for the Antigua program receive the card upon arrival.



### AmeriSpan Group Programs

AmeriSpan has introduced all inclusive packages for groups of 10 or more people. Each package includes language instruction, homestay, afternoon activities, airfare and all the AmeriSpan extra services. Group leader incentives are available. For more information contact: Mariana Patchen at AmeriSpan.



### Executive Intensive Programs

AmeriSpan has decided to upgrade our

Executive Intensive Programs to all private instruction. We have added Executive Intensive Programs in Buenos Aires, Caracas and Santiago.



### New Program In Costa Rica

If beaches, a laid-back atmosphere and a well-organized program is what you want, then take a look at our new program in Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica.



### New Program in Honduras

Located on the Northern Caribbean coast of Honduras, our new program in La Ceiba is reviewed in the School Profile section of this issue.



### New Program in Venezuela

Located in a beautiful, university town in the breathtaking Andes, the Mérida program offers strong language instruction, at least 2 school-organized

activities per week, a homestay with private room, and no other foreigners in the family. In addition, the University of Southern Mississippi grants academic credit for study here.



### Insure a Space, Register Soon

The months of June, July and August are the busiest months at our programs. It is important to register as soon as possible to insure a space especially in Honduras - small capacity, Mexico and Costa Rica - very popular programs.



### Panajachel Program Dropped

AmeriSpan is no longer pre-registering students for Panajachel. Although we like the schools and the staffs, many homestays were too basic and at times the administration was a bit disorganized. Panajachel still makes a great weekend trip from either Quetzaltenango or Antigua.



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