

# Language

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Spanish is the most commonly spoken language in Central America. While English is the official language of Belize, both Spanish and a local Creole are also widely spoken. British and US influences have left other English-speaking pockets in the region, most notably among the descendants of West Indian settlers on the Caribbean coast, but also in Panama, particularly in the Canal Zone. Maya is the most common of a number of indigenous languages and dialects spoken throughout the region.

Every visitor to Central America will benefit from learning some Spanish, and it's easy to pick up the basics. A language course taken before departure can lead to a far more relaxed and rewarding travel experience. You can also enrich your stay by enrolling in a language course in Central America. Don't hesitate to practice your new skills – in general, Latin Americans meet attempts to communicate in their language, however halting, with enthusiasm and appreciation. Even if classes are impractical, learning a few basic phrases and pleasantries is a must.

## CENTRAL AMERICAN SPANISH

The Spanish of the Americas comes in a bewildering array of varieties, depending on the areas in which you travel. Consonants

may be glossed over, vowels squashed into each other, and syllables – even whole words – dropped entirely. Slang and regional vocabulary, much of it derived from indigenous languages, can further add to the mix. For example, in Guatemala and Honduras a soft drink is called a *refresco*, but a *gaseosa* in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and a *soda* in Panama. Frequent travel among the small Central American republics is common, however, so people are generally familiar with these variations; you should have few problems being understood. (For examples of local slang words, see the Fast Facts section of the individual country chapter introductions.)

Throughout Latin America, the Spanish language is referred to as *castellano* more often than *español*. The letters **c** and **z** are never lisped in Latin America; attempts to do so could well provoke amusement.

Another notable difference is that the plural of the familiar *tú* (you) is *ustedes* rather than *vosotros*; the latter term will sound quaint and archaic in the Americas. In many parts of El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica, the term *vos* is used instead of *tú*, and as a result the conjugation of some verbs can vary slightly. To avoid complication, we haven't used the *vos* form in the following list of words and phrases. It's a variant that only affects the familiar form of speech, so no offence will be taken when you use *tú* and you'll still be understood everywhere without problem.

For a more in-depth guide to the Spanish of Central and South America, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Latin American Spanish Phrasebook*. Lonely Planet also offers the *Costa Rica Spanish Phrasebook* for those interested in the linguistic particulars of that destination. Another useful resource worth looking for is the compact *University of Chicago Spanish-English, English-Spanish Dictionary*.

## PRONUNCIATION

Spanish spelling is phonetically consistent, meaning that there's a clear and consistent relationship between what you see in writing and how it's pronounced.

## Vowels

<b>a</b>	as in 'father'
<b>e</b>	as in 'met'
<b>i</b>	as in 'marine'
<b>o</b>	as in 'or' (without the 'r' sound)
<b>u</b>	as in 'rule'; the 'u' is not pronounced after <b>q</b> and in the letter combinations <b>gue</b> and <b>gui</b> , unless it's marked with a diaeresis (eg <i>argüir</i> ), in which case it's pronounced as English 'w'
<b>y</b>	at the end of a word or when it stands alone, it's pronounced as the Spanish <b>i</b> (eg <i>ley</i> ); between vowels within a word it's as the 'y' in 'yonder'

## Consonants

As a rule, Spanish consonants resemble their English counterparts. The exceptions are listed below. Note that while the consonants **ch**, **ll** and **ñ** are generally considered distinct letters, **ch** and **ll** are now often listed alphabetically under **c** and **l** respectively. The letter **ñ** is still treated as a separate letter and comes after **n** in dictionaries.

<b>b</b>	similar to English 'b,' but softer; referred to as 'b larga'
<b>c</b>	as in 'celery' before <b>e</b> and <b>i</b> ; otherwise as English 'k'
<b>ch</b>	as in 'church'
<b>d</b>	as in 'dog,' but between vowels and after <b>l</b> or <b>n</b> , the sound is closer to the 'th' in 'this'
<b>g</b>	as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i> before <b>e</b> and <b>i</b> (written as 'kh' in our guides to pronunciation); elsewhere, <b>g</b> is pronounced as in 'go'
<b>h</b>	invariably silent. If your name begins with this letter, listen carefully if you're waiting for public officials to call you.
<b>j</b>	as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i> ('kh' in our guides to pronunciation)
<b>ll</b>	as the 'y' in 'yellow'
<b>ñ</b>	as the 'ni' in 'onion'
<b>r</b>	a short <b>r</b> except at the beginning of a word, and after <b>l</b> , <b>n</b> or <b>s</b> , when it's often rolled
<b>rr</b>	very strongly rolled
<b>v</b>	similar to English 'b,' but softer; referred to as 'b corta'
<b>x</b>	as in 'taxi' except for a very few words, when it's pronounced as <b>j</b>
<b>z</b>	as the 's' in 'sun'

## Word Stress

In general, words ending in vowels or the letters **n** or **s** have stress on the next-to-last syllable, while those with other endings have stress on the last syllable.

Written accents denote stress, and override the rules above, eg *sótano* (basement), *América* and *porción* (portion).

## GENDER & PLURALS

In Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine, and there are rules to help determine gender – with exceptions, of course! Feminine nouns generally end with **-a**, **-ción**, **-sión** or **-dad**. Other endings typically signify a masculine noun. Endings for adjectives also change to agree with the gender of the noun they modify (masculine/feminine **-o/-a**). Where both masculine and feminine forms are included in this language guide, they are separated by a slash, with the masculine form first, eg *perdido/a*.

If a noun or adjective ends in a vowel, the plural is formed by adding **s** to the end. If it ends in a consonant, the plural is formed by adding **es** to the end.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

### I'm looking for ...

*Estoy buscando ...* e-stoy boos-kan-do ...

### Where is ...?

*¿Dónde hay ...?* don-de ai ...

### a campground

*un terreno de camping* oon te-re-no de kam-peen

### a guesthouse

*una pensión/  
casa de huéspedes/  
hospedaje* oo-na pen-syon/  
ka-sa de we-spe-des/  
os-pe-da-khe

### a hotel

*un hotel* oon o-tel

### a youth hostel

*un albergue juvenil* oon al-ber-ge khoov-ve-neel

### I'd like a ... room.

*Quisiera una habitación ...* kee-sye-ra oo-na a-bee-ta-syon ...

### double

*doble* do-ble

### single

*individual* een-dee-vee-dwal

### twin

*con dos camas* kon dos ka-mas

### How much is it per night/person/week?

*¿Cuánto cuesta por noche/  
persona/semana?* kwan-to kwes-ta por no-che/  
per-so-na/se-ma-na

**MAKING A RESERVATION**

(for phone or written requests)

<b>To ...</b>	A ...
<b>From ...</b>	De ...
<b>Date</b>	Fecha
<b>I'd like to book ...</b>	Quisiera reservar ... (see under 'Accommodations' for bed and room options)
<b>in the name of ...</b>	en nombre de ...
<b>for the nights of ...</b>	para las noches del ...
<b>credit card ...</b>	tarjeta de crédito ...
<b>number</b>	número
<b>expiry date</b>	fecha de vencimiento
<b>Please confirm ...</b>	Puede confirmar ...
<b>availability</b>	la disponibilidad
<b>price</b>	el precio

**Does it include breakfast?**

¿Incluye el desayuno? een-kloo-ye el de-sa-yoo-no

**May I see the room?**

¿Puedo ver la habitación? pwe-do ver la a-bee-ta-syon

**I don't like it.**

No me gusta. no me goos-ta

**It's fine. I'll take it.**

OK. La alquilo. o-kay la al-kee-lo

**I'm leaving now.**

Me voy ahora. me voy a-o-ra

<b>private/shared bathroom</b>	baño privado/ compartido	ba-nyo pree-va-do/ kom-par-tee-do
<b>too expensive</b>	demasiado caro	de-ma-sya-do ka-ro
<b>cheaper</b>	más económico	mas e-ko-no-mee-ko
<b>discount</b>	descuento	des-kwen-to

**CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS**

In their public behavior, Latin Americans are very conscious of civilities. You should never approach a stranger for information without extending a greeting, such as *buenos días* or *buenas tardes*, and you should use only the polite form of address, especially with the police and public officials.

Central America is generally more formal than many of the South American countries. The polite form *usted* (you) is used in all cases in this guide; where options are given, the form is indicated by the abbreviations 'pol' and 'inf.'

<b>Hello.</b>	Hola.	o-la
<b>Good morning.</b>	Buenos días.	bwe-nos dee-as

**Good afternoon.** *Buenas tardes.* bwe-nas tar-des  
**Good evening/night.** *Buenas noches.* bwe-nas no-ches

The three most common greetings are often abbreviated to simply *buenos* (for *buenos días*) and *buenas* (for *buenas tardes* and *buenas noches*).

<b>Goodbye.</b>	Adiós.	a-dyos
<b>See you soon.</b>	Hasta luego.	as-ta lwe-go
<b>Yes.</b>	Sí.	see
<b>No.</b>	No.	no
<b>Please.</b>	Por favor.	por fa-voor
<b>Thank you.</b>	Gracias.	gra-syas
<b>Many thanks.</b>	Muchas gracias.	moo-chas gra-syas
<b>You're welcome.</b>	De nada.	de na-da
<b>Pardon me.</b>	Perdón.	per-don
<b>Excuse me.</b>	Permiso.	per-mee-so
	(used when asking permission)	
<b>Forgive me.</b>	Disculpe.	dees-kool-pe
	(used when apologizing)	

**How are things?**

¿Qué tal? ke tal

**What's your name?**

¿Cómo se llama? ko-mo se ya-ma (pol)  
 ¿Cómo te llamas? ko-mo te ya-mas (inf)

**My name is ...**

Me llamo ... me ya-mo ...

**It's a pleasure to meet you.**

Mucho gusto. moo-cho goos-to

**The pleasure is mine.**

El gusto es mío. el goos-to es mee-o

**Where are you from?**

¿De dónde es/eres? de don-de es/e-res (pol/inf)

**I'm from ...**

Soy de ... soy de ...

**Where are you staying?**

¿Dónde está alojado? don-de es-ta a-lo-kha-do (pol)  
 ¿Dónde estás alojado? don-de es-tas a-lo-kha-do (inf)

**May I take a photo?**

¿Puedo sacar una foto? pwe-do sa-kar oo-na fo-to

**DIRECTIONS****How do I get to ...?**

¿Cómo puedo llegar a ...? ko-mo pwe-do lye-gar a ...

**Is it far?**

¿Está lejos? es-ta le-khos

**Go straight ahead.**

Siga/Vaya derecha. see-ga/va-ya de-re-cho

**Turn left.**

Váltée a la izquierda. vol-te-e a la ees-kyer-da

**Turn right.**

Váltée a la derecha. vol-te-e a la de-re-cha

**SIGNS**

<b>Entrada</b>	Entrance
<b>Salida</b>	Exit
<b>Información</b>	Information
<b>Abierto</b>	Open
<b>Cerrado</b>	Closed
<b>Prohibido</b>	Prohibited
<b>Comisaria</b>	Police Station
<b>Servicios/Baños</b>	Toilets
<b>Hombres/Varones</b>	Men
<b>Señoras/Damas</b>	Women

**I'm lost.**

Estoy perdido/a. es-toy per-dee-do/a

**Can you show me (on the map)?**

¿Me lo podría indicar (en el mapa)? me lo po-dree-a een-dee-kar (en el ma-pa)

<b>north</b>	norte	nor-te
<b>east</b>	este/oriente	es-te/o-ryen-te
<b>west</b>	oeste/occidente	o-es-te/ok-see-den-te
<b>here</b>	aquí	a-kee
<b>there</b>	allí	a-ye
<b>avenue</b>	avenida	a-ve-nee-da
<b>block</b>	cuadra	kwa-dra
<b>street</b>	calle/paseo	ka-lye/pa-se-o

**HEALTH****I'm sick.**

Estoy enfermo/a. es-toy en-fer-mo/a

**I need a doctor.**

Necesito un médico. ne-se-see-to on me-dee-ko

**Where's the hospital?**

¿Dónde está el hospital? don-de es-ta el os-pee-tal

**I'm pregnant.**

Estoy embarazada. es-toy em-ba-ra-sa-da

**I've been vaccinated.**

Estoy vacunado/a. es-toy va-koo-na-do/a

**I'm allergic to ...**

Soy alérgico/a ... soy a-ler-khee-ko/a ...

<b>antibiotics</b>	los an-tee-byo-tee-kos
<b>penicillin</b>	la pe-nee-see-lee-na
<b>peauts</b>	al ma-nee

<b>I'm ...</b>	Soy ...	soy ...
<b>asthmatic</b>	asmático/a	as-ma-tee-ko/a
<b>diabetic</b>	diabético/a	dya-be-tee-ko/a
<b>epileptic</b>	epiléptico/a	e-pee-lep-tee-ko/a

**EMERGENCIAS**

<b>Help!</b>	¡Socorro!	so-ko-ro
<b>Fire!</b>	¡Incendio!	een-sen-dyo
<b>Go away!</b>	¡Déjeme!	de-khe-me
<b>Get lost!</b>	¡Váyase!	va-ya-se

**It's an emergency.**

Es una emergencia. es oo-na e-mer-khen-sya

**Could you help me, please?**

¿Me puede ayudar, por favor? me pwe-de a-yoo-dar por fa-voor

**I'm lost.**

Estoy perdido/a. es-toy per-dee-do/a

**I've been robbed.**

Me robaron. me ro-ba-ron

**Where are the toilets?**

¿Dónde están los baños? don-de es-tan los ba-nyos

**Call ...!**

¡Llame a ...! ya-me a

**an ambulance**

una ambulancia oo-na am-boo-lan-sya

**a doctor**

un médico oon me-dee-ko

**the police**

la policía la po-lee-see-a

<b>I have ...</b>	Tengo ...	ten-go ...
<b>diarrhea</b>	diarrea	dya-re-a
<b>nausea</b>	náusea	now-se-a
<b>a headache</b>	un dolor de cabeza	oon do-lor de ka-be-sa

**LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES****Do you speak (English)?**

¿Habla/Hablas (inglés)? a-bla/a-blas (een-gles) (pol/inf)

**Does anyone here speak English?**

¿Hay alguien que hable inglés? ai al-gyen ke a-ble een-gles

**I (don't) understand.**

Yo (no) entiendo. yo (no) en-tyen-do

**How do you say ...?**

¿Cómo se dice ...? ko-mo se dee-se ...

**What does ... mean?**

¿Qué quiere decir ...? ke kye-re de-seer ...

**Could you please ...?**

¿Puede ..., por favor? pwe-de ... por fa-voor

**repeat that**

repetirlo re-pe-teer-lo

**speak more slowly**

hablar más despacio a-blar mas des-pa-syo

**write it down**

escribirlo es-kree-beer-lo

## NUMBERS

1	uno	oo-no
2	dos	dos
3	tres	tres
4	cuatro	kwa-tro
5	cinco	seen-ko
6	seis	says
7	siete	sy-te
8	ocho	o-cho
9	nueve	nwe-ve
10	diez	dyes
11	once	on-se
12	doce	do-se
13	trece	tre-se
14	catorce	ka-tor-se
15	quince	keen-se
16	dieciséis	dye-see-says
17	diecisiete	dye-see-sye-te
18	dieciocho	dye-see-o-cho
19	diecinueve	dye-see-nwe-ve
20	veinte	vayn-te
21	veintiuno	vayn-tee-oo-no
30	treinta	trayn-ta
31	treinta y uno	trayn-ta ee oo-no
40	cuarenta	kwa-ren-ta
50	cinquenta	seen-kwen-ta
60	sesenta	se-sen-ta
70	setenta	se-ten-ta
80	ochenta	o-chen-ta
90	noventa	no-ven-ta
100	cien	syen
101	ciento uno	syen-to oo-no
200	doscientos	do-syen-tos
1000	mil	meel
5000	cinco mil	seen-ko meel
10,000	diez mil	dyes meel
50,000	cinquenta mil	seen-kwen-ta meel
100,000	cien mil	syen meel

## SHOPPING &amp; SERVICES

## I'd like to buy ...

*¿Quisiera comprar ...* kee-sye-ra kom-prar

## I'm just looking.

*Sólo estoy mirando.* so-lo es-toy mee-ran-do

## May I look at it?

*¿Puedo mirarlo/la?* pwe-do mee-rar-lo/la

## How much is it?

*¿Cuánto cuesta?* kwan-to kwes-ta

## That's too expensive for me.

*Es demasiado caro para mí.* es de-ma-sya-do ka-ro pa-ra mee

## Could you lower the price?

*¿Podría bajar un poco el precio?* po-dree-a ba-khar oon po-ko el pre-syo

## I don't like it.

*No me gusta.* no me goos-ta

## I'll take it.

*Lo llevo.* lo ye-vo

## Do you accept ...?

*¿Aceptan ...?* a-sep-tan

## American dollars

*dólares americanos* do-la-res a-me-ree-ka-nos

## credit cards

*tarjetas de crédito* tar-khe-tas de kre-dee-to

## traveler's checks

*cheques de viajero* che-kes de vya-khe-ro

## less

*menos* me-nos

## more

*más* mas

## large

*grande* gran-de

## small

*pequeño/a* pe-ke-nyo/a

## I'm looking for the ...

*Estoy buscando ...* es-toy boos-kan-do

## ATM

*el cajero automático* el ka-khe-ro ow-to-ma-tee-ko

## bank

*el banco* el ban-ko

## bookstore

*la librería* la lee-bre-ree-a

## embassy

*la embajada* la em-ba-kha-da

## exchange house

*la casa de cambio* la ka-sa de kam-byo

## general store

*la tienda* la tyen-da

## laundry

*la lavandería* la la-van-de-ree-a

## market

*el mercado* el mer-ka-do

## pharmacy/

*la farmacia/* la far-ma-sya/

## chemist

*la botica* la bo-tee-ka

## post office

*el correo* el ko-re-o

## supermarket

*el supermercado* el soo-per-mer-ka-do

## tourist office

*la oficina de turismo* la o-fee-see-na de too-rees-mo

## airmail

*correo aéreo* ko-re-o a-e-re-o

## black market

*mercado (negro/ paralelo)* mer-ka-do ne-gr/o pa-ra-le-lo

## letter registered mail stamps

*carta certificado estampillas* kar-ta ser-tee-fee-ka-do es-tam-pee-lyas

## TIME &amp; DATES

## What time is it?

*¿Qué hora es?* ke o-ra es

## It's seven o'clock.

*Es la una.* es la oo-na

## It's one o'clock.

*Son las siete.* son las sy-te

## midnight

*medianoche* me-dya-no-che

## noon

*mediodía* me-dyo-dee-a

## half past two

*dos y media* dos ee me-dya

## now

*ahora* a-o-ra

## today

*hoy* oy

## tonight

*esta noche* es-ta no-che

## tomorrow

*mañana* ma-ny-a-na

## yesterday

*ayer* a-yer

## Monday

*lunes* loo-nos

## Tuesday

*martes* mar-tes

## Wednesday

*miércoles* myer-ko-les

## Thursday

*jueves* khwe-ves

## Friday

*viernes* vyer-nes

## Saturday

*sábado* sa-ba-do

## Sunday

*domingo* do-meen-go

## January

*enero* e-ne-ro

## February

*febrero* fe-bre-ro

## March

*marzo* mar-so

## April

*abril* a-breel

## May

*mayo* ma-yo

## June

*junio* khoo-nyo

## July

*julio* khoo-lyo

## August

*agosto* a-gos-to

## September

*septiembre* sep-tyem-bre

## October

*octubre* ok-too-bre

## November

*noviembre* no-vyem-bre

## December

*diciembre* dee-syem-bre

## TRANSPORTATION

## Public Transportation

## What time does ... leave/arrive?

*¿A qué hora sale/llega ...?* a ke o-ra sa-le/ye-ga ...

## the bus

*el autobús* el ow-to-boos

## the plane

*el avión* el a-vyon

## the ship

*el barco/buque* el bar-ko/boo-ke

## the train

*el tren* el tren

## airport

*el aeropuerto* el a-e-ro-pwer-to

## train station

*la estación de ferrocarril* la es-ta-syon de fe-ro-ka-reel

## bus station

*la estación de autobuses* la es-ta-syon de ow-to-boos-ses

## bus stop

*la parada de autobuses* la pa-ra-da de ow-to-boos-ses

## luggage check room ticket office

*guardería/ equipaje la boletería* gwar-de-ree-a/ e-kee-pa-khe la bo-le-te-ree-a

## I'd like a ticket to ...

*¿Quisiera un boleto a ...* kee-sye-ra oon bo-le-to a ...

## What's the fare to ...?

*¿Cuánto cuesta hasta ...?* kwan-to kwes-ta a-sta ...

## 1st class

*primera clase* pree-me-ra kla-se

## 2nd class

*segunda clase* se-goan-da kla-se

## single/one-way

*ida* ee-da

## return/round-trip

*ida y vuelta* ee-da ee vwel-ta

## taxi

*taxi* tak-see

## Private Transportation

## I'd like to

*¿Quisiera* kee-sye-ra

## hire a ...

*alquilar ...* al-kee-lar ...

## bicycle

*una bicicleta* oo-na bee-see-kle-ta

## car

*un auto* oon ow-to

## 4WD

*un todo terreno* oon to-do te-re-no

## motorcycle

*una moto* oo-na mo-to

## pickup (truck)

*camioneta* ka-myo-ne-ta

## truck

*camión* ka-myon

## hitchhike

*hacer dedo/ pedir un ride* a-ser de-do/ pe-deer oon ride

## ROAD SIGNS

## Acceso

*Entrance*

## Aparcamiento

*Parking*

## Ceda el Paso

*Give Way*

## Despacio

*Slow*

## Dirección Única

*One-way*

## Mantenga Su Derecha

*Keep to the Right*

## No Adelantar/

*No Passing*

## No Rebasa

## Peaje

*Toll*

## Peligro

*Danger*

## Prohibido Aparcar/

*No Parking*

## No Estacionar

## Prohibido el Paso

*No Entry*

## Pare/Stop

*Stop*

## Salida de Autopista

*Freeway Exit*

## Is this the road to (...)?

*¿Se va a (...) por esta carretera?* se va a (...) por es-ta ka-re-te-ra

## Where's a petrol station?

*¿Dónde hay una gasolinera/un grifo?* don-de ai oo-na ga-so-lee-ne-ra/oon gree-fo

**CROSSING THE BORDER**

<b>birth certificate</b>	<i>certificado de nacimiento</i>
<b>border (frontier)</b>	<i>la frontera</i>
<b>car registration</b>	<i>registración</i>
<b>car-owner's title</b>	<i>título de propiedad</i>
<b>customs</b>	<i>aduana</i>
<b>driver's license</b>	<i>licencia de manejar</i>
<b>identification</b>	<i>identificación</i>
<b>immigration</b>	<i>inmigración</i>
<b>insurance</b>	<i>seguro</i>
<b>passport</b>	<i>pasaporte</i>
<b>temporary vehicle import permit</b>	<i>permiso de importación temporal de vehículo</i>
<b>tourist card</b>	<i>tarjeta de turista</i>
<b>visa</b>	<i>visado</i>

**Please fill it up.**

*Lleno, por favor.* ye-no por fa-vor

**I'd like (20) liters.**

*Quiero (veinte) litros.* kye-ro (vayn-te) lee-tros

<b>diesel</b>	<i>diesel</i>	<i>dee-sel</i>
<b>leaded (regular)</b>	<i>gasolina con plomo</i>	<i>ga-so-lee-na kon plo-mo</i>
<b>petrol (gas)</b>	<i>gasolina</i>	<i>ga-so-lee-na</i>
<b>unleaded</b>	<i>gasolina sin plomo</i>	<i>ga-so-lee-na seen plo-mo</i>

**(How long) Can I park here?**

*¿(Por cuánto tiempo) Puedo aparcar aquí?* (por kwan-to tyem-po) pwe-do a-par-kar a-kee

**Where do I pay?**

*¿Dónde se paga?* don-de se pa-ga

**I need a mechanic.**

*Necesito un mecánico.* ne-se-see-to oon me-ka-nee-ko

**The car has broken down (in ...).**

*El carro se ha averiado (en ...).* el ka-ro se a a-ve-rya-do (en ...)

**The motorcycle won't start.**

*No arranca la moto.* no a-ran-ka la mo-to

**I have a flat tyre.**

*Tengo un pinchazo.* ten-go oon peen-cha-so

**I've run out of petrol.**

*Me quedé sin gasolina.* me ke-de seen ga-so-lee-na

**I've had an accident.**

*Tuve un accidente.* too-ve oon ak-see-den-te

**TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN****I need ...**

*Necesito ...* ne-se-see-to ...

**Do you have ...?**

*¿Hay ...?* ai ...

**a car baby seat**

*un asiento de seguridad para bebés* oon a-syen-to de se-goo-ree-da pa-ra be-bes

**a child-minding service**

*un servicio de cuidado de niños* oon ser-vee-syo de kwee-da-do de nee-nyos

**a children's menu**

*una carta infantil* oo-na kar-ta een-fan-teel

**a creche**

*una guardería* oo-na gwar-de-ree-a

**(disposable) diapers/nappies**

*pañales (de usar y tirar)* pa-ny-a-les (de oo-sar ee tee-rar)

**an (English-speaking) babysitter**

*una niñera (de habla inglesa)* oo-na nee-nye-ra (de a-bla een-gle-sa)

**formula (milk)**

*leche en polvo* le-che en pol-vo

**a highchair**

*una trona* oo-na tro-na

**a potty**

*una pelela* oo-na pe-le-la

**a pusher/stroller**

*un cochecito* oon ko-che-see-to

**Do you mind if I breast-feed here?**

*¿Le molesta que dé de pecho aquí?* le mo-les-ta ke de pe-cho a-kee

**Are children allowed?**

*¿Se admiten niños?* se ad-mee-ten nee-nyos



Also available from Lonely Planet:  
*Latin American Spanish Phrasebook*

# Glossary

See the Language chapter, p752, for other useful words and phrases.

**aguardiente** – clear, potent liquor made from sugarcane; also referred to as *caña*  
**aguas de frutas** – fruit flavoured water drink  
**almuerzo** – lunch; sometimes used to mean an inexpensive set lunch  
**apartado** – post-office box  
**artesanía** – handicraft  
**Av** – abbreviation for *avenida* (avenue)  
**ayuntamiento** – municipal government

**bahía** – bay  
**bajareque** – traditional wall construction, where a core of stones is held in place by poles of bamboo or other wood then covered with stucco or mud  
**balboa** – national currency of Panama  
**balneario** – public beach or swimming area  
**barrio** – district; neighborhood  
**bistec** – grilled or fried beef steak  
**Black Caribs** – see *Garífuna*  
**bocas** – appetizers, often served with drinks in a bar

**caballeros** – literally ‘horsemen,’ but corresponds to the English ‘gentlemen’; look for the term on bathroom doors  
**cabaña** – cabin or bungalow  
**cabina** – see *cabaña*; also a loose term for cheap lodging in Costa Rica (in some cases it refers to cabins or bungalows, in others it refers merely to an economical hotel room)  
**cafetería** – literally ‘coffee shop’; any informal restaurant with waiter service (not a self-service establishment as implied by the English ‘cafeteria’)  
**cafetín** – small *cafetería*  
**cajero automático** – automated teller machine (ATM)  
**calle** – street  
**callejón** – alley; small, narrow or very short street  
**calzada** – causeway  
**camión** – truck; bus  
**camioneta** – pickup truck  
**campesino** – farmer  
**caña** – see *aguardiente*  
**Carr** – abbreviation for *carretera* (highway)  
**Carretera Interamericana** – Interamerican Hwy, or Interamericana (also referred to as the Pan-American Hwy, or Pan-Americana); the nearly continuous highway running from Alaska to Chile (it breaks at the Darién Gap in Panama)  
**casa de cambio** – currency exchange office

**casa de huéspedes** – guesthouse  
**casado** – cheap set meal, usually served at lunchtime  
**cascada** – waterfall  
**caseta telefónica** – telephone call station  
**catedral** – cathedral  
**cay** – small island of sand or coral fragments  
**caye** – see *cay*  
**cayo** – see *cay*  
**cayuco** – dugout canoe  
**cenote** – large, natural limestone cave used for water storage or ceremonial purposes  
**cerro** – hill  
**cerveza** – beer  
**ceviche** – seafood marinated in lemon or lime juice, garlic and seasonings  
**Chac** – Maya rain god; his likeness appears on many ruins  
**chacmool** – Maya sacrificial stone sculpture  
**chamarra** – thick, heavy woolen blanket (Guatemala)  
**chapín** – citizen of Guatemala; Guatemalan  
**chicha** – fruit juice mixed with sugar and water (Panama)  
**chicken bus** – former US school bus used for public transportation  
**cine** – movie theater  
**ciudad** – city  
**cocina** – literally ‘kitchen’; small, basic restaurant, or cookshop, usually found in or near municipal markets  
**cofradía** – religious brotherhood, particularly in highland Guatemala  
**colectivo** – shared taxi or minibus that picks up and drops off passengers along its route  
**colón** – national currency of Costa Rica  
**comedor** – basic and cheap eatery, usually with a limited menu  
**comida a la vista** – meal served buffet- or cafeteria-style  
**comida corrida** – meal of the day; set meal of several courses, usually offered at lunchtime  
**comida corriente** – mixed plate of different foods typical of the local region  
**conquistador** – any of the Spanish explorer-conquerors of Latin America  
**Contras** – counterrevolutionary military groups fighting against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua throughout the 1980s  
**cordillera** – mountain range  
**córdoba** – national currency of Nicaragua  
**correo aéreo** – airmail  
**corte** – piece of material 7m to 10m long that is used as a wraparound skirt  
**costa** – coast



**criollo** – Creole; born in Latin America of Spanish parentage; on the Caribbean coast it refers to someone of mixed African and European descent; see also *mestizo* and *ladino*  
**cuadra** – city block  
**cueva** – cave

**damas** – ladies; the usual sign on bathroom doors

**edificio** – building  
**empanada** – Chilean-style turnover stuffed with meat or cheese and raisins  
**entrada** – entrance  
**expreso** – express bus

**faja** – waist sash that binds garments and holds what would otherwise be put in pockets  
**finca** – farm; plantation; ranch  
**fritanga** – sidewalk barbecue, widely seen in Nicaragua  
**fuerte** – fort

**gallo pinto** – common meal of blended rice and beans  
**Garifuna** – descendants of West African slaves and Carib Indians, brought to the Caribbean coast of Central America in the late 18th century from the island of St Vincent; also referred to as *Black Caribs*  
**Garinagu** – see *Garifuna*  
**gaseosa** – soft drink  
**gibnut** – small, brown-spotted rodent similar to a guinea pig; also called *paca*  
**golfo** – gulf  
**gringo/a** – mildly pejorative term used in Latin America to describe male/female foreigners, particularly those from North America; often applied to any visitor of European heritage  
**gruta** – cave  
**guacamole** – a salad of mashed or chopped avocados, onions and tomatoes  
**guaro** – local firewater made with sugarcane (Costa Rica)

**hacienda** – agricultural estate or plantation; treasury, as in Departamento de Hacienda (Treasury Department)  
**hospedaje** – guesthouse  
**huipil** – long, woven, white sleeveless tunic with intricate, colorful embroidery (Maya regions)

**iglesia** – church  
**indígena** – indigenous  
**Interamericana** – see *Carretera Interamericana*  
**internacionalistas** – volunteers from all over the world who contributed to rebuilding Nicaragua when the Sandinistas assumed power  
**invierno** – winter; Central America's wet season, which extends roughly from April through mid-December  
**isla** – island  
**IVA** – *impuesto al valor agregado*; value-added tax

**junco** – type of basket weaving

**ladino** – person of mixed indigenous and European parentage, often used to describe a *mestizo* who speaks Spanish; see also *mestizo* and *criollo*  
**lago** – lake  
**laguna** – lagoon; lake  
**lancha** – small motorboat  
**lempira** – national currency of Honduras  
**leng** – colloquial Mayan term for coins (Guatemalan highlands)  
**licuado** – fresh fruit drink, blended with milk or water  
**lista de correos** – poste restante (general delivery) mail

**malecón** – waterfront promenade  
**mar** – sea  
**marimba** – xylophone-like instrument  
**menú del día** – fixed-price meal of several courses  
**mercado** – market  
**Mesoamerica** – a geographical region extending from central Mexico to northwestern Costa Rica  
**mestizo** – person of mixed ancestry, usually Spanish and indigenous; see also *criollo* and *ladino*  
**metate** – flat stone on which corn is ground  
**migración** – immigration; immigration office  
**milpa** – cornfield  
**mirador** – lookout  
**mola** – colorful hand-stitched appliqué textile made by Kuna Indians  
**muelle** – pier  
**municipalidad** – town hall  
**museo** – museum

**Navidad** – Christmas

**oficina de correos** – post office  
**ordinario** – slow bus

**paca** – see *gibnut*  
**PADI** – Professional Association of Diving Instructors  
**palacio de gobierno** – building housing the executive offices of a state or regional government  
**palacio municipal** – city hall; seat of the corporation or municipal government  
**palapa** – thatched, palm leaf-roofed shelter with open sides  
**Pan-Americana** – see *Carretera Interamericana*  
**pan de coco** – coconut bread  
**panadería** – bakery  
**panga** – small motorboat  
**parada** – bus stop  
**parque** – park; sometimes also used to describe a plaza  
**parque nacional** – national park  
**peña** – folkloric club; evening of music, song and dance  
**pensión** – guesthouse  
**petén** – island

**plato del día** – plate (or meal) of the day  
**plato típico** – mixed plate of various foods typical or characteristic of a place or region  
**playa** – beach  
**pollera** – Spanish-influenced 'national dress' of Panamanian women, worn for festive occasions  
**pozo** – spring  
**propina** – tip; gratuity  
**pueblo** – small town or village  
**punte** – bridge  
**puerta** – gate; door  
**puerto** – port; harbor  
**pulpería** – corner store; minimart  
**punta** – point; traditional Garifuna dance involving much hip movement  
**pupusa** – cornmeal mass stuffed with cheese or refried beans, or a mixture of both (El Salvador)

**quebrada** – ravine; brook  
**quetzal** – national currency of Guatemala, named for the tropical bird

**ranchito** – thatched-roof restaurant  
**refresco** – soda, or soft drink; drink made with local fruits (Costa Rica)  
**rio** – river  
**ropa vieja** – literally 'old clothes'; spicy shredded beef and rice dish (Panama)  
**rostería** – restaurant selling roast meats  
**Ruta Maya** – Maya Route, describing travels to the Mayan sites of Mexico, Guatemala and Belize (chiefly), but also El Salvador and Honduras

**sacbé** – ceremonial limestone avenue or path between Maya cities  
**salida** – exit  
**sancocho** – spicy meat-and-vegetable stew, the 'national dish' of Panama  
**santo** – saint

**Semana Santa** – Holy Week, the week preceding Easter  
**sendero** – path or trail  
**sierra** – mountain range; saw  
**soda** – place that serves a counter lunch; soda or soft drink (Panama)  
**sorbetería** – ice-cream parlor  
**stela, stelae** – standing stone monument of the ancient Maya, usually carved  
**supermercado** – supermarket, from a corner store to a large, Western-style supermarket

**taller** – shop; workshop  
**tamale** – boiled or steamed cornmeal filled with chicken or pork, usually wrapped in a banana leaf  
**tapado** – rich Garifuna stew made from fish, shrimp, shellfish, coconut milk and plantain, spiced with coriander  
**templo** – temple; church  
**terminal de autobus** – bus terminal  
**Tico/a** – male/female inhabitant of Costa Rica  
**tienda** – small shop  
**típica** – see *típico*  
**típico** – typical or characteristic of a region, particularly used to describe food; also a form of Panamanian folkloric music  
**traje** – traditional handmade clothing  
**turicentro** – literally 'tourist center'; outdoor recreation center with swimming facilities, restaurants and camping (El Salvador)

**vegetariano/a** – male/female vegetarian  
**venado** – deer; venison  
**verano** – summer; Central America's dry season, roughly from mid-December to April  
**viajero/a** – male/female traveler  
**volcán** – volcano

**Zapatistas** – members of the left-wing group Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), fighting for indigenous rights in Chiapas, Mexico

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