

This is a two-part article! Part I dives into the Spanish language school experience. Part II is a compilation of language schools across Latin America. If you have a school to recommend, please email it to ¡Vámonos! The email address is kineticpublishing@gmail.com

Spanish Language Schools Abroad Part I

by Maya Moore, EdM

As the tourism season picks up again, many people no doubt have travel on the mind. If you and your family love to travel but also want to improve your Spanish fluency, fitting in one or two weeks at a language school is a great way to go. Even if your Spanish is advanced, a stint at a language schools can jump start your language comprehension and provide a nice way to meet people!

What are the schools like?

Spanish language schools offer small classes of usually three to five students, and in my experience the teachers are top notch. There is usually a main grammar teacher and one or two other teachers who rotate in to work on grammar or conversation skills with the class. Some schools offer activities such as salsa dancing, yoga, and surfing, and there are usually opportunities for short get-away trips with your classmates.

Host Families

Some schools offer the option to stay with a host family, which can be a fantastic immersion experience. The people who sign up to host are generally very friendly, and hey, they're making your breakfast! During my first experience staying with a host family, I was in my early 20s and on an extended trip. The filtered water provided by my “host mother” kept me from getting sick. She and the other “moms” also arranged trips for me and two other young women I'd become friends with. So host families can also make your trip safer and give you a sense of community.

Classes for Children

When I travel, I always like to bring my favorite travel buddy (my son!) If you have school aged kids, you'll want to find a Spanish class for them as well. Some schools offer classes specifically for children, but even if they don't, they can usually put a class together for one or more children on the spur of the moment. For example, at Montañita Language School in Ecuador, the staff paired my son with a private tutor for a very good rate, so we could both be in class at about the same time. By the end of the trip, my son said he understood more of what the host family said, and was less dependent on me for translation.

Pandemic Times

During our most recent trip to Mexico, I actually didn't include a language class because of Covid precautions, and my language skills definitely suffered. I struggled to find the right words to express myself to the hosts who ran the Air BnB where we stayed, and I could only understand about 60-70% of what I heard (instead of the usual 80-90%) by the end of our stay. After that experience, I vowed to definitely "hit the books" next time!

Please stay tuned for a follow up article, which will explore specific Spanish language schools, including ones that offer classes for children. Do you know of a Spanish school you'd like to see on the list? Please email it to ¡Vámonos! : kineticpublishing@gmail.com

Do you know of a great school that was left off the list? Feel free to email the information to kineticpublishing@gmail.com. I'll update the list and repost it!