

SURVIVAL SPANISH · NOSARA, COSTA RICA

A little Spanish for your stay

A free, practical guide from Nosara Spanish Institute.

Order breakfast, find your way and make a connection. You don't need perfect Spanish. Start with a greeting, try a few words and keep this guide handy.

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Save a copy to your phone. In print, use the page numbers. You can always point to the Spanish phrase.

01 · A QUICK START

Say it with confidence

The pronunciation hints are a starting point, not an exact accent. CAPITALS mark the strongest beat.

a · ah, as in father

e · eh, as in met

i · ee, as in see

o · oh, but short and steady

u · oo, as in food

Keep vowels short and clear, including at the ends of words.

h · silent: hola = OH-lah

j · an English h is a useful starting point: José = hoh-SEH

ñ · ny, as in canyon: mañana = mah-NYAH-nah

ll / y · a y sound is a useful starting point: me llamo = meh YAH-moh

c / z · c before e or i, and z, sound like s in Costa Rica

b / v · sound alike in Spanish; a gentle b will get you started

DON'T LET R STOP YOU

A single r is often a quick tongue tap. The strong r and rr vary by speaker. Keep going even if you can't roll them.

A COMFORTABLE WAY TO BEGIN

This guide uses usted forms when speaking to one person. In Costa Rica, usted can be friendly as well as respectful. You may also hear vos or tú.

02 · LITTLE WORDS, WARMER MOMENTS

Hello & thank you

Hola. / Buenas.

Hello. / Hi.

OH-lah / BWEH-nahs

Buenos días.

Good morning.

BWEH-nohs DEE-ahs

Buenas tardes. / Buenas noches.

Good afternoon. / Good evening or good night.

BWEH-nahs TAHR-dehs / BWEH-nahs NOH-chehs

Por favor. / Gracias.

Please. / Thank you.

pohr fah-BOHR / GRAH-syahs

Con permiso. / Disculpe.

Excuse me (to pass). / Excuse me (to get attention).

kohn pehr-MEE-soh / dees-KOOL-peh

Me llamo... Mucho gusto.

My name is... Nice to meet you.

meh YAH-moh... MOO-choh GOOS-toh

¿Cómo está? Bien, gracias. ¿Y usted?

How are you? Fine, thank you. And you?

KOH-moh ehs-TAH / byehn GRAH-syahs / ee oos-TEHD

Hasta luego.

See you later.

AHS-tah LWEH-goh

PURA VIDA · POO-RAH BEE-DAH

You'll hear this as a friendly hello, goodbye, thanks or "all good," depending on the moment. A simple greeting before a question is a lovely place to start.

03 · KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

When you don't understand

Hablo un poquito de español.

I speak a little Spanish.

AH-bloh oon poh-KEE-toh deh ehs-pah-NYOHL

No entiendo.

I don't understand.

noh ehn-TYEHN-doh

Más despacio, por favor.

More slowly, please.

mahs dehs-PAH-syoh pohr fah-BOHR

¿Puede repetir, por favor?

Can you repeat that, please?

PWEH-deh reh-peh-TEER pohr fah-BOHR

¿Me lo puede escribir?

Can you write it down for me?

meh loh PWEH-deh ehs-kree-BEER

¿Qué significa...?

What does... mean?

keh seeg-nee-FEE-kah

¿Habla inglés?

Do you speak English?

AH-blah een-GLEHS

Quiero practicar mi español.

I want to practice my Spanish.

KYEH-roh prahk-tee-KAHR mee ehs-pah-NYOHL

GIVE YOURSELF ANOTHER TRY

A smile, a gesture or showing the phrase can help. If someone is busy, keep the exchange short. You'll have another chance to practice.

04 · FROM THE FIRST COFFEE TO THE BILL

At a café or restaurant

Swap café for the food or drink you'd like.

Una mesa para dos, por favor.

A table for two, please.

OO-nah MEH-sah PAH-rah dohs pohr fah-BOHR

¿Me trae el menú, por favor?

Could you bring me the menu, please?

meh TRAH-eh ehl meh-NOO pohr fah-BOHR

¿Qué me recomienda?

What do you recommend?

keh meh reh-koh-MYEHN-dah

Para mí, un café, por favor.

For me, a coffee, please.

PAH-rah mee oon kah-FEH pohr fah-BOHR

Un vaso de agua, por favor.

A glass of water, please.

oon BAH-soh deh AH-gwah pohr fah-BOHR

Para aquí. / Para llevar.

To eat here. / To take away.

PAH-rah ah-KEE / PAH-rah yeh-BAHR

La cuenta, por favor.

The bill, please.

lah KWEHN-tah pohr fah-BOHR

¿El servicio está incluido?

Is the service charge included?

ehl sehr-BEE-syoh ehs-TAH een-KLOO-ee-doh

YOU MAY HEAR: ¡BUEN PROVECHO!

Enjoy your meal! Reply “gracias.” A casado usually has rice, beans, sides and a main; ask what's included.

05 · ASK BEFORE YOU ORDER

Food preferences & allergies

Sin carne, por favor.

Without meat, please.

seen KAHR-neh pohr fah-BOHR

¿Tiene opciones veganas?

Do you have vegan options?

TYEH-neh ohp-SYOH-nehs beh-GAH-nahs

Sin picante, por favor.

Not spicy, please.

seen pee-KAHN-teh pohr fah-BOHR

¿Esto tiene leche?

Does this contain milk?

EHS-toh TYEH-neh LEH-cheh

Tengo alergia al maní.

I'm allergic to peanuts.

TEHN-goh ah-LEHR-hyah ahl mah-NEE

Tengo una alergia grave.

I have a severe allergy.

TEHN-goh OO-nah ah-LEHR-hyah GRAH-beh

¿Puede confirmar con la cocina?

Can you check with the kitchen?

PWEH-deh kohn-feer-MAHR kohn lah koh-SEE-nah

leche / huevo / pescado · milk / egg / fish

mariscos / maní / trigo · shellfish / peanuts / wheat

BE SPECIFIC

A preference and an allergy are different. For an allergy, show a written Spanish explanation of exactly what you must avoid and ask the kitchen to confirm. “Sin carne” alone does not explain every dietary restriction.

06 · SETTLE IN & ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED

At your accommodation

Tengo una reserva a nombre de...

I have a reservation under the name...

TEHN-goh OO-nah reh-SEHR-bah ah NOHM-breh deh

¿Cuál es la clave del wifi?

What's the Wi-Fi password?

kwahl ehs lah KLAH-beh dehl WEE-fee

¿A qué hora es la salida?

What time is checkout?

ah keh OH-rah ehs lah sah-LEE-dah

¿Puedo dejar las maletas aquí?

Can I leave my bags here?

PWEH-doh deh-HAHR lahs mah-LEH-tahs ah-KEE

No funciona el aire acondicionado.

The air conditioning isn't working.

noh foon-SYOH-nah ehl AH-ee-reh ah-kohn-dee-syoh-NAH-doh

No hay agua caliente.

There's no hot water.

noh ahy AH-gwah kah-LYEHN-teh

Necesito una toalla, por favor.

I need a towel, please.

neh-seh-SEE-toh OO-nah toh-AH-yah pohr fah-BOHR

¿Me puede ayudar?

Can you help me?

meh PWEH-deh ah-yoo-DAHR

A WORD YOU MAY HEAR

Paño can mean towel in Costa Rica; toalla is understood too. Save your accommodation's name, map pin and contact number on your phone.

07 · FIND THE PLACE, CONFIRM THE PLAN

Getting around & heading out

¿Dónde queda...?

Where is...?

DOHN-deh KEH-dah

¿Cómo llego a la playa?

How do I get to the beach?

KOH-moh YEH-goh ah lah PLAH-yah

¿Se puede ir caminando?

Can you walk there?

seh PWEH-deh eer kah-mee-NAHN-doh

¿Cuánto cuesta ir a...?

How much does it cost to go to...?

KWAHN-toh KWEHS-tah eer ah

¿A qué hora salimos?

What time do we leave?

ah keh OH-rah sah-LEE-mohs

¿Me puede enviar la ubicación?

Can you send me the location?

meh PWEH-deh ehn-BYAHR lah oo-bee-kah-SYOHN

¿Dónde está el baño?

Where's the bathroom?

DOHN-deh ehs-TAH ehl BAH-nyoh

a la derecha / a la izquierda · to the right / to the left

todo recto / cerca / lejos · straight ahead / near / far

DIRECTIONS IN NOSARA

Directions often use landmarks. A shared map pin helps confirm the exact place. Before a ride or activity, confirm the total price, currency and meeting point.

08 · CLEAR PRICES, FEWER SURPRISES

Shopping & paying

¿Cuánto cuesta esto?

How much does this cost?

KWAHN-toh KWEHS-tah EHS-toh

¿El precio está en colones o dólares?

Is the price in colones or dollars?

ehl PREH-syoh ehs-TAH ehn koh-LOH-nehs oh DOH-lah-rehs

¿Puedo pagar con tarjeta?

Can I pay by card?

PWEH-doh pah-GAHR kohn tahr-HEH-tah

¿Tiene cambio?

Do you have change?

TYEH-neh KAHM-byoh

¿Cuánto es en total?

How much is it altogether?

KWAHN-toh ehs ehn toh-TAHL

¿Me da el recibo, por favor?

Can I have the receipt, please?

meh dah ehl reh-SEE-boh pohr fah-BOHR

Solo estoy viendo, gracias.

I'm just looking, thank you.

SOH-loh ehs-TOHY BYEHN-doh GRAH-syahs

No, gracias.

No, thank you.

noh GRAH-syahs

YOU MAY HEAR

¿Efectivo o tarjeta? = Cash or card? Solo efectivo = Cash only. Don't guess when a price is unclear: "¿Me lo puede escribir?" = Can you write it down for me?

09 · START SMALL, BUILD UP

Numbers you'll hear

Use these for people, quantities, times and room numbers.

0 · cero

1 · uno

2 · dos

3 · tres

4 · cuatro

5 · cinco

6 · seis

7 · siete

8 · ocho

9 · nueve

10 · diez

11 · once

12 · doce

13 · trece

14 · catorce

15 · quince

16 · dieciséis

17 · diecisiete

18 · dieciocho

19 · diecinueve

20 · veinte

30 treinta / 40 cuarenta

50 cincuenta / 60 sesenta

70 setenta / 80 ochenta

90 noventa / 100 cien

PUTTING NUMBERS TOGETHER

21 = veintiuno (bayn-tee-OO-noh). 25 = veinticinco (bayn-tee-SEEN-koh).
From 31, use y: treinta y uno = 31; cuarenta y cinco = 45. Before colones,
uno becomes un: veintiún colones.

10 · GET COMFORTABLE WITH COLONES

Hundreds, thousands & prices

₡ means Costa Rican colones. These are example amounts, not prices for particular goods or services.

THE HUNDREDS

100 cien	200 doscientos	300 trescientos
400 cuatrocientos	500 quinientos	600 seiscientos
700 setecientos	800 ochocientos	900 novecientos

500 = quinientos (kee-NYEHN-tohs).

101 = ciento uno; 150 = ciento cincuenta.

LISTEN FOR MIL (MEEL) = THOUSAND

₡1,000 mil meel

₡1,500 mil quinientos meel kee-NYEHN-tohs

₡2,000 dos mil dohs meel

₡2,500 dos mil quinientos dohs meel kee-NYEHN-tohs

₡5,000 cinco mil SEEN-koh meel

₡7,500 siete mil quinientos SYEH-teh meel kee-NYEHN-tohs

₡10,000 diez mil dyehs meel

₡20,000 veinte mil BAYN-teh meel

₡25,000 veinticinco mil bayn-tee-SEEN-koh meel

₡50,000 cincuenta mil seen-KWEHN-tah meel

A HANDY PATTERN

3,000 = tres mil; 15,000 = quince mil. Say mil, not un mil. Add the hundreds directly: dos mil quinientos = 2,500. You may see ₡2.500 or ₡2 500 written for ₡2,500.

11 · KEEP THESE WITHIN REACH

When you need help

In an emergency in Costa Rica, call 9-1-1.

¡Ayuda!

Help!

ah-YOO-dah

Llame al nueve uno uno, por favor.

Call 9-1-1, please.

YAH-meh ahl NWEH-beh OO-noh OO-noh pohr fah-BOHR

Necesito un médico.

I need a doctor.

neh-seh-SEE-toh oon MEH-dee-koh

Estoy en...

I'm at...

ehs-TOHY ehn

¿Dónde hay una farmacia?

Where is there a pharmacy?

DOHN-deh ahy OO-nah fahr-MAH-syah

Keep your accommodation's name, address or map pin and contact number available offline.

LOCAL MEDICAL CARE

Paradise Medical Services

Centro Médico Guiones, Playa Guiones.

Call +506 2682-1212

WhatsApp +506 8909-5769

For an emergency, call 9-1-1. Don't wait for a WhatsApp reply.

paradisemedicalservices.com

Contacts checked September 18, 2026.

12 · A FEW LOCAL ESSENTIALS

Useful during your stay

Nosara Calendar

Local events, live music, markets, and classes.

nosaracalendar.com

Nosara Ocean Safety

Beach flags, rip currents, and ocean safety.

nosaraoceansafety.org/safety-tips

Nosara 911 directory

More local medical, fire, and other help contacts.

nosara911.com/numbers

YOUR STAY · SU ALOJAMIENTO

Accommodation: _____

Host contact: _____

Address / landmark: _____

Ask your host for the exact map pin and save it on your phone. You can also save your details in the online guide.

[Open the online guide](#)

A FEW WORDS CAN OPEN A CONVERSATION.

Enjoying your Spanish? Explore lessons with Nosara Spanish Institute. We'd love to help you keep going.

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nosaraspanishinstitute.com

