

MENLO
ABROAD



Costa Rica



May 18-June 7, 2026



Menlo Abroad: Costa Rica

May 18–June 7, 2026



IN BRIEF

Menlo Abroad offers transformative experiences through guided immersive travel in the global South. Emphasizing relationship-building through homestay and community engagement, students develop knowledge, skills, and a greater understanding of themselves and their world. They emerge with a renewed sense of purpose and a desire to serve.¹



Dates: May 18-June 7, 2026

(Note that participants will be out of the country and unable to return for Commencement or related activities. June 7 is a required day of reflection and celebration on the Menlo campus.)

Enrollment Limits: 16 students

Enrollment Eligibility: Menlo students in grades 9-11. For medical questions or exemption requests contact the school nurse.²

Trip Leaders: There will be two Menlo-affiliated trip leaders: Upper School Athletics Administrative Assistant Quinn Holland and former Senior Dean/Upper School Spanish Teacher Justin Carunchia. In addition, there will be one or more leaders from World Leadership School.

All-Inclusive Fee³: \$6400. Financial aid may be available. Current financial aid recipients should contact Rose Garza (rose.garza@menloschool.org) for information.

¹ Menlo Abroad is an elective option for MTerm and is considered and assessed as an M Term course. But while other MTerm courses end May 29, Menlo Abroad courses complete on the evening of June 7, 2026.

² Neither fluency in Spanish language nor enrollment in Spanish language is required.

³ Fee includes all flights • hotel accommodation • all meals • all surface transportation • museum, park, and temple entrance fees • course preparation manual and reading materials • donations to charitable causes in the host country • instructor and extra guide fees • on-site equipment rental where needed • comprehensive risk management systems and administrative support 24/7. The fee does not include trip cancellation insurance or expenses for petty cash expenditures (est. at \$200), baggage fees, travel medicine or immunization or obtaining passports and visas.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Costa Rica is a land of stunning beauty, rainforests in the clouds, unusual plants and animals, and spectacular diversity. It is a country known for progressive environmentalism and rich history, culture, and traditions. Yet Costa Rica is also a developing country that shares many of the same challenges and blessings of the Global South. Menlo Abroad Costa Rica is an encounter with these contrasts.

After beginning orientation on the Menlo campus and an overnight flight to the capital city of San Jose, we travel north to the beautiful rural area of Chilamaté, where we orient at a local lodge. Over the next three days, we visit nearby community-based businesses, institutions, and organizations, including an organic farm, a local elementary school, and a women's collective. These three organizations then become the bases for daily community engagement activities. After our initial orientation, we move into the main chapter of Menlo Abroad: Costa Rica, namely, an extended homestay. Here a routine begins: Arranged in pairs, students are hosted by families, depart most mornings for work with community partners, and return each evening for dinner, informal gatherings, and lodging with the homestay family. On weeknights and weekends, students and homestay families spend extended time together. Aside from the community engagement activities, students partake in various activities such as a soccer clinic, a tour of a cacao farm, a visit to an indigenous community, and a trip to the mountain town of La Fortuna.

For the final chapter, the group departs Chilamaté for reflection and transference activities in the Caribbean Coastal town of Cahuita. They then return home for a final re-entry day and celebration on the Menlo campus.



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ITINERARY

(Note: Itinerary is subject to change, and full details will be shared with families closer to the date of departure.)

Menlo Abroad is a progressive journey, broadly divided into three phases. The first is orientation, beginning on the Menlo campus and continuing in the destination country; the second is the homestay and community engagement phase, the longest period and heart of the travel experience. The third and final phase is transference, a time of reflection and meaning making, concluding on the Menlo campus.

Phase 1: Orientation & Acclimation

- **Location:** Menlo Campus - San José - Chilamaté
- **Focus:** Preparation. Cultural context. Group connection.
- **Dates:** May 18-May 21

Students begin their journey on the Menlo campus before traveling to Costa Rica for orientation activities in San José and Chilamaté. Highlights include a rainforest walk, community introduction, cultural activities, and time with our associate World Leadership School (WLS) at the Chilamaté Rainforest Eco Retreat (CRER).

Phase 2: Homestay & Community Engagement

- **Location:** Linda Vista - El Paraíso - San Ramón
- **Focus:** Immersion. Relationship-building. Meaningful contribution.
- **Dates:** May 22-June 2

During this phase, students live with host families and work alongside local partners, including an organic farm cooperative, an elementary school, and a women's cooperative. Experiences include community projects, river swims, hikes, cultural exchanges, soccer clinics, and visits to local landmarks such as Poza Azul and La Fortuna.

Typical Day in Phase 2

- Breakfast with homestay family
- Check-in with cohort
- Community engagement activity at either a) women's cooperative; b) organic farm; c) primary school
- Lunch at community engagement sites
- Continued community engagement activity
- Return to Linda Vista. Swim in Sarapiquí River
- Dinner and after-dinner games with homestay family and community members

Phase 3: Transference & Reflection

- **Location:** Cahuita (Caribbean Coast) - Menlo Campus
- **Focus:** Reflection. Synthesis. Looking ahead.
- **Dates:** June 3-June 7

The final phase takes place in Cahuita, where students take part in reflection activities, explore Cahuita National Park, and prepare to bring their learning home. The journey concludes with travel back to SFO and a reunion with families on the Menlo campus.

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TIMELINE OF APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS

January 9	Announcement of Menlo Abroad and Borderlands programs at upper school assembly
January 27	Applications due
February 6	Participants notified
February 10	Forms and Payment due by 3:00 pm
April 21, 6:00 pm	Pre-departure information night (MS Garage) for enrolled students and their parents (meeting is mandatory for student and at least one parent)
May 18, 9:00 am	Menlo Abroad: Costa Rica orientation on Menlo campus; evening departure for Costa Rica
May 18-June 6	Menlo Abroad: Costa Rica trip
June 7	Re-entry day on Menlo Campus and completion of reflections and celebration. ⁴

⁴ Students must attend the final day to receive full credit for the course. The time and nature of the celebration is to be determined.



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PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Menlo Abroad: Costa Rica is built around interrelated academic and experiential program components intended to create a holistic, immersive experience. Below is a list of these components as they relate to this program.

- 1. Survey of Development Issues:** Our program explores a range of development issues, from resource management and environmental impact to education to market- and community-oriented development. Students learn through their direct experiences, meetings with community members and leaders, and related activities.
- 2. Independent or Small-Group Study:** Menlo students will have the opportunity to investigate—individually or in small groups—a topic of particular interest, availing themselves of local knowledge and resources.
- 3. Language Study:** We do not expect participants to come with language skills, nor to master them. We do expect that students will want to interact with locals as closely as they can. Few things do more to empower participants and to facilitate ease of cultural understanding than frequent use of language and supportive instructors. Each of the instructors is either fluent or comfortable in the Spanish language and will encourage the acquisition of language skills and act as a translator where needed.
- 4. Immersive Travel:** Traveling to traditional communities in developing countries requires students to get out of their comfort zones. In Menlo Abroad, students are travelers rather than tourists. They travel in a style that enables them to genuinely know the people of the countries they visit. For adaptable participants, it offers the most authentic experience and profound learning adventure. Students should expect to cope with cold water showers, basic infrastructure, and pit toilets in the rural areas.
- 5. Homestay:** Often the most challenging and fulfilling component, homestays take students to the core of their experience. Homestays are carefully set up with each student's individual personality in mind in order to provide the best experience in cultural and language immersion possible. In Linda Vista, homestays are coordinated through community leaders. Each student will be placed in a homestay, most likely together with another Menlo student. The cohort will gather most mornings to check in and to engage in group activities.
- 6. Community Engagement:** Students will learn about themselves and each other through their experiences working on community engagement projects of mutual interest and benefit.
- 7. Guided Reflection:** Students will regularly meet with Menlo and WLS leaders to investigate, monitor, problem solve, and reflect on events or issues particular to the individual students. Students will journal and blog frequently to communicate their experience with friends and family back home.

MENLO ABROAD ASPIRATIONS

1. **Knowledge and Global Competency**⁵: Menlo Abroad programs advance students' self-knowledge and global competencies, including intercultural capabilities, historical perspectives, and attentiveness to diversity. Through direct experience, students develop awareness of global systems and issues impacting their host communities.

2. **Dispositions of Global Engagement**⁶: Menlo Abroad programs cultivate internationally minded students who recognize their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet and strive to create a better and more peaceful world. Among the many positive dispositions they develop are agency, leadership, confidence, empathy, compassion, humility, feelings of interconnection, and respect.

3. **Relationships**: Menlo Abroad programs build sustaining relationships between students and diverse, underserved foreign communities and individuals through shared common experiences of everyday life.

4. **Community Engagement**: Menlo Abroad programs contribute to solutions based on mutually beneficial work, apprenticeship, or study, in activities that at the same time support students' knowledge of, and appreciation for, local cultures and issues at hand.

5. **Transference**: Menlo Abroad programs generate sustaining interest and connections with Menlo curricula and programs.

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⁵ *Global competency* includes the ability to investigate the world beyond the immediate environment, the recognition of one's own and other perspectives, and the ability to communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences.

⁶ By *Global engagement*, we mean the dispositions necessary to be connected and of service to others, including those beyond national borders.





Please contact Peter Brown with any questions at 650.330.2001 ext. 2238 or email pbrown@menloschool.org.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The program is being offered by Menlo School in conjunction with World Leadership School. In cases of programs offered in conjunction with other organizations, participants are expected to complete registration, waivers, and medical forms provided by both Menlo School and the third-party organization.

By February 10: To secure a place in the program each of the following must be submitted:

To Dorelia Arias at Reception, Stent Hall:

1. A check payment payable to *Menlo School* for \$6400. Write participant's name and *Costa Rica* on the memo line. Financial aid recipients will be contacted by the financial aid with a revised program fee.
2. All required Menlo and third party forms via Permission Click.

By April 13: Deadline for any outstanding submissions, e.g., *Parent Authorization for Minor Traveller* form (hard copy) or digitized passport copy.

Equipment lists, air travel instructions, and further information about the program will be provided subsequently.

Our intention is to address the goals and curricular elements listed in the program description, but all participants are advised that course itineraries will likely change to incorporate participant goals and interests, to adjust to the health of members of the group, or in response to weather conditions, problems with transportation, political or social unrest or other unforeseen problems. Regardless of such changes, we will always work to structure and implement the course so that it stays true to the original intent.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Menlo encourages participants to consider purchasing travel insurance or trip cancellation insurance policy for the Borderlands trip. Check your primary medical insurance provider to ensure your child will have medical coverage while traveling. If that is in question, travel insurance including medical coverage should be purchased.

If the participant is on financial aid, travel insurance purchases for this trip will be reimbursed at the rate of financial aid.

You might consider purchasing a travel insurance package through an organization such as InsureMyTrip to provide some financial protection against unforeseen circumstances or withdrawal. Menlo makes no recommendation regarding these options: Please read all policies carefully to ensure that your needs are met.

CANCELED TRIPS: A full refund will be made for canceled trips that arise out of insufficient registration, though Menlo is not responsible for other costs incurred by the student or family preparing for the trip. For trips canceled due to any other circumstance that is beyond Menlo's control, Menlo will refund all recoupable tuition. If Menlo decides to cancel the trip at its own discretion, Menlo will fully refund participants' payments.

REFUND POLICY: If Menlo does not cancel the trip but a participant chooses to withdraw, the participant must inform the Global Programs Director (pbrown@menloschool.org) and the Program Director of (erin@worldleadershipschool.com) in an email communication. Menlo will refund recoupable fees.*

MEDICAL AND EVACUATION EXPENSES: It is the responsibility of the student and the student's family to understand the limits of any medical and evacuation policy, and to provide up-front payment of emergency services when required.

CELL PHONES: No cell phones or internet-connected devices are allowed on the trip.

VIOLATION OF RULES AND REGULATIONS: If a participant acts in a way that is injurious to himself or herself, people of the host community, or other participants on the trip, or generally conducts himself or herself in a way that is disruptive to the trip, we reserve the right to send the participant home without refund or to require parental pickup at the travel site. Underage use of alcohol and the use of illegal drugs are cause for dismissal. Participants sent home early or who choose to return for any reason, including sickness, personal emergencies or injury, will be responsible for all medical costs and will absorb travel and related costs associated with an unscheduled departure.

*Recoupable fees do not include airline fees and deposits Menlo pays to travel organization on the student's behalf.

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READ THIS DESCRIPTION CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING FORMS.