



# Costa Rica & Mexico: Exploring Higher Education Across Borders



REGIONAL INSTITUTE  
The Americas 2026

# What we'll explore together

**01**

Each country as a destination

**02**

How international students are admitted

**03**

Cost of study and living

**04**

Scholarships and financial aid

**05**

Immigration and student support

**06**

Experiences and internships

**07**

Safety

**08**

Your questions and experiences





# Two Countries, One World of Opportunity

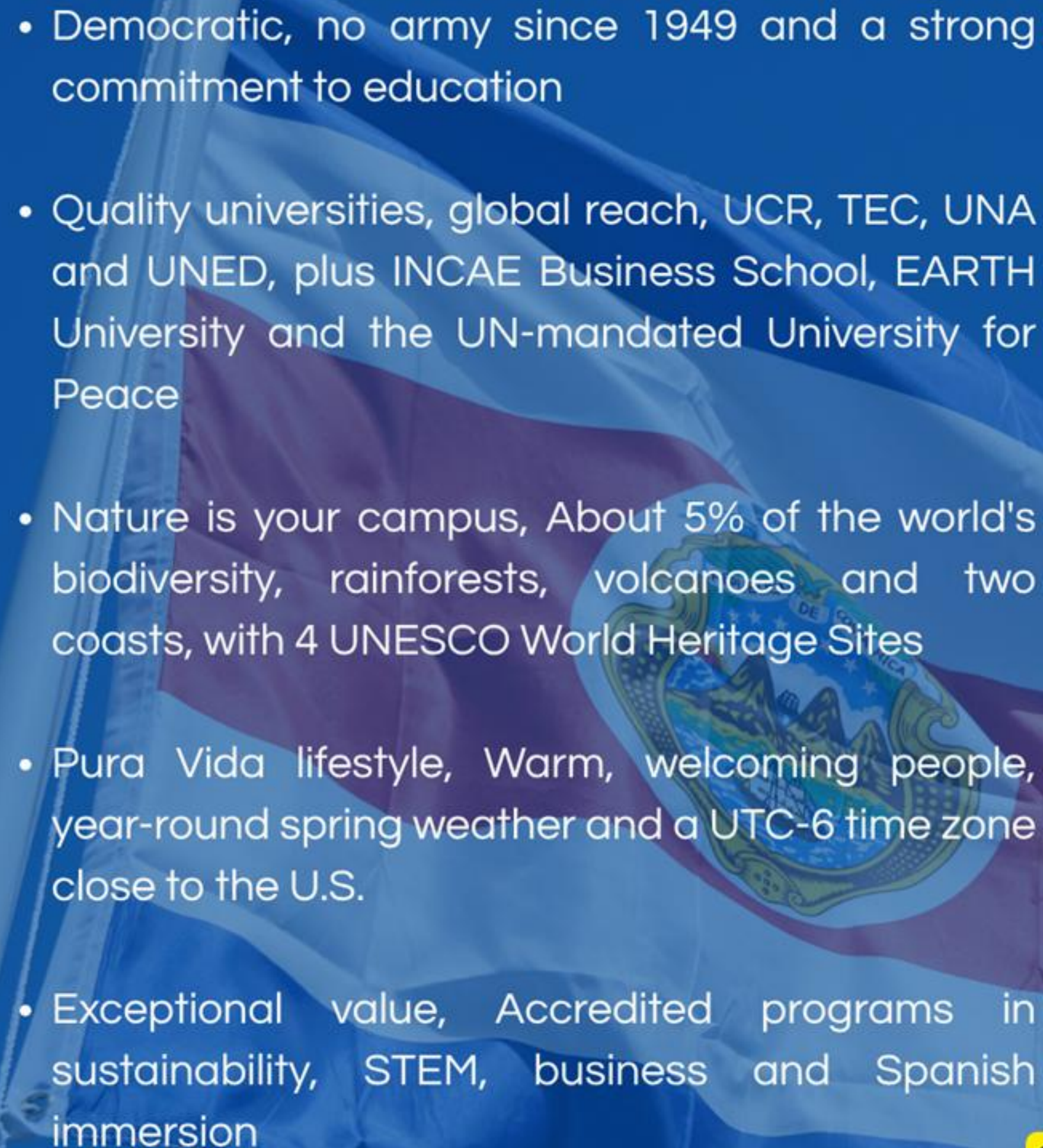
- Well-established public and private universities with diverse academic offerings.
- Strategic location within the Americas and good international connectivity.
- Opportunities to become proficient in Spanish, one of the world's most widely spoken languages.
- Rich cultural immersion and strong community-oriented lifestyles.
- Growing international university partnerships and exchange opportunities.
- Access to important industries, multinational companies, research centers, and professional networks.
- A wide range of institutions, from large research universities to specialized and internationally oriented campuses.
- Opportunities to study global issues from a Latin American perspective.
- Proximity to home for students from North, Central, South America, and the Caribbean.

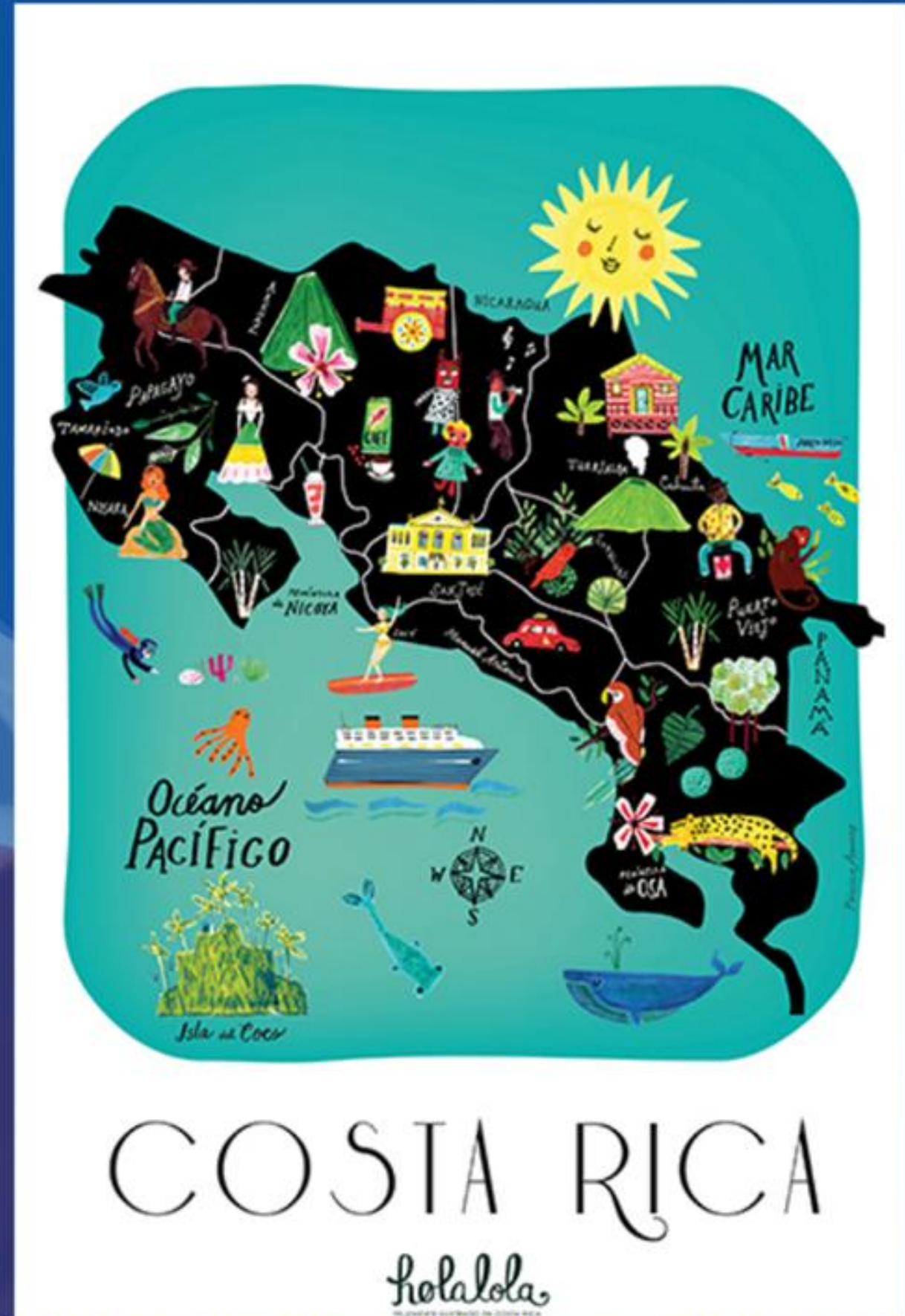


**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
**The Americas 2026**



# WHY COSTA RICA AS A STUDY DESTINATION?

- 
- Democratic, no army since 1949 and a strong commitment to education
  - Quality universities, global reach, UCR, TEC, UNA and UNED, plus INCAE Business School, EARTH University and the UN-mandated University for Peace
  - Nature is your campus, About 5% of the world's biodiversity, rainforests, volcanoes and two coasts, with 4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites
  - Pura Vida lifestyle, Warm, welcoming people, year-round spring weather and a UTC-6 time zone close to the U.S.
  - Exceptional value, Accredited programs in sustainability, STEM, business and Spanish immersion



1949 Army abolished // 25% to 28% Land Officially protected // 4 UNESCO sites

# Costa Rica, A Landscape of Exceptional Public Universities

COSTA RICA

Public Universities in the QS Rankings

Latest available editions · September 2026

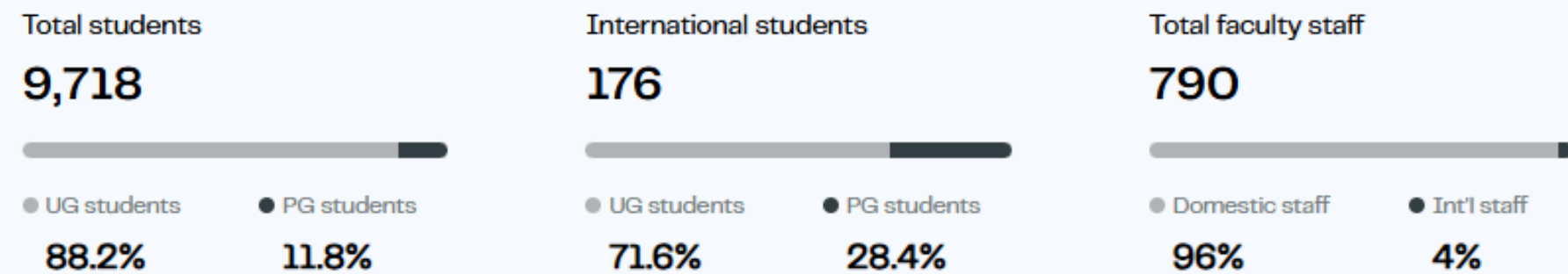
| UNIVERSITY                  | QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2027 | LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN 2026 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 University of Costa Rica  | =463                              | 19                                 |
| 2 Tecnológico de Costa Rica | 1201–1400                         | 91                                 |
| 3 Universidad Nacional      | 1201–1400                         | 96                                 |

Source: Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) · Latest editions available as of September 2026

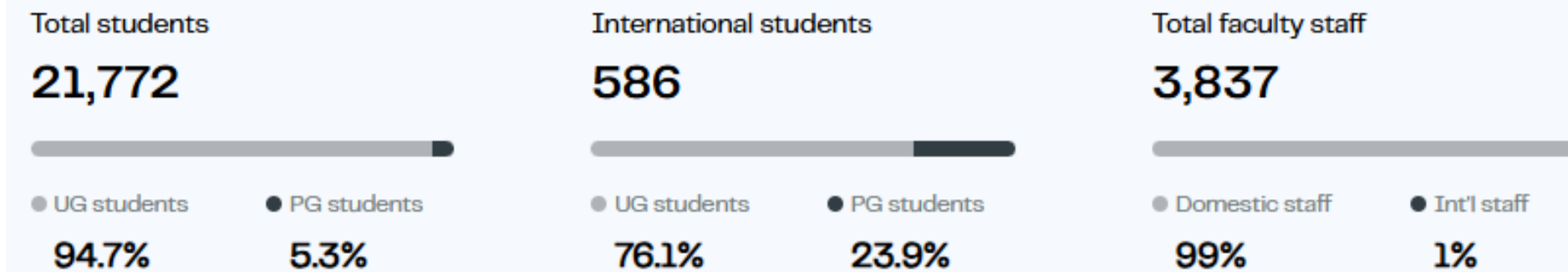
This results highlight the regional strength and growing international visibility of Costa Rica’s public higher education system.

# Costa Rica

## TEC | Tecnológico de Costa Rica



## UNIVERSIDAD DE COSTA RICA



REGIONAL INSTITUTE  
The Americas 2026

# International and English-friendly options



## EARTH University

Residential campus in Guácimo focused on agriculture and sustainability; about 400 students from 41 countries, most on scholarship



## INCAE · New bachelor's

Bilingual Bachelor in Business + Master in Management (3+1) in Costa Rica and Panama; first class August 2027



## Texas Tech University Costa Rica

A U.S. bachelor's degree in Escazú, taught 100% in English, including STEM pathways



## ULACIT

Bilingual university; top-ranked private university in Costa Rica by QS for 14 consecutive years



# Health sciences, design and more



## UCIMED

Medical sciences university; admits international students with an apostilled, MEP-recognized diploma



## UNIBE

Health sciences with its own hospital: medicine, pharmacy, nursing, psychology, biomedical engineering



## Universidad Latina

Broad range of programs; ranked #150 in Latin America (QS 2026)



## Universidad Veritas

Art, design and architecture; homestays with local families for international students



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
**The Americas 2026**

# How international students are admitted

## Public universities

- One platform for UCR, UNA, TEC, UNED and UTN
- Admission exams: PAA (UCR & UNA) or TEC's own exam
- Registration opens in **February** for entry the following year
- High school diploma or its equivalent required

## Private universities

- More flexible calendars
- Often fully online admission
- Some are bilingual and require English placement
- Academic year runs roughly March to November



# Costa Rica

## COST OF LIVING

### Estimated Annual Living Costs

Annual estimates in US dollars



#### ● Accommodation

**\$4,130** 48.2%

#### ● Food

**\$2,530** 29.6%

#### ● Utilities

**\$1,320** 15.4%

#### ● Transport

**\$580** 6.8%

Figures represent estimated annual amounts and may vary by student lifestyle and location.



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
The Americas 2026

# Tuition at a glance

## UCR undergraduate tuition

Per semester, full-time 12-credit load

**\$1,527**



**International**  
student rate

**\$420**



**Costa Rican**  
student rate

## Private universities

Estimated annual total cost

**LOW-COST ESTIMATE**

**UPPER ESTIMATE**

**\$10,700**

**\$36,856**

**TUITION + HOUSING + FOOD + BASIC LIVING COSTS**

Actual costs vary by institution, program, housing and insurance

Low estimate uses an economical private-university tuition model plus \$8,560 in annual living costs

Conversion used: ₡459 = US\$1 · Rounded to the nearest dollar · Rates and tuition may change

Sources: BCCR exchange-rate tables; UCR figures supplied; Universidad Independiente published tuition rates



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
**The Americas 2026**

México



# Why choose Mexico as a study destination?

- 🌐 A global crossroads
  - *Connecting North and Latin America*
- 🇲🇽 One country, countless experiences
  - *World-class cities, beaches, mountains, historic towns and 36 UNESCO World Heritage Sites*
- ☀️ Climate, culture & warmth
- 💰 Exceptional value
  - *High quality accredited education at a fraction of cost*



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
The Americas 2026

# Exceptional Value

- Approximate tuition at private universities: \$17,000–\$22,000 USD
- Annual living costs vary by city
  - Mérida: \$5.5K–7.3K
  - Monterrey: \$8.2K–15.1K
  - Mexico City: \$8K–12K
- International accreditations, including ABET and AACSB
- Top Global rankings
- Direct-entry professional programs, including Medicine, Psychology and Architecture



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
The Americas 2026

# Multiple Cities Different Experiences

| City        | Experience                                                         | Great fit for students interested in...                        |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mexico City | Cosmopolitan, cultural & globally connected                        | Business, economics, public policy, arts & media               |
| Monterrey   | Entrepreneurial, industrial & surrounded by mountains              | Business, engineering, technology & entrepreneurship           |
| Guadalajara | Technology hub with a strong creative culture                      | Technology, design, entrepreneurship & business                |
| Puebla      | Historic university city with colonial character                   | Architecture, humanities, business & engineering               |
| Mérida      | Cultural, warm & close to beach, nature and archaeology            | Sustainability, culture, tourism & environmental studies       |
| Cancún      | International tourism & hospitality destination, beautiful beaches | Hospitality, tourism, luxury services & international business |



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
The Americas 2026

# Public vs. Private

## Public universities

- UNAM is top ranked for medicine globally, but are not designed for international students.
- Require in-person exam & revalidation of diploma
- To graduate with diploma in any degree must take an exam demonstrating knowledge even if student completes the program.

## Private universities

- Tec de Mty highest ranked (#188 QS World)
- Often fully online admission
- Some are bilingual and/or have full English programs
- Offer support and housing for international students



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
The Americas 2026

# University Highlights & International

| University                                | Rankings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Strongest / Signature Areas                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Tec de Monterrey</u>                   | Entrepreneurship / Business Incubators: Top 5 worldwide by Princeton Review / QS.<br>Marketing: #17 in the World<br>Business & Management: #22 in the world.<br>#4 overall in Latin America (QS)<br>#60 Globally in Computer Science & Information Systems. (QS)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Business • Engineering & Technology • AI/Computer Science • Architecture • Finance |
| <u>Universidad de las Américas Puebla</u> | Top 10 in LATAM for Hospitality & Leisure Management (recognized via international accreditation & partnership rankings).<br>Holds a 5-Star QS Rating across overall performance categories (Teaching, Employability, and Internationalization).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Business • Hospitality • Engineering • Economics/Finance • Culinary Arts • IR      |
| <u>ITAM</u>                               | #1 in Mexico for Graduate Employment Outcomes: In the QS World University Rankings reflecting the demand for its graduates in finance, consulting, government, and multinational firms.<br>Political Science, Public Policy & Actuarial Science: Widely considered the #1 or #2 institution nationally in Mexico for placing a heavy percentage of its alumni into top public sector roles, central banking (Banco de México), and elite global graduate programs (Harvard, MIT, LSE). | Economics • Finance • Political Science/IR • Law • Actuarial Science               |
| <u>Universidad Anáhuac</u>                | Global Top 50 in Hospitality & Leisure Management: Anáhuac ranks in the Top 50 worldwide in the <i>QS World University Rankings by Subject</i> for Hospitality and Tourism Management.<br>Graduate Employability: Top 3–5 in Mexico for graduate employability, deep ties with major business sectors, law firms, and hospitality groups.<br>Consistently rated Top 3–5 nationally for Law, Medicine, Business, and Communications.                                                    | Hospitality & Tourism • Business • Art & Design                                    |
| <u>UDEM</u>                               | Design & Architecture: Top 10 Nationally. UDEM's <i>Roberto Garza Sada Center</i> (designed by Tadao Ando) serves as an international landmark for design education.<br>Medicine & Health Sciences: Highly competitive nationally, with top-tier pass rates on the ENARM (national residency exam for physicians in Mexico).<br>Academic Reputation: Scores strongly in student satisfaction, campus infrastructure, and international exchange mobility.                              | Architecture • Design • Communication • Medicine • Engineering • Business          |
| <u>Universidad Iberoamericana</u>         | Top 10 in LATAM for Art & Design and Humanities/Modern Languages.<br>Top 10 in LATAM for Communication & Media Studies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Design • Architecture • Communication • Psychology • Law                           |
| <u>CENTRO</u>                             | Graphic Design / Visual Communication: Top 5–10 nationally<br>Marketing & Digital Media: Top 10 in Greater Mexico City.<br>Faculty Reputation: Ranked in the Top 5 in Mexico for faculty quality in Design & Creative Arts, owing to its model of hiring active industry practitioners.<br>Industry Employability: Within Mexico's creative sector (fashion, film, digital design, interior architecture, and advertising), CENTRO ranks among the premier institutions                | Design • Film • Architecture • Fashion • Creative Technology                       |

# Admissions: Costa Rica and Mexico at a glance

| Topic               | Costa Rica                               | Mexico                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Admission timing    | Fixed yearly cycle; register in February | Varies; Opens in August, rolling at many private universities, popular programs & those in English fill up by December. |
| Rec Letters/ Essays | TTU CR (Only)                            | No Rec Letters<br>Essays (some universities, i.e. Tec de Monterrey)                                                     |
| Entrance exams      | PAA (UCR, UNA) or TEC exam- SAT (TTU CR) | University exams; PAA, SAT or ACT at privates                                                                           |
| Credentials         | Diploma or equivalent                    | Revalidation of foreign high school studies<br>Grades 10 & 11 considered                                                |
| Student status      | Consular visa, then DGME category        | Consular student visa (over 180 days)                                                                                   |
| Academic year       | Roughly March to November                | Usually August start; some in January                                                                                   |
| Interviews          | Ucimed: Med. School                      | Tec de Monterrey & UDEM - Medicine and Health majors<br>Some artistic programs                                          |





# Q&A



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
The Americas 2026



# Thank you · ¡Gracias!

Let's keep the conversation going across borders.

María del Pilar Soto Saprissa · [masoto@lincoln.ed.cr](mailto:masoto@lincoln.ed.cr)

Silvia Guillén Araya - [sguillen@colegiomiravalle.com](mailto:sguillen@colegiomiravalle.com)

Luly Treviño - [luly.trevino@paperpitch.com](mailto:luly.trevino@paperpitch.com)

Maria Jose Lamadrid · [mariojose.lamadrid@asfm.edu.mx](mailto:mariojose.lamadrid@asfm.edu.mx)



**REGIONAL INSTITUTE**  
The Americas 2026