

Plan an Exposure Trip to Costa Rica

Latin American Biblical University

The Latin-American Biblical University (UBL) (www.ubila.net) is located high in the mountains of Costa Rica on the edge of the teeming city of San Jose. The campus of the university is on the outskirts of the city, surrounded by gardens and situated only 40 minutes from the rainforest. The buildings are simple and beautiful with many amenities that Canadians will find comforting.



The university is an ecumenical theological college that trains ministers from many denominations and countries in Latin America. New courses begin every two months, with course offerings are tailored to the particular needs of the incoming students.

Education and Exposure Opportunities

The group study program at UBL offers a combination of study experiences, visits to communities, and other activities that provide diverse opportunities for interacting with issues in Costa Rica and Latin America.

The study program seeks to provide a perspective on key socio-economic and political Latin American issues that are related to justice for human beings, for society, and for the environment. UBL focuses on these issues from the perspective of the victims of various contexts experienced in Latin America, and also supports theological reflection on the questions that these realities present us as Christians—both in doing theology and in the work of congregations.

The following four principal areas can form the basis of an education and exposure experience. The content of the program depends on the specific interests of the group:

1. Latin American social-political/economic context
2. Ecological issues
3. Gender and family issues
4. Racial and ethnic diversity

The basic learning methodology of UBL is the classic model of Latin American theology: See, judge, act.

1. *See*: gain an understanding of the context and the issues involved, in particular how they affect the lives of the powerless
2. *Judge*: based on the questions that arise from these critical situations, reflect on the contexts using scriptures and theology
3. *Act*: work with the responses that these steps lead us to in personal, congregational, and societal transformation (beginning with values and following with concrete actions)

Topics are explored with UBL faculty and specialists from other institutions in Costa Rica, using creative pedagogy and visits to communities and projects. They are happy to design a flexible itinerary that covers topics of interest to you or that focuses on one or more topics exclusively. Visits generally last 7–10 days.

UBL does not accept groups that are entirely made up of high-school-aged youth. Mixed groups that include youth are welcome!

Sample itineraries follow to give you a sense of what you can experience with UBL.

Housing, Meals and Transportation

Housing is provided in the student dormitories and/or apartments. Depending on the time of year you may be sharing the facility with UBL students. Single rooms are standard. Each room has a sink, but washrooms and showers are shared. The accommodations and other buildings of the seminary are wheelchair-accessible. The climate does not necessitate air conditioning.

The months of July and August are the most difficult for the seminary to accommodate groups, as this is when the largest number of students are on campus and require housing.

Meals of bountiful, authentic, and delicious cuisine are eaten on site in the beautiful multi-purpose chapel. A neighbourhood *supermercado* offers Costa Rican snacks, and North American fast-food chains are also nearby. All transportation is provided by the seminary.



Budget and Travel Requirements

The cost for the study program is C\$80 per day per person. This includes all transportation, housing, food, translator, speakers, sightseeing trips, dinner in a typical restaurant, and other program activities. Planners will need to include international airfare in participants' costs.

The cost for work-study programs is C\$60 per day per person, and work-study teams must also contribute \$300–\$500 as a group for work supplies.

A \$26 exit fee is required at the airport. There are no visas required for travel to Costa Rica.

For more information contact the People in Mission program (pip@united-church.ca).

Exposure Trip to Costa Rica Sample Itineraries

Theological Seminary Study Tour

This itinerary is a basic introduction to a number of theological and justice issues in Costa Rica and Latin America. It was designed for theological students but is appropriate for congregational groups as well.

Day 1: Arrival and orientation; free evening

Day 2: Visit to rural church
Visit to megachurch
Introduction to Latin American theology
Group reflection

Day 3: Bible Study
Session on U.S. and Latin-American relations: a historical perspective
Sessions on immigration issues: Nicaragua and Mexico
Group reflection

Day 4: Visit to La Carpio immigrant community (Nicaraguan)
Session on biodiversity, environment, and theology
Session on Central American Free Trade Agreement: where do we go from here?

Day 5: Sightseeing day to Poas Volcano and Sarapiquí river trip
Group worship and reflection

Day 6: Session on the church in Latin America
Session on Latin American feminist theologies
Dinner in a typical restaurant

Day 7: Session on Afro-Caribbean realities and cultural diversity in Central America
A portrait of the women of Limon (the coastal region where today most Afro-Costa Ricans live, meaning the women of Limon experience the double oppression of race and gender—one of these women will share her story)
Session on biblical studies and culture in Latin America
Shopping for local arts
Final evaluation and sharing

Work-Study Itinerary

This itinerary was designed for college students. It includes introductory sessions to many topics. Sessions could also focus on one particular topic of interest to your group.

Day 1 Arrival, orientation, and tour of San Jose

Day 2 Visit and worship with a congregation
Visit a community
Introduction to UBL

Day 3 Work project

Day 4 Work project
Session on biodiversity, environment, and theology

Day 5 Trip to Poas volcano and Sarapiquí boat trip, banana plantation

Day 6 Bible study
Session on the church in Central America
Session on Latin American theology
Shopping for arts
Dinner at a typical restaurant

Day 7 Session on geopolitics: Latin America and the North
Session on trade agreements in Central America

Day 8 Departure