



Isabel Allende

**Buy a Book and Help Someone Read
You'll even be entered to win a trip to Chile!**

AmeriSpan has teamed up with best-selling author, Isabel Allende and with *National Council of La Raza (NCLR)* to raise \$10,000 for adult literacy programs. You can help make this happen by buying an autographed copy of *Paula*, one of Allende's most critically acclaimed and moving works. These autographed editions are trade paperbacks and only available through AmeriSpan. 100% of net proceeds from the sale of the books will be donated to NCLR, the leading Hispanic

"think tank" in the field of education, here in the U.S. At the same time you are helping erase illiteracy in the U.S., you will automatically be entered in a drawing pool to win a two week trip to Chile, with free language study, homestay and roundtrip airfare provided by AmeriSpan.

Isabel Allende took the literary world by storm with her 1982 publication of *The House of the Spirits*, a novel which chronicled four generations of a Chilean family against the backdrop of Chile's brutal history. Who was this author whose first novel had readers and critics comparing her to the great Latin American writers of this century?

Born in Lima Peru in 1942 and raised in Chile, Bolivia, Europe and the Middle East, Isabel Allende worked as a journalist in Chile until the 1973 military coup. Allende fled her homeland, settling in Venezuela with her husband, son and daughter. "I felt, as many Chileans did, that my life had been cut into pieces, and that I had to start over again," she recalls.

Two days before a European tour to promote a new book, Ms. Allende set aside an hour to chat with AmeriSpan. We discussed everything from her contemporaries, to the spiritual world, to ways she would like to be remembered. Excerpts from our delightful conversation follow.

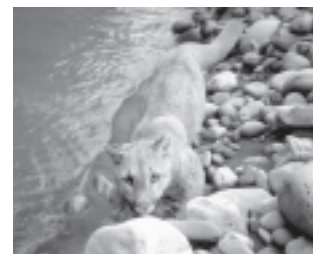
AS: Because you are Latina, it is tempting to assume that other Latin American writers have influenced your work. Who are the writers that have been role models or have influenced you?

Allende: I grew up reading at a time when there was no television in Chile and we went very seldom to the movies. So, I was trained to read.... I read all the Russian novelists. When I was ten I was reading Shakespeare. Have you seen the movie *Shakespeare in Love*?

continued on page 3

Bolivia program finally here

The last couple of years we have been receiving an increasing number of requests for a program in Bolivia. To the delight of all of you who have been waiting and waiting, it's finally here! This 1-on-1 program is located in Cochabamba, the third largest city in



"On the prowl in Bolivia".

Bolivia. It lies in a fertile valley and enjoys an excellent climate year round. It is a progressive and active city, which in spite of its size retains a

small town feel. The area reflects the diversity and contrast of its country. Colonial villages, traditional communities and pre-Colombian archeological sites are within reach.



A jungle walk in Bolivia

In This Issue

Letter from the Editors	2
Teen Programs	2
STA Now Selling AmeriSpan Programs	2
Country Close-up: Panamá	5
\$600 Stipend for Language Travelers	6
Language Teachers - Reserve Dates for Costa Rica	6
Program Profile: Monteverde, Costa Rica	7
AmeriSpan: Off the Wire	8



AmeriSpan Unlimited
THE BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURES

Letter From The Editors:



Hello Friends,

Welcome to the Spring '99 issue of the Translator, a newsletter that is published periodically for the customers and friends of AmeriSpan.

This issue is mainly dedicated to our interview with what may very well be the most popular Latin author today, and a related charity fundraiser - the cooperation between AmeriSpan, the author Isabel Allende, and NCLR (National Council of La Raza).

We also want to encourage you to take an extra look at page 6, on which we once again mention the Johns Hopkins Medical Study where cash is rewarded to the participants in the study. We feel this is a very easy and beneficial opportunity, not to be missed, especially for those already planning to spend a few weeks in Latin America before July 1999.

Enjoy this issue of the Translator.
Until next time,

Dorioara Pinku & John Slocum
Co-Directors

Teen Programs

Yes, Amerispan offers various programs for teens traveling without adults. These young "globetrotters" have the following options:

Supervised for ages 16-18: Alajuela (Costa Rica). Supervision is provided by select host families and school staff. There is an evening curfew as well as restrictions related to independent weekend travel unless the legal guardian signs a waiver.

Highly supervised summer camp for ages 12-17: Madrid and Marbella (Spain). Similar to North American summer camps. Includes lodging, sports, activities and 15 hours of Spanish classes per week. Participants are of mixed nationalities, many of them from Spain.

Unsupervised for ages 16-18: We accept this age group into many of our standard programs as long as it's fully understood that in this case, supervision will not be provided. We leave it up to the parent(s) to decide whether the teenager is sufficiently mature and independent for this option.

The largest student travel agency, STA, now selling AmeriSpan programs

STA has about 30 offices in the USA. This means that if you prefer to deal with a local sales person, you can always look up the closest STA office for assistance with your language program booking. If you like one stop shopping, STA can certainly book your airplane ticket at a low cost. After all, that's what they are primarily known for.

continued from page 1

AS: No, I haven't seen it yet.

Allende: Well, go see it! When I saw it everything came back, all the fascination of my childhood with the stories, not the words in this case, because I wasn't old enough to appreciate the beauty of the language. Also, I grew up reading science fiction, which was very important for me. Then in my twenties I started reading the Latin American writers. I belong to the first generation of Latin American writers who grew up reading other Latin American writers. The previous generation, which was called the "boom" generation of Latin American writers: García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, all of those...

AS: ...Pablo Neruda?

Allende: Neruda, Donoso, all of them - they were a little older than me - grew up reading North American and European authors in translation. They were all writing at the time, but the books were not well distributed, so they couldn't read each other... I have also been very influenced by the movies. I'm a movie junkie, I see everything and I love the stories, the images, the

color. Sometimes a scene in a movie can trigger a story for me.

AS: With your busy schedule of writing and traveling, do you have time to read now? And do you have any recent favorite books?

Allende: It goes in spurts. For example, if I'm writing a novel, I usually read everything that regards the scenes in the novel. That was the case with my latest book, which is a historical novel that takes place in California in 1849 as the time of the gold rush. So, I read a lot of stuff about that period. Therefore, I didn't have much time for other things, but I try to read women writers from ethnic minorities in the United States. They are great narrators. They are really revitalizing the old craft of storytelling. Chicanas, Black Americans, Native Americans, Chinese and Japanese Americans are writing great books.

AS: When you were forty, you were afraid of being "mediocre" for the rest of your life. Obviously, that has changed!

Allende: I have had a very strange destiny, really. Things have happened to me that I never expected.

AS: At this point - now that you are successful, critically and commercially - do you think of the future in terms of goals and projects? Or do you get inspirations?

Allende: Since my daughter died, I don't think of the future. I may die tomorrow, too. She was 27 years old, she had a life to live and something happened. So, I don't make any plans, I live one day at a time, I don't have any goals or ambitions. I try to do the best today...I really have become very centered in the present, because I know that things happen, always. You know my life is about change, it is about great losses and great gains that I never expected. I just try to live today the best I can.

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AS: I want to switch to politics for a moment... Do the events [in Chile] of 1973 still shape your political opinions?

Allende: I think the events of 1973 marked my generation and divided the country in Chile. No one remained neutral after that. For 25 years, people have tried to silence the truth and to be cautious not to provoke any upheaval... because they fear the military and they fear repression and also they fear confrontation. But I think there will be no healing before we start talking about it. My life was shaped by that event because I had to leave my country. When I left my country, my job, my family, my house, everything, I was forced to find something inside me that maybe was always there, this strength that was always there, but I had not had any need to use it. From that experience and from the losses came my first novel. So, I think I am a novelist because of the military coup.

AS: You talk a lot about the spiritual world in your books and you mention having learned the ability to decipher your dreams.

Allende: Some [of them].

AS: Do you believe that dreams speak to everyone? And if they do, what do they tell us?

Allende: Dreams are a way we have of tapping into an unconscious world and getting information that we

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

have gathered, but don't even know we have stored somewhere. I think that you can develop the ability to remember the dream and in the long run decipher the symbols, which are not the same for everybody. For example, my mother is terrified of snakes. If my mother has a dream about snakes, it's a nightmare and for her it has a bad meaning. However, if an Indian shaman dreams of snakes, snakes do not have an evil meaning for him or for her.

AS: The dreams are in context of the person who is dreaming them?

Allende: Of course! The culture, and their own experience. What happens in my case, because I have been paying attention to my dreams for so long, I know what they mean most of the time, I can then be more aware of the conscious world. For example, I always give this example about dreaming of babies when I'm writing. (And I only dream of babies when I'm writing!) I have discovered, or I think, that the baby in the dream is the book in real life. And what happens to the baby in the dream, usually, is something that I'm not aware of that is happening to the book. For example, a baby that cries with the voice of an old man. So, the next day I remember the dream, I write it down and then I go to my work and I go through the text again because, most probably, the narrative voice is off, is wrong. So that helps me.

AS: You write [in *Paula*] very honestly about extremely personal, sometimes very painful experiences. Do your fans approach you sometimes, having met you for the first time, and think they know you through your writing?

Allende: It's amazing. I find people in the street who treat me as if I was their relative. I also receive an incredible amount of mail from all

over the world. At the beginning when the book first was published, I had to hire two people just to open the mail and sort it by languages! If I read the word "Paula" in the letter I knew it was about that book. All those letters were the most moving experience, really. I still do receive many of them...and most of them are about *Paula*. So, I feel that I have been exposed to a lot, but on the other hand, I don't feel more vulnerable because of that, I feel stronger. In a way, people share with me their own losses.

AS: You have lived in more countries than a lot of people will visit in their lifetime. What has your classroom of the world taught you that couldn't have been learned in [a regular] school?

Allende: I think one thing you learn very fast is that people are very much alike. The similarities are many more than the differences. We cling to little differences, so little that they are practically insignificant, and that can create a war...while the similarities are extraordinary. If you go to Tibet or Irian Jaya or Africa or South

America, you find that mothers love their children the same way, that people fear death and infirmity the same way. We react emotionally very much alike. Once the barrier of the difference in color or clothes or shape is surpassed, then you realize that you can be brothers or sisters with most people! There are always some jerks, of course! (laughter).

AS: You have moved between cultures so often, voluntarily and otherwise, do you now feel comfortable in any situation?

Allende: Mostly, I do. I adapt easily, I'm pretty flexible, I can take a lot of discomfort. But I'm not a socialite and will never be. So, I don't feel comfortable in social events – and I'm invited to a lot! When I travel my greatest fear is that I will be at a cocktail party in some socialite's house. That terrifies me!

For the complete Allende interview, to learn about NCLR's literacy programs, or to buy your signed copy of "Paula," please go to our web site www.amerispan.com

Country Close-up: Panamá

Public Safety: Safe. No change. Security is reported acceptable in the Capital city, particularly in the hotel and banking districts, but not so in poorer peripheral neighborhoods, especially at night. In Colon, the Zona Libre shopping area is always heavily patrolled and very safe, but the city Center is quite the opposite. The Darien Gap border crossing to Colombia is very dangerous because of insurgency on the Colombian side. Beaches and other rural areas of Panama, as well as small towns, are generally very safe.

Health Risk: Low. No recent developments.

Weather & Nat. Phenomena: Rains were reported at the end of February, unusual for what is considered the driest time of the year.

Travel Costs: Daily travel budget: luxury \$284, 1st class \$148, economy \$42, basic \$19. Hotels: luxury \$108, 1st class \$55, economy \$20, basic \$9. Restaurants: luxury \$28, 1st class \$17, economy \$9, basic \$4.50. Airfares, \$0.16/mi. Bus, \$0.038/mi. Taxi, \$0.80/mi. City bus fare \$0.15. Gasoline, \$1.50/gal.

The Economy: US\$1=1 Balboa (This is not an exchange rate, rather US\$

bills circulate in Panama and are called Balboas.) Inflation (1998 average) 0.4%/mo. Unemployment 14%. Minimum wage \$216/mo. Cost of living index \$750/mo. The government has pushed ahead with its ambitious privatization program in several sectors. Among the industries sold-off or earmarked for sale during 1998 were: the telephone company, the electric company, the ports of Balboa (Pacific) and Cristobal (Atlantic), concessions for the construction of new ports, the national railway, a cement factory, a sugar mill and other agro-industries. Municipal waterworks throughout Panama are currently slated for privatization and the proposed move has generated a great deal of controversy. The current administration has also invested heavily in the country's road system, over US\$1,000 million to date.

Political Situation: Very stable. Constitutional Democracy. President Ernesto Perez Balladares (term 10/94 to 10/99). Campaigning is underway for presidential elections to be held later this year. The leading contenders include Martin Torrijos, the 35 year old son of former strongman General Omar Torrijos, for the incumbent Partido

Revolucionario Democratico (PRD); Alberto Vallarino, a prominent banker, for the Democracia Christiana; and Mireya Moscoso of the Partido Arnulfista. Both Torrijos and Vallarino are running on a populist platform, promising job-creation and social spending in rejection of the current government's neo-liberal economic policies. A clear favorite has yet to emerge in public opinion polls.

The Panama Country Close-up is as of March 1999 and provided by The Latin American Travel Advisors. For additional details, PO Box 17-17-908, Quito, Ecuador. USA & Canada toll-free fax: (888)215-9511. International Fax: +593-2-562-566. Email: lata@ecnet.ec Web: www.amerispan.com/lata/



The Panamá Canal

More Panamá Facts

- Population: 2.63 million
- Location: In Central America, between Costa Rica and Colombia with coastlines on the Pacific and Caribbean.
- Weather: The rainy or wet season (winter) is May-December. The dry season (summer) is January-April. On the Caribbean coast, rain can be expected 365 days per year. Temperatures during the year are between 90 degrees (F) during the day and 70 degrees (F) at night.
- Languages: Spanish is the official language, English is common as a second language and there are many indigenous languages still alive
- Capital: Panamá City, estimated metropolitan population of over 600,000 (with a total population of 1.2 million in the entire province)
- Religion: 84% Roman Catholic; 5% Protestant, 5% Islamic, 1% Bahai and a small number of Jewish, Hindu and other followers
- Ethnic makeup: 62% are Mestizo (of mixed Spanish and indigenous descent), 14% Black, 10% White, 6% indigenous Indians (three major tribes: Cuna, Chocó and Guaymí) and 5% mixed Black & White

**The Winner of the
"Explore Ecuador Contest"**

Congratulations Eva Koenig from Pennsylvania! You and a companion will enjoy 1 week in Ecuador "the middle of the world," courtesy of AmeriSpan. Your trip includes: 1 week of car rental from Avis Rent A Car; 4 nights in the honeymoon suite at Café Cultura, one of Quito's coziest and most unique bed and breakfasts; 2 nights at the Chalets Bascún resort and health spa in Baños; 1 night at the hotel El Indio Inn in Otavalo after a day's excursion throughout the area, visiting indigenous craft markets and the area's natural wonders; 1 day white water rafting with Eco-Adventour, one of Quito's best known rafting companies; 10 free rolls of film and developing from Difoto, Quito's finest film developers; 5 jumbo box juniors from DHL to send all your souvenirs home to the States. Have a great trip!

**Attention Language Teachers!
Reserve the dates July 5-10, 1999 for a fun and
productive trip to Costa Rica.**

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is hosting its yearly conference July 5-10, 1999 in Costa Rica. The ACTFL OPI Workshop is an intensive four-day introduction to the techniques of administering and rating the Oral Proficiency Interview, a test that measures functional speaking ability on a global scale. The OPI workshop is open to Spanish, French, Italian, German and Portuguese language teachers. Why participate?

- ▼ Meet peers from other parts of the USA and the world.
- ▼ Acquire a new skill and resume builder.
- ▼ Keep up with the constantly progressing language teaching developments.
- ▼ Have a fun but productive vacation.
- ▼ Get to know this treasure of a country.
- ▼ Learn or improve your Spanish by adding optional class

Call AmeriSpan and ask for the OPI flyer.

\$600 stipend for Language Travelers - Too good to be true?

Some of you already heard about the trial of an oral vaccine against Traveler's Diarrhea currently being evaluated by travelers to Antigua, Guatemala and Cuernavaca, Mexico. Perhaps you even have seen the articles in various major newspapers about this collaboration between AmeriSpan and Johns Hopkins University, School of Public Health. The vaccine trial has been extended through July 1999 and Johns Hopkins' has raised the stipend to \$600 to be given to each participant in the study. Both locations have Johns Hopkins' staff on site. The money can be used towards the volunteers' Spanish language programs or other expenses. But is it safe to volunteer for this study? Yes, we would say so. The vaccine is oral, has no reported side effects, and is currently being used for other purposes. It's an easily earned \$600. Not to mention that it reduces YOUR chances of catching the most common travel illness during your time in Guatemala or Mexico.

"Great way to help fund your trip. You only have to check in a couple of times a week", Brian Eggener, Consultant, Illionis

"Almost made my trip free...totally simple!", Kathy Humphry, Communications, California

"Nothing to it. If it was offered again, I would do it!", Kay Anderson, ESL Teacher, New Jersey

For more information, visit the AmeriSpan website <http://www.amerispan.com/press/johnshopkins.html> or contact Janet Shimko of Johns Hopkins University (tel: 410-955-0053 or email: jshimko@jhsph.edu)

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Program Profile



Monteverde, Costa Rica

School:

Centro Panamericano de Idiomas

Location:

Monteverde is a small community located on the Tilarán mountain range, about 5 hours by bus from San José and more “off the beaten path” compared to our other programs in Costa Rica. Most roads are not paved so be prepared to do a lot of walking (however there are taxis available). The community was founded by North American Quakers in the 1950's. Primarily a community of dairy farmers, the Quakers began conservation efforts of the cloud forest to protect the water shed. Today, the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve covers 10,500 hectares and receives thousands of visitors each year, making eco-tourism a big industry in this area. Despite the number of tourists, Monteverde and the adjoining town of Santa Elena, still maintain a small town community and a life that goes on outside of the busy tourism industry. This program is ideal for nature lovers and those interested in ecology and environmental issues.

School Atmosphere:

A brand new building is set back off the main road, surrounded by pine trees and facing the Gulf of Nicoya. The modern 2-story facility has 17 indoor classrooms and will soon have 5 additional semi-outdoor classrooms. There is also a video room for rainy days, a lending library, an email computer area and a student/teacher lounge with couches and a ping-pong table. Maximum capacity is 70

students per day. Hot tea, coffee and typical Costa Rican meals are served in the cafeteria.

Language Program:

The Spanish program is appropriate for all levels, from beginner to advanced language learners. It includes 4 hours per day of Spanish classes with a maximum of 4 students in each group. Classes are structured to allow for maximum student participation. Typically, teachers present one grammar point per day and utilize written and oral exercises, role-play and conversations to enforce the lessons. Additional private instruction is available at an extra cost if desired. Most of the program participants are university students and professionals from the USA.

Homestay:

The homestays are located in both Monteverde and in the adjoining town of Santa Elena, only three kilometers away. Most homes are located within walking distance to the school campus. From Santa Elena, students can be picked-up each morning by a staff member in the town center and driven to school. There is only one student per family, unless requested otherwise. The

host family provides breakfast, dinner and laundry service.

Activities:

Each week the school staff organizes Latin dance classes or excursions. The campus is within walking distance to two Cloud Forest Reserves, a Butterfly Garden, a Canopy Tour, Horseback Riding and the Monteverde Cheese Factory where you can sample the excellent products.

Other Comments:

The program offers an additional campus in San Joaquín, a suburb of San José, Costa Rica's capital. If you wish, you can switch to this campus after completing at least one week in Monteverde.



A homestay in Monteverde



AmeriSpan: Off The Wire

New full color catalog

We are proud to announce that the new and improved AmeriSpan program catalog is here. It's now larger in size, full color, and includes photos and other attractive graphics. A big "Thank You" to our talented graphic designer, Chris Converse.



For beach lovers

Program in Cancún, Mexico

But isn't it awfully touristy? Well, Cancun actually has 2 distinct areas: The *Hotel Zone* where most tourists live, eat, and spend their time, and *Ciudad Cancún* (Cancún City) which is more like a regular Mexican city. The language school is located

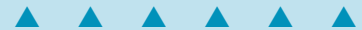
in Ciudad Cancún, which means that program participants will be able to experience genuine Mexican life.....and the beautiful green waters of the Caribbean coast! Another nice feature about this program is that it offers a good mix of nationalities since many participants are from Europe.



Not only 1-on-1 classes in Quito

If you have ever researched language programs in Quito, you probably noticed that it's difficult to find one where you can study in a small group. Traditionally, most language programs in Quito offer only private classes. Recently, one of the AmeriSpan partner schools in Quito

shifted its program from private classes to group classes. If you are among those who always wanted to go to this splendid, high altitude city in the Andes, but always end up somewhere else because you favor group classes, it's time to finally do it! Please note that this does not mean that you will no longer be able to book private classes in Quito with AmeriSpan. We still offer a 1-on-1 program at a different campus. This combination will ensure that Quito has the same varied options as many other popular language travel destinations.



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