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## When in Costa Rica

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Posted on [February 10, 2015](#) by [bravochat](#)

Warm and colorful sunsets, white beaches, lounge chairs- can you see it, feel it, and smell it? I'm sorry, I am well aware that it is currently the middle of winter in Pennsylvania, which means that everything appears lifeless and dead, exactly the opposite of what I just described. Because of the lifelessness of Pennsylvania in January, I decided that I had to escape to a warmer, tropical paradise. So I ventured to Costa Rica for nearly the entire month of January and here I am back in the States again to share some of my adventures.

Prior to January 2015, I was not a seasoned traveler, so I had never experienced culture shock. In my opinion, culture shock and language barriers are probably the toughest challenges to overcome when traveling. For example, it was difficult getting used to Costa Ricans' strange eating patterns and their habits of waking up early and going to bed early. These cultural norms challenged me to adjust to short nights of sleep and long periods of time in between meals quickly. I also realized that for the whole month I would consistently

eat rice and beans in the morning, sometimes with eggs, but almost always without. Even though I vowed that I would never consume them again when I returned to the States, I still appreciated the Costa Rican lifestyle, even if it meant tirelessly eating the same food over and over again.

Although the food was not as glamorous as I initially expected, I still experienced many fun adventures. Each week consisted of participating in different activities, such as ziplining, Tarzan swings, rainforest tours, cloud forest tours, animal sightings, beach visits, cruises, snorkeling, and surfing, just to name a few! Since this was my first time abroad, I wanted to make the most of my experience by trying everything. I figured that I only had one chance to do these activities, so why not? I'm certainly glad that I did!

Even though the trip was packed with fun activities, it was still academic-based; therefore, I learned a lot. It's interesting, though, that despite learning about the country in the classroom, the trip was much more enriching through my interactions with the natives. They taught me the value of relationships and the importance of laughing and enjoying life with other people. Most importantly though, I learned that it is possible to be content with only friends and family by your side; you don't need a lot of material possessions, because ultimately, people can fill you with more joy than any material good.

Amanda Bieler, Harrisburg Intern