SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

ALYSSA DOOLEY

Program: UW Advanced Spanish Language & Internship in Costa Rica, Summer

Alyssa’s Majors: Spanish; International Studies

Academic Life: The first four weeks of the program, I took classes 4-5 hours a day with other UW students. My first class was about women in Costa Rican literature and the second one was about Afro-Caribbean culture in Costa Rica. The small class sizes (2-4 students) allowed us to practice our Spanish A LOT. The second four weeks of the program I had an internship 5 hours/day and one-on-one private Spanish lessons one hour/day.

Internship Abroad: The internship was at a nonprofit, micro-finance organization and allowed me to practice my Spanish in a professional setting. I helped with creating presentations, spreadsheets, a data analysis, and researching funds for the organization. Interning abroad allows one to learn more about the country in which he/she is staying, beyond what is observable in daily life. I was able to see the differences in the work culture between Costa Rica and the U.S.

Housing: I lived with a host family, which included a mother, father, 7-year old son, and aunt. There was also one other student staying with us from Costa Rica who was studying in the local university. We only spoke Spanish in the house.

Initial Impressions: Before leaving I was nervous about the experience, but when I arrived I felt much more comfortable than I expected. My host family was welcoming so it was easy to adjust to my housing accommodations, and the program staff was extremely helpful and supportive.

Tips for Future Students: If anyone is considering studying abroad, they should do it, because although it is normal to have hesitations, I have never heard anyone regret their experiences abroad. I have only heard students regret not studying abroad.

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Alyssa climbing a ficus tree.

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