

JordanSparrow

Spring 2010, Fall 2010 & Spring 2011
Costa Rica

In early January of 2010, I eagerly left a snowy Kansas City and began my first semester abroad in San José, Costa Rica. I was so excited to exchange the five inches of snow for warm tropical weather, but I was nervous about what was going to come out of my experience abroad. When I landed for the first time in Costa Rica, I remember telling myself that this was going to be the adventure of a lifetime. Little did I know that this adventure was going to last much longer than one semester.

As my study abroad program began, I quickly began to adapt to life in Costa Rica. The biggest change for me was living with a host family, and speaking Spanish all day, every day. My host mom, María, made my transition to my new home a fun and eye-opening experience. She was one of my favorite aspects of the study abroad experience because of the deep friendship we formed. The “pura vida” attitude that genuinely characterizes Costa Ricans made it easy for me to make life-long friends who I still keep in touch with today.

As my first semester abroad came to a close, I realized that I was not ready to go back to the United States. I felt that I did not have enough time to truly grasp the Spanish language or really delve deep into the Costa Rican culture. One day, I made the bold move to study another semester! Before I knew it, my second semester abroad was coming to an end, and I once again decided to stay in Costa Rica for a third semester. My decision to study abroad in Costa Rica for a year and a half opened up my eyes to countless experiences that I otherwise would have never experienced here at KU.

Throughout my three semesters abroad I had the opportunity to foster my newfound love of traveling. Many weekends during my stay I found myself on a bus heading to the rainforest or the beach. I had the opportunity to travel throughout all of Central America and the Caribbean, which enabled me to learn firsthand about other cultures. Spending so much time in Costa Rica and



traveling so frequently has taught me how to be independent and the importance of seizing once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. I saw things I could never experience in Kansas such as ancient ruins, volcanic islands and cloud forests.

The relationships that I have built with my “tico” (Costa Rican) friends have continued even after my study abroad trip finally ended. I had the opportunity to return to Costa Rica for fall break to visit my friends, host mom and on-site program coordinators. Many of my tico friends have come to the United States to visit me as well! Looking back on my experience, I learned much more than just Spanish; I made memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. I consider Costa Rica my second home, and look forward to making more memories there in the future.



HollyGoodman

Spring 2011
Wollongong, Australia

Last spring, I had the most incredible opportunity to spend a semester in Wollongong, Australia. I was able to study Business and Australian society, while immersing myself in a new culture. Until my big departure, I had never been farther than four hours from home! Not to mention I had also never been on a plane, seen the ocean or been away from home for so long. My four and a half months in Australia entirely changed my perspective on the world, people and myself.

Upon arrival, I have to admit, I was anxious about meeting my host family. Being an only child, I have not spent too much time around kids. My host family consisted of Glen and Louise, and their children: a thirteen-year-old girl, Tayla, and a ten-year-old boy, Riley. It turns out, I had nothing to worry about. It took no time at all until they became my second family. We shared everything together. My host mum even threw me my first surprise birthday party.

When I started to explore Australia I was nervous about learning how to get around without a car! And four months without a car, I didn’t know how I would cope. However, I eventually mastered public transportation and now I would much rather ride a train than drive. I spent a lot of my time shopping at the local mall, walking around Wollongong, and of course swimming in the gorgeous ocean.

Wollongong University is a relatively new campus, only 40 years old. It was large, lush and flat, which was a nice break from the hill! When weather permitted, a local band would play out in the open green spaces, which serenaded me during lunch.

As time passed, Australia felt more like home than anywhere else. I had a home-cooked meal every night, a wonderful host mum to chat with and a family to love. Every Australian I met was so warm and welcoming; I almost forgot I wasn’t a local! When people would ask me where I was from, and I would say “Kansas, um, in America” and the



Pictured (L-R) Holly Goodman with her host dad and mom, Glen and Louise.

response was always, “Yes, I know Kansas is in America. Do you know Dorothy?”

I also got to travel along the Australian coast. I saw pristine white beaches, got close to dolphins, explored caves, spotted a platypus, and ate kangaroo, went wine tasting in gorgeous wine valleys, tried amazing new cuisines (and became addicted to Thai food) and frequented local pubs. In addition, the diverse wildlife was beyond incredible. I got to pet a koala, see a Tasmanian devil, talk to a dingo and hear kookaburra’s song at my window every morning.

The love and acceptance of my wonderful host family, and all Australians, are memories I will cherish for the rest of my life. My experiences opened my eyes to how large the world truly is and made me hungry for more traveling. If there is one thing I know for certain, this will not be my last adventure.



*photo submitted by
Jordan Sparrow, Costa Rica
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JayhawksAbroad

/ a newsletter from the Office of Study Abroad

Spring**2012**

Study Abroad Fair
Today, Wednesday, February 1
10:30-3:30
4th Floor, Kansas Union

SamSpurlock

Summer 2010
Internships Abroad
Dublin, Ireland

Fall 2010
Angers, France

Summer 2011
Language & Culture
Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua

Céad míle fáilte! I spent a summer in Dublin, Ireland, immersing myself in a brand new culture and lifestyle. I was fortunate enough to participate in KU’s Internship Abroad program, and it forever changed my life. With many options for locations to do my internship, I felt Dublin was the best place for me to go because it was a perfect mixture of a cosmopolitan city and a small welcoming city. I always thought of Ireland as rolling green hills - sheep and all - loud Irishmen singing and dancing in pubs, and the old Celtic traditions. That is exactly how it is, and because of that, I quickly fell in love with the entirety of Ireland.

My experience was very unique because I actually had two different internships. Each internship taught me something new about my future and myself and I am extremely grateful for those opportunities and memories. My first internship was with a small NGO called Show Racism the Red Card- Irish Sector, where I helped to promote anti-racism to the youth in Ireland by assisting on the creation of a summer camp, in which I later participated. I spent a week of that internship in Donegal, the Northern most part of Ireland, with youth from all over the world. It was an incredible week, lots of life-changing moments, and being the only American Counselor at that camp helped to bring another perspective to the already diverse group of people in that group. All the kids LOVED my accent!

The next month my internship changed. I worked for a parliamentary organization called AWEPA, which worked with African countries and their communications with the Irish Parliament. Because there are many French speaking countries in Africa,



Pictured (L-R) Emily Weber, Hillary Johns-Parson & Sam Spurlock at a fundraising event for Show Racism the Red Card.

my French major was very useful. I was able to do French translations often while we worked to raise awareness of gender based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This internship taught me a lot about my confidence and my ambition through creativity and communication.

I really got to know Ireland because traveling within the country is fairly inexpensive. I went all around Ireland, even Dingle, the most western point of Europe. Because I had an internship, I had the flexibility of my work hours and often I traveled on weekends, including Scotland and Spain!

The greatest part of the internship program was the fact that I got to explore what real life was in Ireland, not just being a student. Not only did I get two incredible internships, I got to see what the average citizen does at work and after work. I ate lunch at the Park of Trinity College every day, I had my favorite spot in St. Stephens Green, I had local friends, and by the end of my two months in Dublin, I really felt like I was a Dubliner. In addition to a traditional Irish experience, I made lifelong friends that continue to impact my life. Everyone talks about Irish hospitality, and I can truly say that they are some of the most welcoming people in the world and I cannot wait till I can go back. Sláinte!

EileenRemley

Spring 2011
Costa Rica

I walked into the first night of class full of apprehension. What had I been thinking? How could I ever manage to learn the art of Costa Rican Folkloric Dance? The Costa Rican students would have prior experience and I had never even taken a dance class in the United States. I wasn’t even fully confident in my Spanish speaking skills and here I was in a setting where I would be communicating with my dance partners and my professor instead of just listening in a lecture class. It was the best decision of my study abroad experience.

I studied abroad in Costa Rica in the spring of 2011. I am double majoring in English and International Studies with an emphasis in Latin American culture. I chose Costa Rica for the total immersion aspect. I wanted to learn Spanish. I knew the only way to do this was to integrate myself into my host family’s life, make friends in my classes, and be unafraid to step out of my comfort zone. The latter led me to enrolling in a three hour Costa Rican Folkloric Dance Class on Monday evenings.

On the first day the Professor explained we would learn the basic steps and turns of the traditional dance and be expected to put together a performance for the final class. In addition we would be going on field trips and learning more about the history and culture of Costa Rica. The women were expected to wear the traditional large colorful skirt or “enagua” and leather sandals; the men must wear the same sandals and bring their handkerchiefs to class every week.

We began class by forming lines and practicing basic steps in order to begin to understand the rhythms of the music. Luckily, hearing a beat is the same across the world and I quickly earned my teacher’s approval. After the class had grasped a few basic steps we began to partner up and practice moving in pairs. At first, this terrified me. I was standing face to face with “ticos” (Costa Ricans) and needing to communicate in order to perform the steps properly.



This fear quickly vanished when I smiled and nervously stuttered to a student in attempts to make a friend, and the rest of the class proceeded to assist me when I didn’t fully understand the instructions. As the class continued, my friendships grew with the other students in my class and we began to spend time together outside of class. I helped them practice their English and they helped to improve my Spanish immensely. Spending time with them gave me the gift of really experiencing Costa Rica from a native’s perspective. They accepted me into their everyday lives and it changed my experience.

The final performance arrived too quickly. We were outfitted in our finest traditional wear including perfect make-up and hair. We brought customary foods to celebrate after our recital. My group’s performance was voted the favorite as we laughed and talked when it was all over. Everyone knew I would be leaving at the end of the week and no one left without wishing me well. As I rode the bus home that night, I couldn’t believe how much a simple dance class and the wonderful people I danced with had influenced my time in Costa Rica.

AliMeeks

Spring 2011
Barcelona

From the moment I stepped off the plane in Barcelona, I knew this study abroad experience would be an adventure I would never forget. In Barcelona last spring, I lived with an incredible host family who told me the first time they saw me, “no hablamos inglés.” I knew that submerging myself into a Spanish speaking culture would teach me more about the language than I could ever imagine. My host family made me feel like I was one of their own. They taught me about Spanish traditions, how to properly order tapas, and how to fit into a new culture. They told me the best beaches to visit, the best restaurants to eat at, and how to have the time of my life while abroad.

My first few weeks while in Barcelona I spent my time exploring the city and getting to know my new surroundings. I began to understand the varios barrios, such as the Gothic district, El Born district, and Raval district. Each district was distinct in its own way and had its own flair. Being in a new city encouraged me to open my eyes and take in every second of my study abroad experience. I cannot put into words how much my study abroad experience taught me. I learned a lot about myself through various experiences, such as finding my way around the city using a map instead of my cell phone for directions.

The passion that the Spanish people have is one to take note of. They put their heart and soul into everything they do. I saw this vividly while experiencing FC Barcelona win a fútbol game firsthand and walking through some of the masterpieces of Antoni Gaudí like Casa Batlló, Parc Güell, y La Sagrada Família. Learning about all of these incredible buildings in a textbook is one thing, but being able to gaze at the beauty of these creations is an experience everyone should have. Studying abroad was one of the best decisions I ever made. I was able to explore the world and go to school. It’s the best time to travel while you’re young. I was able to take weekend trips by train with my newfound friends. Being able to walk to the



Barça beach gave me time to relax, unlike the usual busy life that most of us lead at home.

The four months I spent in Barcelona will always be close to my heart. I learned more than I ever imagined. The world is so big and has so much to offer. Cultures vary from city to city and are unique in every way possible. My longing for learning through experience led me to go backpacking for six weeks after my study abroad program ended. I was able to visit ten countries, living out of a backpack and traveling by train. I met people from all over the world, experienced different languages, foods, and traditions. It was a dream come true! Spending a semester abroad is something that I would wholeheartedly suggest to everyone. It has taught me more than I realize and has proved to be something that I will always remember.

