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Travel Description

I traveled to San Jose, Costa Rica to participate in the IHCAI program, which is a 4-week intensive Medical Spanish course, as well as, an Introduction to Evidence Based Tropical Medicine course. IHCAI is a non-profit foundation working for medical education, the development of research, and for the improvement of health in the communities of Central America. While attending the program, I stayed with a middle-class Costa Rican family, who prepared most of my delicious, home-cooked meals.

Most of my time in San Jose was spent in class learning medical Spanish. Classes were generally on weekdays from 9am to 4pm, with an hour break for lunch. After class, I usually spent some time roaming the city and shopping, before returning home for dinner and studying. I had daily homework assignments, projects, and simulated patients. It was a lot of work, but I learned so much every day, especially at home talking to my Costa Rican family and interacting with people in the city.

On the weekends, I usually traveled to other areas of the country. My first trip was to La Fortuna, where I had my first hike through a rain forest, and visited the hot springs. I also learned how to ride a horse, saw a waterfall, as well as a volcano with lava. My second trip was to Monteverde, where I stayed in a hotel on top of a mountain that had no internet, no TV, and no phone, only peace and quiet! I watched a gorgeous sunset, and then went zip lining across the canopy in the morning. My last trip was to Tortuguero where I went canoeing for the first time, visited the Tortuguero National Park, saw many amazing creatures, and read a book on the local beach.

This trip was my first time outside of the country. I think what made it truly wonderful for me, besides all of the knowledge and rich experiences that I gained, was the program facilitators and staff at IHCAI, as well as, my Costa Rican family. Both the program staff at IHCAI and my family in San Jose made me feel like they had known me my entire life, and treated me as if I was truly a member of their family. That became of optimal importance to me, especially when I was becoming a bit homesick. I learned an incredible amount of medical Spanish and Costa Rican culture, both inside and outside of the classroom. Since I had such an amazing time there, I plan to return to Costa Rica in my 4th year as an elective.

(Pictures on next page)











