

**Major:** International Studies — Spanish

### Why did you choose Costa Rica?

I've always wanted to go to Costa Rica. I was drawn there because I wanted to learn more about the environment and the culture. When I saw there was a study abroad program, it was the right price and I was ready for the adventure. At the time, I was a dietetics major, and I saw value for my major in studying abroad there. It was everything wrapped up into one.

**Housing:** The place we stayed, Tirimbina, was in the middle of the jungle. We were given a guide, Daniel, and two caretakers, Laura and 'El Viejo' who lived there with us. We were secluded and surrounded by Mother Nature. You could hear the monkeys talking and all different kinds of birds singing in the morning. There were hammocks to relax on and soak it all up during the downtime.



*“You take away the TVs and the radios and the internet and cellphones, and you bond like no other. I still talk with everybody who was on that trip. We’re friends for life!” — Cheryl*

**Biggest cultural difference:** The language — I didn't speak Spanish. When I came back, I changed my major to Spanish.

### How were you transformed?

Part of going to Costa Rica was facing my fears. We had people who were afraid of snakes, or spiders, or not comfortable in the environment ... but we were all there to support each other and we learned a lot about the relationship that we as human beings share with the environment. It was truly living in the present moment and getting back to nature!



After hiking at Arenal Volcano National Park on New Year's Eve, we relaxed in the natural volcanic hot springs in Costa Rica.