Costa Rica Summer Language and Culture Immersion
Promotional Video - 2013

PURA VIDA

Summer language and Culture Immersion at University of North Carolina at Greensboro sponsored by the School of Health and Human Sciences

Special thanks to support from:

Dean Celia Hooper, International Programs Center, Division of continual Learning, Centro Panamericano de Idiomas

Daddy Yankee—Trip song “Gasolina”

Thanks to the bold students: who joined us in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010 and to the people that love and support their growth and exposure to new worlds

The summer of 2006 saw us undertake our second language and culture emersion in Costa Rica. You can now reach Costa Rica by direct daily flight from Charlotte.

Here’s our 2005 group in front of the Poas Volcano.

In March of 2006 a group of UNCG faculty went on a mini version of this trip.

We visited a number of the same sites seen by students, ate the same foods and planned for an exciting summer excursion.

Our partner in this venture is the Centro Panamericano de Idiomas or CPI; they make ground arrangements, student homestays, and do four hours of language training daily; with a ratio of one teacher to four students. You are looking at their facilities in Heredia, and in Monteverde; in the cloud forest.

As you can see their Facilities are modern, they are inviting and they provide a great learning environment for students.

Here we are in Monteverde the rural week of this trip, set in the Cloud Forest students live with local families and here they are at the end of their first week saying goodbye to the families who have become their new friends.

Markeen drives the big blue bus he’s on top loading luggage and our local guide is Gustavo. Gustavo makes many of our arrangements and is fully bilingual.

This trip involves daily activities of recreation and learning
Let’s first look at some of the recreational elements of this venture

While in Monteverde we go to the Sky Trek, this is a canopy tour that allows students to zip through the tops of trees in the tropical forest. With this experience much attention is given to safety. The Sky Trek really is a metaphor for the whole trip, its risk without great danger.

Sky trek is one of the highlights of this trip, it’s a highlight because it builds confidence, its fun its exhilarating, its challenging, and it builds connections and support between the members of the group.

In week three of the trip we take a long morning and go to the Sarapiqui River; to look at some of the unique wildlife in Costa Rica. This is our guide Percy, who knows lots about monkeys and about the life along the river. Everyone wants to see the monkeys and soon we do, we watch them feed and play in the trees.

Percy (tour guide) : and if that monkey jumps the female will follow him, somebody going to jump in a minute she’s going to jump, she’s going to jump, jump baby jump common

Narrator starts again : After seeing the Cayman we had one more monkey sighting and then it’s time to go head back to Heredia for class

We have two great weekend outings during this trip; this is one of the many thermal pools at the Topican Hot Springs where we go on our first Saturday. It is in the shadow of the Arenal Volcano; and at night if you’re lucky you can see lava flows from the volcano, they are spectacular.

The fee structure for this course includes all of the admissions room and board for your two weekend trips

The next day we go to this lovely waterfall, where we get some time in the beautiful cool mountain water. Costa Rica is a temperate place with an average high in the seventies the year round.

You’ve seen some of our fun activities and other fun activities; now let’s look at some of our cultural and educational activities. Also in week three we went to Café Brit, to learn about the making of coffee. This theatrical presentation is a favorite of students. They spend time in the coffee fields and then they get to learn about how coffee is chosen by becoming a coffee taster.

Our second weekend in Costa Rica is spent at the Rib Caribbean Coast. This is part of the undiscovered Costa Rica; unspoiled beaches and an Afro-Caribbean feel that is warm and inviting.

Here the group is heading into Puerto Viejo for some Saturday night dancing. We do all of our travel on this chartered bus. We usually have the same driver and the same guides. There is a great deal of fun and beauty on this trip, but this trip also has a serious side.
In week two we are in La Carpio, the largest immigrant community in Costa Rica. We are there with Gail Nistum of the Humanitarian Foundation of Costa Rica. We meet Families we spend time working with children in the child care center. It’s here that we begin to understand the issues of immigration and the ethnic tensions that trouble Costa Rica. Gail is a former Peace Core volunteer, and has worked in Costa Rica for the last 25 years to improve living conditions. Gail works with us on all of our community visits and does a wonderful job in helping us understand the complexity of Costa Rican culture.

In the process we will meet many wonderful children and families who are struggling to survive.

We will learn about the rich social resources and social problems of Costa Rica and compare them with those in the United States.

On another visit in the community La California, the squatter community is housed by Tecos and Nicaraguans. We have visited after many other residents have abandoned the community at the behest of the government. Let’s listen to Gail explain a little more about why this has happened.

Gail: They’ve gone, so where are they going, some of them are going to, ok the government—the people who had legal documentation got one-hundred and eighty-thousand colons each from the Costa Rican government. That’s three months rent, in theory. So they actually could go rent a place with the money that the government gave them. Other people went—that’s why these walls are torn down; they took their walls in the back of—

Narrator starts again: All participants of the program brought gifts of personal care and clothing items. We brought them with us, unfortunately the people of La, California needed them and we were glad to distribute them.

On another day we visit the more hopeful community of La Promesa. Here one of our students Cherry Hitt, who is a Peace Core volunteer in Southeast Asia, is talking to the residents about how she worked with folks in the Peace Core to develop entrepreneurial skills among village women. The women were very glad to hear this, Gail translates for them. We hope it was useful information as they try to develop entrepreneurial skill in their community.

[Inaudible group discussion]

Narrator starts again: These brave women were homeless once, but fought with the government and finally gained concession and they own these homes.

In the cost structure of this trip we include fees for each of these visits. Gail uses the money that we provide and turns it back into the community. Here is part of our group working to put together food bags that will be delivered to those families.

On our way to the coast we stop and meet with the Ecar people. This is a group of indigenous people who live in the eastern part of Costa Rica who live in a very primitive style. They are sharing with us information about their lives, about their crafts, and again we hope we make a contribution to their lives by sharing time and space with them. It is a rare opportunity to meet
with people who are so removed from western culture as we know it. We appreciated the opportunity and we hoped to do it again. Here is an example of one of the members of the tribe showing us how they make their crafts.

[Inaudible group discussion]

**Narrator starts again**: And here are their crafts made of native materials and native dyes. You will have the opportunity to purchase some of these crafts while with this community.

Other social and cultural visits include a visit to a hospital in Costa Rica to explore their rather exceptional health care system.

The students in our 2005 group told us they wanted to do more service projects. While we were in Monteverde we worked on a Habitat for humanity type project. Helping this family dig a important drainage ditch, do painting, and do other things that were helping them get toward their goal of finishing their home.

In Heredia we went to a local elementary school. We purchased sod and flowers and replanted part of their yard and their flower boxes.

This trip is full of service, of learning, and of life changing experience for the participants.

At the beginning of this show you saw the words Pura Vida. What do they really mean when it comes to Costa Rica? Maybe it was the beautiful flowers and the beautiful nature that we experienced while we were in this unique country? Maybe it’s the closeness that you feel when you take risks and have adventures that are new; that are things you've never experienced before? For some people Pura Vida might mean trying to figure out what to do with that huge frog that’s in the restroom. Pura Vida might mean the time we spend with these beautiful children learning about them, their families, their culture, their teachers, what they eat, what they do in life. Or it may mean the connection we make with the host families who graciously take us in. Or it could mean the sadness we feel when we see a community destroyed, and a little dog staying in an empty house to guard for its people. Maybe Pura Vida is simply making lifelong friendships, and having a truly life changing experience.

Based on the feedback we’ve had from students we know that Pura Vida means different things to different students. We invite you to join us to find out about your own Pura Vida and to have the good life.

**Outro Music playing**: Daddy Yankee “Gasolina”

**Credits**:

Students who participated in 2005
Seth Horton, Matt Dennison, Emilie Hart, Erica Roberts, Berkley Mangum, Karin Lauff, Catherine Doreffler, Whitney Lutz, Dawn Cornwell, Annette Estrada, Sharon McBride, Chrysecolla Taico, Meaghan VanVeen, Marcia Smith- Fisher, Heather Aylla

Students who participated in 2006

Katie Campbell, Crystal Carter, Tommy Decoster, Cherry Hitt, Mary Jordan, Pachovia Kimes, Maren Londhal-Smidt, Minda McCurry, Jane Steward, Carrie Mcquaid, Emily Monteverde

For the University

Daniel Beerman, Arelys Chavelier, Kathy Hinshaw, Linda Hosteness, Steve, Hosteness, Mary Morgan, Martica Bacallo, Emily Edwards, Cate Wineburg, Andy Supple, Ann Marie Scott