

Students adventure in Costa Rica



After several delayed flights and a layover in Mexico City, CCC students arrived in Liberia, Costa Rica, 33 hours after their initial departure. After finally arriving in Santa Cruz, the students discovered a mural (below) near the town's center.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY JONATHAN VILLAGOMEZ
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Ninety degrees in December is very uncommon here in Oregon, but not so much in the Guanacaste province of Costa Rica where eight Clackamas Community College students had the chance to travel abroad to right before Christmas break. Before the trip, they spent nine weeks prepping. During their classroom time, the students learned about the Costa Rica education system and LGBTQ rights among other things. As the time to leave for the trip neared, students looked forward to the upcoming cultural experiences as well as the four college credits they would earn by participating.

The day to depart had finally arrived but was soon met with a minor setback:

"We all gathered at the airport three hours early because we were very excited to depart for this journey and then we had a 24-hour flight delay. So, we hung out at the airport till 2 a.m. We waited because they told us the flight was just an hour delayed and then at midnight, they said actually the flight was delayed till the following day at 10 p.m. So, everybody had to call their rides from Molalla, Aurora, Oregon City, to be picked up to go home in the middle of the night. It was pretty disappointing," said Jacqueline Curry, the class instructor.

The next day they finally boarded and were ready to endure the six-hour flight to Mexico City, Mexico, only to board another three-hour flight to land in Liberia, Costa Rica. Upon landing everyone was excited only to be hit with one more thing. "The first thought that went through my mind was definitely how hot it was. It was like getting hit by a wall of heat," said Madison Ramsey, a CCC student that's doing a dual high school/college enrollment.

With the temperature and humidity both being in the 90s, the group of nine jumped on board their ride only to endure a long, one-hour ride to home base with a van that had a broken AC unit. Or so they thought.

"We were heading to Samara beach. My feet were so hot, and I was like there's no way I can put up with this heater/AC and so I asked Ronnie (the driver) 'hey Ronnie, does the AC not work?' and then he's like 'Oh it's because you guys put it on hot. Every time you get off the car, I have to switch it back

to AC because it's always on hot," explained student Estefania Colazo. They rode in the van that was blasting hot air for more than a week. Just a reminder that it was roughly 90 degrees outside.

It's not every day that you have the opportunity to travel to a different country, that's why student Destiny Child didn't think twice about going. "When I was in high school, I wanted to go on a trip to Mexico to build houses, but my family ended up not letting me go. When I found out about this on the first day of school, I jumped on the opportunity. I didn't even think twice," said Child.

Child, who is a big animal lover, had a tough time seeing all the stray dogs roaming around the streets. "Seeing all the stray dogs was difficult for me since my goal in life is to own a rescue. There were dogs that had been hit by cars and hadn't had any medical attention. This experience showed me that I have to do something for these dogs who can't do it for themselves. The woman who runs Territorio de Zaguates, Land of the Strays, started by taking in strays off the street to find them new homes and when they got to 100, they realized they needed a bigger space. They moved to her husband's family's and now they have about 1,000 dogs. I hope to go back and visit the Land of the Strays and try and help the amazing woman who is changing these street dogs' life, one dog at a time," said Child.

While in Costa Rica they had the chance to go and volunteer with kids at a daycare called Gotitas de Miel where they painted educational murals and got to help out with more than 20 kids ages 3 to 6 years old. Their main mural was painted in the courtyard near the entrance of the daycare center. It was a project that took about one week to complete. They wanted students to be as involved as possible. They put kids handprints on the main mural. "It was fun to see how excited some of them got about it," said Ramsey.

The students got to bond with many of the kids throughout those two weeks.

"I loved the children and how it didn't matter that we didn't speak the same language or that we were from a different country," said Child.