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Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person

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Person to Person in Costa Rica

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Field Notes From Abroad: Person to Person in Costa Rica

Since this is my first time traveling to a different country I had no idea what to expect. I knew that it would be different than the United States but I didn't know in what ways. My experience in Costa Rica is already half over, and I have learned so much in such little time and a lot of what I have learned has been from my host mom. There have been many surprising differences between Costa Rica and the United States, but there are two that stand out more than the rest. The first is that people here never seem to be in a hurry. The lifestyle is very "tranquillo", or relaxing. If one starts to get upset about something, the response is more often than not to just relax. It is the exact opposite of people in the United States, who are always preoccupied with timelines and full of stress. The second difference that I noticed was that religion is a major part of people's lives in Costa Rica. Not everyone believes in the same religion, but it seems like everyone holds an overall respect for religion. A common greeting here is "hello, how are you doing" and the response that people most often say is "good, thanks be to god." God plays a huge role from greeting others to saying grace before meals and of course the celebration of religious holidays.

One of the biggest cultural differences is cooking. There is not very much processed food in Costa Rica, and for this reason the people here are healthier. The downfall to eating foods that are not highly processed is that it takes a lot longer to cook the meal. In both the United States and Costa Rica, praying before a meal is common. The difference is that in Costa Rica people are much more likely to pray out loud and for a much longer time. They do this because culturally they have always prayed out loud to God.

This interview has not changed my perception of the country very much because what I learned in the interview was things that I have seen occur with my own eyes. I think that the

interview helped explain a few things that I didn't understand such as why people here pray out loud. I have a lot of respect for how much God is a part of people's lives in Costa Rica, and I believe that it is part of the reason that the majority of the people are very happy and kind. If I could change one thing about the United States I think that it would be to have God be a bigger part of our country.

Teresita Mata
Host Mom
10/10/11