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2011-12 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

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## It's a Long Way from Home

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Day One August 27, 2011

Costa Rica smells different.

After a long day of traveling the group finally arrived at the airport in San Jose Costa Rica. The trip through customs went smoothly other than having to mime a bit with one of the officials. At the exit a man was waiting with a "Linfield College students" sign to take our bags and lead us to the bus that would take us to San Ramón. Mayra, our director, talked to us about what to expect over the next couple days on the 40-minute bus ride. Our host families were waiting to whisk us away when we arrived; hopefully tomorrow I will get to find out where the other students are staying. I have my own room and bathroom, but they smell a little musty it's a very different atmosphere here weather-wise--you can smell the humidity inside and out. My host mother is very nice although I can only understand about 2/3 of what she has said to me so far. .

Day Two August 28, 2011

El globo rojo

Waking up my first morning in Costa Rica was nerve-racking to say the least. Orientation material said absolutely no pajamas around the house and everyone showers in the morning; we are in a rainforest, after all. So do I risk it and pop out to see what everyone is wearing or hop in the shower and get dressed before even saying good morning. Either way I risked being rude and starting off my day all wrong. Finally I decided my pajamas were modest enough to risk it, so with sweatpants and a t-shirt on I walked into the sala (living room) to say good morning, in Spanish of course. My family was welcoming and there were no looks of distaste or upset by my pajamas, thank goodness. After eating I showered, as expected, and then joined my new cousin in some games. The two kids had a red balloon (un globo rojo) that we bounced in the air and tried not to let hit the floor, finally I started to feel at home because this was a game my sister and I have played many a time. The rest of the day was smooth sailing. I bonded with the family and explored Costa Rica some and now I am getting ready to go out and participate in activities en el centro.

Day Three August 29, 2011

Donde esta mi casa?

Today was orientation, and we learned about the customs and the do's and don't's of the culture. I got up early and ate breakfast. Papaya, bananas, y un tamale. Los Tamales are a special food made during times of celebration this week is the Dias de San Ramón, the saint that Is the city's namesake. Around the church are vendors with food and trinkets. We learned our way around the city a bit and tomorrow will take a walking tour with Adriana, our Spanish Prof.

Day Four August 30, 2011

Una celebracion

Today was the celebration de los Santos. The parade of saints lasted hours, and the streets were filled with people all over the city. Some of the students returned to their houses for lunch and others had lunch in the park. After lunch some of us went to the clubs where people were celebrating. I ended up finding my host sister Alexandra and her esposo in El Club De Amigos. There were tons of people in the clubs eating, drinking, dancing and socializing. It was a new kind of holiday for me. After this we walked around the city and talked in Spanish the entire day as we have been for the last three days. We stopped in an internet café and set up times to talk to our parents/ boyfriends/ girlfriends tomorrow. I am feeling excited about all the new things, but also nervous for classes to start. I am discovering just how hard it is to speak Spanish all day every day. The mornings and nights are the worst--pretty much whenever I am tired is harder to keep track of what I am saying. I am already scatterbrained in my own language, and I don't even want to know the things that come out of my mouth in another language!

Day Seven September 2, 2011

Well it's been a week in the morning. We started classes yesterday and already have a TON of homework. But I guess that's true most years; it still always manages to sneak up on me. I am sitting in my concina (kitchen) going over my homework for Monday because we leave for the reserve early tomorrow. The classes are different firstly because there are only 10 of us and we spend the whole day in class together. Also, the classes go from 8:30 in the morning until 4:30 Mon-Thurs. We do have an hour and half lunch but still it's a long day. Fridays are only from 8:30 to 11:30. The people here go to bed really early and get up really early, so getting to class is not a problem.

Day 11 September 6, 2011

We went to a nature reserve this weekend. We left early Saturday morning and returned Sunday afternoon. It was really beautiful and I enjoyed seeing all the different plants, and yes even the different insects, of which there were TONS! We saw some snakes, birds, and LOTS of butterflies. I really wanted to go on a hike on one of the paths but our professor wouldn't allow us.

We have now officially been to all of our classes. the work load seems heavy, but I think it will be manageable; we shall see. The professors are all really nice but I still don't completely understand a lot of what they say to us, although I get the main idea. I miss home but I really like it here at the same time. But talking in Spanish every day is exhausting!!!