

Missouri State University Study Away Programs

Short Term Faculty Led Final Report

Ecotourism and Logistics in Costa Rica
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Course Purpose:

The purpose of this program is to provide an alternative delivery method for the International Marketing and Logistics courses to include a short term cultural learning experience. This is an important component of international understanding that is not possible in the traditional classroom setting. The students are responsible for the same materials as the courses taught in the traditional classroom, but have the added benefit of a short term cultural experience.

IDS 397 International Culture & Study Abroad
MKT 394 Cooperative Education in Marketing
MKT 596 Research Issues & Problems,
MKT 796 Independent Study Marketing,
MKT 474/MKT 774 International Marketing
MKT 464/MKT 764 International Logistics

Credit Hours: 3 undergraduate/graduate

Program Description:

This course focused on the impact of cultural, social, economic, political, and infrastructure issues in global marketing and logistics. Students explored the concept of ecotourism and multi-national marketing issues from a cross-cultural point of view. Specific studies are directed toward significant market and tourism trends of Costa Rica as an emerging Central American market. Total program costs for students we're approximately \$3,025.00. The program included many events with different opportunities to investigate the culture and landscape of Costa Rica.

Significant events included:

- Best Western Irazu, San Jose
- Catamaran to Tortuga Island
- Corporate visit to CeNAT – National Center for Technology
- U.S. Embassy visit – Commercial Attache
- Jungle Crocodile Safari
- Coffee Plantation and Processing Plant tour
- Sarchi Ox Cart Factory tour
- World's largest Ox Cart
- Steel Church
- Ziplining Canopy tour
- Rainforest boat ride
- Poas Volcano
- La Paz Waterfall Gardens
- Rainforest, Dry forest, Cloud forest
- Best Western Resort, Jaco Beach

Sustainability and Ecotourism Presentation by the General Manager At Best Western
Resort – Jaco Beach
Tour of San Jose
Gold Museum
National Theatre
Catholic Cathedral

Results and Success of the Program:

Students by far indicated that the Poas Volcano and La Paz Waterfalls were the highlight of the trip. All students engaged with one another socially and participated in all portions of the course including class meetings before and after the trip as well as events on the trip. Student comments included, "I have never experienced so many new things in such a short period of time," and "I think this was the best day of my life." Student Comments are attached as Appendix A. The biggest drawback from these comments seems to be that we did not have enough cultural immersion. While this is difficult to do in a one week short term study abroad program, it is something I will try to work on in future programs.

Number of Participants:

24 (see Appendix B – Participant List)

Faculty Evaluation, conclusion, recommendations:

This course was extremely successful. The strengths of the program also seemed to be its weaknesses. The strengths were that we saw a significant range of things in Costa Rica from an ecotourism perspective as well as from a marketing and logistics perspective. While this was a significant positive, students also wanted more time to explore the local culture on their own. While we did have a significant number of events, the fact that we had to take a tour bus everywhere was a little restrictive. One of the biggest challenges was that the entire tour group either ate something bad or had a 24 hour stomach bug shortly after our trip started which required us to rearrange some of the schedule. However, we still managed to get everything done. The best thing for other program directors to be aware of is that things come up and they need to be prepared to be flexible. Things may change or tours may get cancelled mid-trip. The publicity of this trip began in September 2013 in classes with fliers and signup sheets. We posted the trip on Facebook, web-sites and social media sites. The first thing we did was to create a buzz about the trip and then started marketing it significantly in October and November before Thanksgiving Break. See Appendix D for promotional material.