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# Manuel Antonio, el Día de Independencia, y San José

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# Journals from Costa Rica

2010-09-18 Manuel Antonio, El Día de Independencia, y San José



Our group at Backpackers Hostel in Manuel Antonio

We've been in Costa Rica for a little over three weeks and have both learned and seen SO much! We had the opportunity to visit a Trapiche, which is where a popular candy 'dulce' is made from sugar cane. The juice from 'la caña' is extracted, cooked at extremely high temperatures, and essentially turns into a caramel-like consistency, then hardened. This candy is often used as a sweet treat after dinner or at various celebrations. Sugar cane is also used to make alcohol.

Our next big trip was a group-planned trip to Manuel Antonio National Park on the Pacific coast. We stayed in a beautiful hostel and spent a day at the beautiful private beach in the National Park. It was quite surreal because while we were swimming and getting our tans on, monkeys were playing in the trees (and actually ended up stealing Misty's cookies), raccoons and iguanas were wandering up and down the beach, and little red sand crabs were peeking in and out of their sand-hole homes. Walking through the park, we saw sloths, toucans, plenty of lizards and iguanas, and 3 or 4 different species of monkeys...and of course, plenty of insects, butterflies, and plants.

On the 15th of September, we were a part of Costa Rica's independence day and spent the morning watching a parade of elementary, junior high, and high school kids playing in school bands, dancing, and wearing the traditional outfits of the country. There was a lot of patriotism, happiness, and a strong sense of community during the festivities.

Our most recent field trip was to San José, Volcán Irazú, and a handful of indigenous towns outside of San José. We learned a lot about the religious aspect of Costa Rica and saw many beautifully structured churches (iglesias). By the end of our three-day field trip to the capital, we all were exhausted and ready to go home to our host families.

Back to the books!

Fun fact: The boys here call each other 'mae' (pronounced like 'my') which means 'dude.'

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