

Belize is a Dream 2017

By Kerri Cobb '17, Biological Sciences



My study abroad trip to Belize exceeded my expectations. When we first arrived, I was in awe by the beauty of the country. Even after getting absolutely no sleep, I was wide awake, taking it all in. It felt like a dream. My dream is to travel the world, so I was living my dream. The weather was hot and humid. My hair was frizzy and had a lot more volume. I didn't mind it though. I would rather it be humid than dry. The environment is so lush and green. The first hotel that we stayed at was the Sleeping Giant in Belmopan. This was my favorite hotel of the trip. It felt luxurious. We had a balcony with a hammock overlooking the river. I freaked out like a little girl when I saw our view. We were greeted with a complimentary drink and we had a three-course meal for dinner.

The food in Belize was fresher than food in the United States. I ate a lot of fish and freshly squeezed juices. I really enjoyed the



cantaloupe juice. The first day there, I ate an amazing quesadilla. The tortilla was home-made, which made it taste much more fresh and delicious than any quesadilla you could find in the United States. While we were hiking in the jungle, we got a chance to eat some live termites right off their mound. I like to think of myself as an adventurous person. I'll try anything at least once. The termites were surprisingly good. They tasted like mint, which was unexpected. I enjoyed the flavor and wanted more. Our guide cut open some coconuts so we could drink some fresh coconut water. We also ate some heart of palm in the jungle and drank from a water vine.



The culture really warmed my heart. All the locals I met were very nice and welcoming. We learned all about how to make Mayan chocolate. Then, we got to taste it and it was amazing. It was so fresh that it melted all over my hands the second I touched it. We listened and danced to Garifuna drums one night. I loved the music. I could feel the passion that the drummers had while they were playing.



My favorite part of the trip was the jungle survival tour. I love the show *Survivor*, and it was pretty much exactly like that, except there weren't any challenges that we had to compete in. It was rainy and muddy. We all got very dirty. We built a shelter out of branches, palm fronds, and vines. I got to cut down branches with a machete. Using the machete was a really cool experience.

My partner, Lauren Iannazzi, and I studied the coral reef while we were snorkeling in Placencia. We observed the reef and learned that the herbivorous fish have a mutualistic relationship with the coral. The fish depend on the coral for food and shelter, while the coral depends on the grazing by certain fishes for reproductive success. It is a mutualistic relationship because both organisms benefit from the interaction.



After having this amazing experience, I feel like a whole new person. I feel more cultured and fulfilled. I think being more cultured will help me in my future. When I become a Physician Assistant, being more cultured might help me to interact better with my patients. Any student that is financially capable of taking Global Science Explorations should take it with no second thoughts. It was worth so much more than the money spent. There will always be a place for Belize in my heart. I fell in love with the country. I made new friendships that I wouldn't have made if it weren't for this trip. I came back with so many stories to tell, and those memories will be with me forever.