

I'm an event planner. I'm constantly thinking of how to bring people together to make things happen. I want to make people happy. I want them to meet people and interact with each other and have a shared experience that they can go home with and be like "wow." But to be like "wow" and to meet other people and be able to share an experience, you have to get out and go. You have to travel. I mean with today's technology you do not HAVE to travel but it is not the same as if you were really there.

Travel. You go to another place and dive into all the pleasures of leisure activities. You go to see other places and other cultures, but how much do you interact with your surroundings? Cultures are created by the people of the places you go. Yeah, going to a local restaurant or event is cool and all, but have you ever talked with people who are creating these experiences and living them everyday?

Think about people from around the world coming to visit your hometown. How do they interact with you and how do you interact with them? Most cases when someone is lost and asks for directions, a quick conversation is had and then everyone continues on their merry way, but what if it went further than that? What if you asked for the story behind the restaurant or the food you are eating? What if you asked about someone's profession and how they got to where they are in life? These stories are what makes travel so much more than just going places.

In January of 2020, I went to Costa Rica through the Sustainable Tourism class taught by professor Linda Heyne. Most people when they think about tourism and traveling, sustainable practices are the last thing on their mind. People want to live lavishly, explore the convenience and have all resources at their leisure. Not only does this have a heavy tax on the planet, it creates a heavy burden on the local communities that tourism takes place. It doesn't have to be like that. Costa Rica is the world's leading example of how sustainable tourism is achievable.

Costa Rica is a beautiful country and I would recommend it to anyone but I would also recommend doing it right. Take in the nature and the culture around you but respect it and immerse yourself in it. In all honesty, with the internet you don't have to leave your bed to understand how cool of a place Costa Rica is but to really travel there is more than surface level tourism. Go out and explore! Talk to the people around you! Learn through the stories of people how the land shapes their everyday lives and developed their culture.

Throughout my trip, I met some wonderful people that really enhanced my journey. Everyone I met had such vast knowledge of the nature around them. They all shared a passion for the land they lived on. Their hearts were filled with kindness and laughter. They brought me closer to Costa Rica than I could ever imagine. Traveling brought people together and made things happen. My presentation is on the people of Costa Rica.