Students gain international learning exploring the best of Costa Rica...

During the Winter quarter, 52 students and five chaperones from Sullivan's Louisville and Lexington campuses' Tourism & Event Management and Hotel/Restaurant Management programs departed from Louisville International Airport for a learning journey to the Special Events Tradeshow & Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The Special Event is the leading international conference and expo for event specialists, and a great learning opportunity for students.

The group arrived in Phoenix and proceeded by motor coach to the historic hotel and restaurant management program located in Louisville. After checking in, everyone was free to do lunch on their own before meeting at the convention center to take in the trade show. Students saw a great variety of vendors who support the special event and tourism industries. They were also given projects to complete as part of the learning journey requiring them to find certain items to report when they returned. Many of the students were amazed at the scope of some of the displays and many enjoyed getting temporary glitter tattoos.

We met again for dinner in the hotel lobby for a brief walk to Mi Amigos Restaurant for a fabulous Southwestern-style dinner. Most people could not finish the portions provided and all of it tasted within minutes the bus passed through mango and banana plantations with aquaculture farms framing the Central American Highway.

Well-rounded travel experience
The journey was centered in the Guanacaste Region in the northwest corner of Costa Rica. The students experienced the full flavor of the country with horseback riding and hiking trips to the Arenal Volcano, Los Sueños Resort, the Monteverde Rainforest, coffee plantations and Saint Elena Town. The group enjoyed accommodations at the Los Suenos Resort, a luxury spa and hot springs heated by the Arenal Volcano. Leaving the resort, students crossed Lake Arenal, a manmade lake that is the primary power source for all of Costa Rica.

Vehicles took them into the mountains and across the continental divide. While many enjoyed a cool dip before resuming their hike, Keaham Hunter gave a thumbs up for her piggyback ride across the stream to the hiking trail.

Costa Rica is the most beautiful place I have ever been. There are tropical forests, beaches, and mountains everywhere! There are waterfalls that you can swim in, and they all are in vibrant colors. We stayed on Arenal Volcano and some of us had the opportunity to take a horseback ride to a waterfall. If you looked straight ahead, you saw a gorgeous view of the volcanos, and if you looked to either side you would find a hidden stream or a sheer fall of flowers. When we got to a point where the horse could no longer go, we made the rest of the hike on foot and had to cross a rope bridge...it was definitely a little bit challenging because of the height. You can see how green it was. We got to see in the Costa rican side, and the waterfall was streamlined...it was the size of a skyscraper, and it was flowing over a moss filled, natural alcove. The water was cobalt blue, and you could see all of the way to the bottom. I have never been anywhere more beautiful. After our hike back up, I have never felt more accomplished in my life. Our trip to Costa Rica was nothing short of an adventure.

McKenzie Profitt, Tourism & Event Management student

Last fall, 24 students from Sullivan’s Tourism & Event Management and Hotel/Restaurant Management programs, with Chef Instructor Kimberly Jones, Chef Instructor Katie Payne and Assistant Professor Eddie Maarry, departed Louisville for Liberia, Costa Rica in Central America. Costa Rica has become an increasingly popular destination for everyone from the budget-minded to the luxury traveler. This trip gave a dynamic international learning experience to the students, given the diversity of the regions that were visited.

Arriving to an open air airport, the group cleared immigration and customs before being greeted by our tour guide and bus driver. Besides tourism, Costa Rica is an agricultural community and...and received career insights on learning journey to the Special Events Tradeshow & Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The Special Event is the leading international conference and expo for event specialists, and a great learning opportunity for students.

The next morning, we headed to the laFortuna rainforest waterfalls. Plenty of local flavor
In the rain forest region, Sullivan students stayed in the Hotel Heliconia, an eco-lodge high in mountain. While there, they experienced Costa Rica’s Independence Day where at 6:30PM the entire country stops to sing the national anthem. The group celebrated with town locals at the elementary school across the street for some local culture. Many students enjoyed a thrilling experience on the zipline tour high above the rainforest. While heading to the last stop on this fabulous trip, we saw howler monkeys, three-toed sloths, iguanas, and crocodiles, and were treated to migrating macaws and toucans as we approached the lowlands.

More adventures ahead
The last stop was the Monteverde, an all-inclusive waterfront resort. After all the hiking and adventurous activities, the lounge chairs looked awfully inviting! On the final night, everyone enjoyed a sunset sail on Pacific Ocean for some whale and dolphin watching. However, while the sunset was beautiful, an unexpectedly fierce storm approached. Half the group made it back to the Allegro Resort but for safety reasons, the other half sailed to the Four Seasons Resort. These experiences were learning adventures that taught students about tourism, great safety and accommodation.

The next morning, we headed to the airport with a new appreciation for a very small country full of heart and passion. It was safe to say that this journey was much greater and a once in lifetime experience for this group of students.

Pura Vida!
by Chef Instructor Kimberly Jones, CCCC, CCEC, CCE, Professional Catering and Associate Chef, Event Management & Tourism

Victory group photo after successfully hiking to the LaFortuna Rainforest waterfalls.

Sade O’Connor and Katy Rayner appreciate the comfy bus seats after long hikes in the rain forests.

McKenzie Profitt and Jeremy Morris traverse the hanging bridges high above the treetops in the lush Monteverde

Misty Graham enjoyed the Pacific Ocean sunset sail.

Debbie Moore leads the “Sullivan Posse” on a scenic cross-country ride to the Arenal Volcano.

Dobbie Moore enjoys the “Sullivan Posse” on a scenic cross-country ride to the Arenal Volcano.

...and received career insights on learning journey to Phoenix

Students enjoyed visiting the massive kitchens of the Arizona Biltmore. The Executive Chef and Sous Chef graciously spent time giving them a tour and answering questions.

by Chef Tom Hickey, CEC, CCE, CFE, CCE, Professional Catering and Associate Chef, Event Management & Tourism