

Last October I discovered I'd been selected to go on a Girlguiding LaSERIO charity trip to Costa Rica. From this point, I knew I had to raise at least £2500 and therefore had a challenging, yet very exciting year ahead of me.

I've had such an amazing time out in Costa Rica, and every last bit of it has been a life-changing experience – from the fundraising to the challenge of the trip itself. The purpose of the trip was to do volunteering work which would help make a difference to the environmental issues in that area. This involved many incredible and once-in-a-lifetime activities.

Some of my favourite experiences were:

- Whilst working at a turtle station we were fortunate enough to see a protected nest hatching. We measured and weighed the newborn hatchlings, before safely releasing them to the sea in order to give them a higher chance of survival. Although sadly, only one in every thousand hatchlings make it to adulthood... and we were very honoured to be able to increase their chances!



- Another part of our trip was the visit to the indigenous tribe, the Bri Bri. All of it was amazing - from the trek to get there – which was half the fun and included swimming through a rapid river – to actually meeting the Bri Bri people and learning about their incredible lifestyles. We went inside a typical house, made out of tree bark, followed by a taste of their food. This, firstly, was trying a plantain which was native to that area, with some cocoa juice. This was like nothing I've tasted before but we had to eat it and appear grateful because it was a blessing from them. After that little ordeal, however, the food was much more 'edible'. We also did a presentation on London to the children which they really enjoyed.

The most challenging parts of the trip were:

- The home-stay was quite difficult because we were staying in small groups with a Costa Rican family. They were lovely and hospitable, but it was still quite daunting, as we didn't really speak much Spanish. We did cope quite well though, especially as it was some of the best food I've ever tasted in my whole entire life. During the days, we did work for their village, planting trees and we also did an afternoon of games and "soccer" with the local children. That was really good fun as we met so many new people and were able to join in on a typical community event.



- Another place which I found difficult was the Veragua Rainforest and Research Park. It was an amazing place, and we saw so much incredible wildlife – including tropical frogs and even a toucan! I did, however, find it hard when we had to build a pond for a new species of frog. It was really difficult and quite exhausting, especially knowing that getting so muddy would mean my whole bag would stink for ages.

So thank you so much to my County for a generous grant, to my leaders for supporting me all the way, and to LaSERIO for making this amazing trip possible!



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