

Education Abroad Returnees of the Month February 2018

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SIT: Tanzania-Zanzibar: Coastal Ecology and Natural Resource Management, Fall 2016



Most interesting class and why? Did you take classes in connection to your major or electives?

Although I am a biology major, the credits I got through my program were elective classes related to environment science. The best thing about my program was we were not learning in a typical classroom setting, instead we were learning from experiences. During the three months when I was in Zanzibar we snorkeled at over ten reefs, visited a mangrove forest that had an endemic monkey species, swam with dolphins, went to the Public

Health facilities on the island, saw how essential oils were cultivated, and so many more things. From this I learned through seeing and through touching, not from a textbook.

How was education abroad different than anticipated?

When you read about "Africa" in the news you hear about how diseases are running rampant through the continent, how poor the people are, and the classic "children in Africa are starving". Coming in with this perception of "Africa", when I experienced Zanzibar for the first time I was blown away by how false many of these perceptions were. Stone Town, but especially Dar-Es-Salaam were much more urbanized than I expected. My host mother had been educated in the U.A.E, went to Dubai every year, and had siblings living within the UK, the US, and Oman. People had smartphones!! In this way I had to spend a lot of my program getting rid of the preconceived misconceptions I had about the whole continent and replacing them with the realities of the situation in front of me.



Number one way the experience contributed to your growth

My study abroad experience was so challenging in many ways but also so fulfilling. I think the most important thing my study abroad experience gave me was a renewed sense of confidence within myself. What I mean by this was that I could survive through challenging times, I could adapt to the situation I found myself in, but most importantly I could thrive in that different and unexpected situation.



Favorite local hangout, and why?

Jaw's Corner! Jaw's Corner is a staple of Stone Town and as soon as you go there you can understand why. Located pretty much in the heart of Stone Town, Jaw's Corner is a meeting place for all members of the community. During the day the dukas are opened and sell a variety of goods. Other people are also selling various fruits and vegetables from their carts. People are streaming all about on their way to their destination, while the men hang out on the stoops

just hanging out. At night is when Jaw's Corner really comes alive. All of a sudden it feels like all the men in the community gather there, hanging out, talking about politics, and watching the children play in the streets. When there is a football (soccer) game going on people bring all sorts of chairs and stare at the little TV in the corner. It truly is one of the hearts of Stone Town.

Most interesting/delicious cuisine tried

I consider myself a foodie but my favourite part of Zanzibari cuisine was the food served at weddings, specifically pilau. Pilau is a staple of Zanzibari food and is essentially a rice dish served with any variety of meat, and some fresh vegetables such as onions and tomatoes. At weddings pilau is served in a massive communal dish, everyone sits around the dish and eats their little portion with their hands.

Most meaningful experience abroad

The final part of my specific program consists of an Independent Study Project. Basically what this means is for one month each student on the program conducts a month-long independent research project on the topic of their choice. For my independent research project I conducted a baseline study on the prevalence of coral diseases in Chumbe Island Coral Park. Or in other terms I got to spend a month snorkeling everyday on a resort island for school, I mean how cool is that? Besides just how cool my project was it also taught me a lot about problem solving, working within the resources offered to me, and how procrastination does not always work. It was a once in a life-time opportunity and the best thing I have done in college thus far.



Sum up the experience in three words

Exhilarating, Relaxing, Crazy.



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