

dianaclark

Santiago,

Dominican Republic

DIANA'S MAJOR(S): double major in journalism and Spanish with a certificate in Latin American & Caribbean studies

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: fall 2002

REASON YOU CHOSE THIS PROGRAM: I already did a program in Europe (London summer), so I wanted to do a language program next, and I didn't want to do something in Spain. Santiago worked out calendar-wise, and there was a community service aspect that appealed to me.

FAVORITE CLASSES: Dominican-Haitian Relations, Community Service Practicum



— Diana Clark (fourth from left) and other participants from the Santiago program take a break during their trip to Samana, close to where Christopher Columbus landed. CIEE arranged the trip that also included a hike through the jungle.

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: I lived with a host family: a mom, three teenage daughters who were 19, 17 and 15, and the grandma would come visit, too. We were a house full of women. I hung out with them a lot; they were great. I also lived close to the university, a 10-minute walk.

GREATEST CHALLENGE: The community service class. We had to teach English to a group of kids, ages 8-14. It was an after-school program in the community center. We didn't have any resources. We had to make up our own lesson plans. We taught them the alphabet, greetings. We tried songs to help them learn, like the "Hokey-Pokey." They loved American music. It was fun but very intimidating at first.

WHAT I WISH I KNEW BEFORE I LEFT: I wish I had known more about the Dominican culture and history. Reading novels by Julia Alvarez would help; they take place in the Dominican Republic.

GOING ABROAD VS. STAYING ON CAMPUS, DISCUSS: I felt really at home in Bloomington, and I was sad about leaving, but it was such an amazing experience and when will you ever have a chance again to have this experience? I didn't regret being gone for a semester, and I actually wished I would have stayed longer.

"I feel much more aware of different cultures, that different ways of life exist. I'm more aware of the history and politics of the Caribbean. *I feel more open to whatever else comes my way.*"

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: IF I COULD DO IT OVER, I WOULD ... have spoken Spanish all the time. In a group with Americans, it was easy to speak English, so I wish we would have made more of an effort to speak Spanish. I think I also would have been more open to opportunities, just exploring or trying new museums.