About Daniel

I was born to travel the world and help people along the way. I do both in the name of the University of Toledo.

And so it begins...August 1st, 2013

¡Hola!

*My name is Daniel Andrews, a sophomore at the University of Toledo studying International Business and Global Studies with a concentration in Pre-Law. I will be studying abroad in Puntarenas, Costa Rica for the Fall Semester and this is my blog...*

We all seem to be waiting for something, big or small, so we can move on in life—perhaps that once in a lifetime experience that truly defines who we are. Yet, many of us will keep waiting all our lives in search of the special something or someone to lead us down the yellow brick road.

In two weeks I will be departing for Puntarenas, Costa Rica— I will study there for four months, learning a new language and meeting new people. But more importantly, searching for that “something” that will change my life forever.

Unlike many teenagers, I’ve traveled a lot in my young life. I’ve already been throughout Europe on two separate occasions and most recently I went to Haiti with a group of students from the University of Toledo. Each trip I’ve taken has taught me a new life lesson but now I hope to connect them all together during my trip to Costa Rica.

Francis Bacon said, “travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience.” This upcoming trip is exactly that, an educational journey.

While in Costa Rica I’ll be completing some general education courses, taking a Latin American dance class and also a heap of Spanish lessons but that’s not the only reason I’m there— I want to become educated far beyond the constraints of a textbook. I want to learn about the culture, the people and the pura vida lifestyle.

Over the next four months you will have the opportunity to read about my experiences, look through my pictures and learn a few Spanish words & phrases with me. Honestly, majority of you probably know more Spanish then I do right now; I don’t know anything!

So my words of advice today are simple, seek opportunities to find deeper meaning within ourselves, especially when life comes most challenging.
¡Hola!

Hello from the beautiful Puntarenas, Costa Rica!

This has been an extremely exciting first week and I’m eager to share my experiences with you.

Previously, I talked about finding that special someone or something that will change your life forever. That something that will ultimately bring you happiness; at the end of the day, happiness is what truly matters. Though I’m still searching for that something special, I believe I’m headed in the right direction here in Costa Rica.

In just one week: I have learned how to write multiple paragraphs worth of simple Spanish text, despite having no Spanish background, I have left my previous housing arrangements and moved into a homestay with an amazing host family, I’ve learned how to salsa, I’ve planned a trip to Panama and I’ve even organized a group to go to a local town to teach English on a weekly basis. With approximately fifteen weeks remaining, I’m eager to see what my fellow classmate and I can accomplish in this beautiful country.

With this group, I believe that the sky is the limit in regards to what we can accomplish. Similar to the group I went to Haiti with, these USAC students come from all over the world, from different religious & ethnic backgrounds and different career paths. Yet, we uniquely mesh together and create something special that hopefully can impact this community, country and world we live in; the impact that can be made has no constraints.

Sarah Dressen once said, “What you have to decide is how you want your life to be. If your forever was ending tomorrow, would this be how you’d want to have spent it? The truth is, nothing is guaranteed. You know that more than anybody. So don’t be afraid! Be alive!”

I encourage all of you back home to go out and explore. Explore Toledo! Explore Ohio! Explore the United States! Explore the world! This unique planet has so much to offer and we must take advantage of all of these opportunities. Never quit learning, never quit exploring and never quit living. Now, go on and find that special something or someone. You have much to learn and much to share!

Go Rockets!
What Makes You Stronger

¡Hola!

*It’s already been three weeks since I arrived in Puntarenas, Costa Rica; needless to say, time is flying by! Here are a few anecdotes since my last blog post.*

In life, we rarely know what is going to happen next. Day to day, we live our lives not in fear but with curiosity as to what type of experiences and opportunities will arise in the coming days. We [I] continuously search for that special something or someone who will change our lives forever. ([previous blog](#)) Yet all along, we [I] may have been looking in the wrong places.

Throughout my many journeys I have searched for something tangible, something I could grasp onto and cherish for the years to come. Though, I’m learning that regardless what the object is, they begin to deteriorate over time. I’ve bought some of the coolest souvenirs and took some of the coolest photos, yet I feel like those objects are sometimes meaningless. Through a series of unfortunate events, I’ve found that the love of family is much more important than wealth [objects] and privilege.

On September 4th, my Uncle Mike Andrews of Muskegon, Michigan passed away; arguably one of the more difficult situations in my life. Though I was not necessarily close with my Uncle due to the location of our families, this unfortunate event really impacted me and strengthened my family bond.

What is unique about the love is that it is never measured in distance. Unlike a souvenir, love can stretch miles and miles apart: in my case, love stretches 2,500 miles. It is such a uniquely powerful bond that can be felt at anytime. Whether I’m in Costa Rica or right next to my family, our love for each other will never change. What kind of souvenir can do that?

Surprisingly, I’m not homesick and nor’ have I ever been homesick. Maybe it’s just luck or maybe it’s something more than that, to be honest I’m not really sure. Though, what I am sure about is that my family has and will always be my backbone in times of need.

Without my family I would not be who I am today. I would of not traveled the world at such a young age. I would of not had my faith based education in a private school. I would of not had many of the experiences I’ve had without my loving and caring family. They’re the ones who make things possible for me and they’re the ones who I love. They are that someone(s) special that will impact my life forever.
¡Hola!

Costa Rica has been a great learning experience and I’m thankful for this opportunity.

Traveling is one of my passions. Whenever I get the opportunity to go somewhere I take advantage of it; with each trip comes new perspectives. Traveling allows you to experience life in a new, fun and exotic way while learning more about the world and yourself.

Studying abroad is notoriously known as a long vacation and party for students around the world. While that may be true for some, this trip, to Costa Rica, has allowed me to view a few particular social issues differently— especially the cultural clash within colleges and society.

Many of us are guilty of being insensitive towards foreign cultures within our communities and/or universities. We make comments regarding the language, their habits and fashion. Some just assume that since we live in Merica’, everyone will speak Merican’, act like Mericans’ and dress like we’re Merican’ — this is not the case and nor should it ever be.

Having spent the last four months in Costa Rica, having traveled throughout Europe and working in Haiti I can assure you that cultural diversity is vital to our existence.

When you think about food in America, where does it come from? Pizza comes from Italy, hamburgers come from Germany and idea of utilizing beef comes from the French— this is a simple yet effective way of showing diversity within the United States. Though, cultural diversity is much more than the food we eat.

Living abroad, studying and working is extremely difficult— especially when the native language is not your first language. Many of us get to come home from school and relax, yet those living abroad have the constant uphill battle of mastering the native language. But unfortunately, since I’ve been at Toledo, I’ve heard many discouraging comments regarding foreigners not speaking the language.

disclaimer: This happens everywhere and I’m not putting the blame on individuals at Toledo, in Ohio or the United States.

I came to Costa Rica, four months ago, knowing less than ten words in Spanish— now I’m having full conversations with my host family and various locals.

Rather than discouraging, we need to encourage foreigners to come to wherever we are. We need to embrace the cultural diversity and becoming welcoming. This will not only help them, but it will help the community, school and your own personal growth. With every new person there is something new to learn. Imagine the United States without cultural diversity— we’d be non-existent.

We must give everyone a chance— A chance a creating a better life for themselves, their families and their country. The United States is a dream destination for many and we cannot disappoint. Embrace the cultural differences, learn and grow with one another.

You may not understand que onda (Spanish), was ist los (German) or commet ca va (French) but you will always understand a simple smile.