

Jane Pickey (they/them) is a senior studying horticulture with a concentration in sustainable food and farming systems. They are heavily involved with the Purdue Student Farm, with this being their third year working there as a lead intern. Read below to learn about Jane's study abroad experience in Trinidad & Tobago.

I travelled to Trinidad and Tobago for a spring break study abroad program called "Explore Trinidad and Tobago" through the agriculture department. The country consists of two islands: Trinidad and Tobago, but we only visited Trinidad. The trip was focused not only on agriculture in Trinidad, but also culture in general. We went on several outings that highlighted the ecology of the island, traditional and popular cuisine, commercial industries, religion, music, and the general day-to-day life of a Trinbagonian.

I was intimidated by the prospect of a semester abroad and needed to work during the summer, so a spring program was already ideal for me. The kicker was that my boss at the farm, Chris Adair, leads the program with his wife. He's a great guy and so is Ashley. Chris is very passionate about the program and makes a point of convincing his students and interns to consider applying. I'm relatively introverted, so hearing him talk so positively about all the people involved on the trip was very motivating to me.



During the experience, the week was packed full of activities during the day. For the first half of the trip, most days we would see two or three different places on the island. The last couple days we spent at a small resort which centered around ecological conservation. These days offered more free time for exploration, and the itinerary gave the individual traveler more choice. Free time was during longer bus rides in between outings and in the evenings at lodging.

Before the trip I was anxious about our level of activity, but I found that it was easy to relax on most of these outings. I quickly learned that it was refreshing to my social battery to sit back and observe everything very deeply. My favorite example of this was during a canoe trip on the Caroni swamp. I was feeling quiet and tired. It was so lovely to take in all the colors and sounds, focusing on spotting any creatures hiding in the mangroves as we made our way through the canal system.



I'll feel more confident next time I leave the country. I feel like I made a couple connections there that would be useful if I were to find myself in Trinidad again.

Surprisingly, I found it easier to talk to people in Trinidad than I do back home. There's less pressure to act a certain way. As a foreigner, you're already expected to be a bit weird and different. So, no pressure trying not to be weird and different! Generally speaking, Trinbagonians have a wonderful sense of humor and easygoing demeanor. For someone going on this trip, I would recommend really putting yourself out there, trying everything, and asking Trinbagonians about their lives and stories. Everyone involved with the trip loved to have fun and learn new things.

I want to go back to Trinidad so badly. It's a beautiful country. Going abroad expands your understanding of the world and breaks the seal of having never travelled before. I know

