

Students broaden horizons with world travels

Sarah Claire Miller, Staff Writer

From cruises to mission trips, travel experiences this past summer showed students the world is much bigger than Olive Branch.

"I thought that I wasn't going to like going to different parts of the world, but once I got there it was a whole new vibe of people," sophomore Paris Johnson said. "They were different, but it wasn't in a weird way. It was straight. I really enjoyed myself."

At the end of her freshman year in May, Johnson spent a week in Panama with one of her cousins. A month later, she went on a seven-day Carnival cruise to Honduras, Cozumel and Belize.

"My mom's family always plans a big trip to go on, and this year they all chose to go on a cruise because they felt that it would be a good experience to see different parts of the world and to meet new people," she said, adding that previous family trips have been to Disney World and Gatlinburg.

Carson Ewing, a junior, spent two weeks in July in Bagaces, Costa Rica on a mission trip with Central Church of Collierville. It was his first time out of the United States and his first time on a plane.

"Our church worked with a Christian youth group called Tribu de Juda in hosting a VBS for little kids at their church and a retreat to Río de Naranjo for the older kids," Ewing said. "We each stayed in separate host homes hosted by Costa Rican families where we stayed while we weren't at church. I stayed with a family who lived on a farm who had a 16-year-old boy and a 10-year-old boy."

Ewing was one of a dozen teenagers on the mission trip, which his church has participated in before.

"My sister had gone in previous years and I had close friends at my church who went and strongly recommended it," Ewing said. "I also wanted an opportunity to be a server."

For junior Ashia Eubanks, traveling was a way to learn about herself and others.

"This summer I went to Jordan with one of my very best friends, Sanabell Ghanem," Eubanks said.

Eubanks traveled with Ghanem and her family to Chicago and then took a 12-hour flight to Jordan.



Photo courtesy of Paris Johnson

Paris Johnson, pictured on a beach in Cozumel, went on a cruise with her family to Honduras, Belize and Cozumel in July. "I thought I wasn't going to like going to different parts of the world, but once I got there it was a whole new vibe of people," the sophomore said.

"I met her wonderful family there, saw different cultures, and saw how Jordanian way of life is very different than the USA," Eubanks said. "The country is absurdly beautiful, with various huge praying churches – castles, in my opinion – and I was just in awe of the landscapes."

Getting to know another culture was a learning experience for Eubanks.

"Traveling is on a lot of people's bucket list," she said. "Traveling allowed me to learn more about myself and learn more about the various cultures around me. You see beautiful interactions amongst people that make you think different. You experience different customs, that are quite frankly weird, but oddly inviting."

An example of an odd custom was eating goat brain, which Eubanks said was surprisingly good. She added that all in all, travel can be a mental, physical and spiritual experience.

"I believe that is what traveling is all about," she said. "If that's not enough to convince you to travel, just think, the photos will look good enough to post on your Instagram, maybe even your Snapchat story."