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My trip to Ecuador will forever be one of the most memorable experience of my life. My first day in Quito was quite overwhelming due to the fact that there were about forty people at orientation, but it was also exciting at the same time. It was a very hot, tiring day because it took a long time for everyone to take their Spanish placement tests and we had about five hours of meetings. I went back to my host family's house exhausted and slept great that night. My host family had done a great job with making me feel comfortable and that helped with the transition.

I arrived in Ecuador with a decent background in Spanish, but I lacked confidence in my ability to use it, especially with native speakers. This experience was great because it forced me to speak Spanish and, as many native speakers told me that I spoke Spanish well, my confidence grew. I am now at the point where I feel I can get my ideas across with much less difficulty and with almost no worry that I sound like an idiot. I now realize that they know I am not a native speaker and appreciate that I am making the effort to communicate in a different language. An additional benefit that I was not expecting was that I was able to spend some time in the coast as well as the mountains, where they have different dialects. This helped me to be able to understand more people from different backgrounds, which will help a lot in the United States.

The most important personal benefit from this internship was learning how to quickly adapt to and understand another culture. In order to be able to get around and not go crazy with having to fight against a different set of values from my own. I had to learn how to bargain and not back down with taxi drivers in order to not get ripped off. I also learned a lot through the debates about their new constitution. Professionally, the biggest benefit was learning how to act in a medical environment. I have now seen many strange/shocking things and feel that I can react well to them all.

My biggest challenge while in Ecuador was trying to keep a low profile while walking around town. As an unusually tall, blonde, blue-eyed girl, I tended to draw a lot of attention towards myself from both the male and female population. I knew that the best method to deal with cat-calls was to ignore it, but it got really annoying after ten weeks straight. A couple of times, I wanted to turn and yell at them and tell them to go away. I never overcame the challenge because it would have been impossible, but I did learn to deal with it by the time I left.

In order to become an asset to the organization, I made sure to show up to clinic on time, with all the necessary supplies for the day. I also tried my best to learn as much as I could without being too much of a bother for the doctor. Any time the doctor was doing something and looked like they needed help, I tried my best to assist them as much as I possibly could.

The level of guidance in the clinics and hospitals varied a lot from place to place. In some sites, the doctor stopped between every patient to explain anything that needed explaining and at others, it was like pulling teeth in order to get any information. Some doctors were very interactive and let me be more hands on with examining the patients. With others, I just had to stand back and watch. Either way, the clinical experiences were usually great. The quality of

the teachers at the Amazing Andes School was quite good, with some being better than others. They helped strengthen my Spanish skills and also taught me a lot about Ecuadorian culture.

When I came to Ecuador, I expected to see a very poor country in which everyone was scraping to get by. As I travelled throughout the country, I saw some of this, but I also saw some very clean, well put together cities and towns with good infrastructure. Also, the clinics were much cleaner and had more supplies than I expected, with some exceptions. Overall, Ecuador was much more safe and developed than I had expected.

The main thing I had wished I had known before I came to Ecuador was how much money I was going to spend. Before the dollarization, Ecuador was a much cheaper place to live, but afterwards it has made things much more expensive. Though things are much cheaper than in the United States, it is not like things are incredibly inexpensive in Ecuador.

Each day, I would get up around six-fifteen and have breakfast around six-forty five. I would then leave at the appropriate time to be able to get to my clinical site by eight. Clinic went from eight to noon, after which I would have lunch. I would usually get to the school just in time for classes to start at two. Class lasted until six, at which point I would walk home and have dinner at seven. After dinner, I would do my homework and then go to bed, ready to do it all again the next day. The weekends had much more freedom and I was able to travel and experience other parts of Ecuador then.

Anyone planning to come to Quito or Chone should know to have access to more money than they think is necessary. Also, bring warm clothes for Quito because it gets quite cold at ten thousand feet and bring cool clothes for Chone because it is much lower, hotter, and more humid. A water-proof rain shell is a good idea as well because the weather changes very rapidly here and sun can change to rain in seconds. Try to go see as many things as possible and try not to bring any pre-conceived ideas about the culture because the people will always surprise you. From what I have seen and heard, the home stays are great. My personal experience was great. Don't be afraid to spend time with your family.

Overall, this was a great experience, with ups and downs, but mostly ups. I learned a lot in clinic, school, and my travels, many things I could not have learned at home. I am extremely glad that I had the opportunity to go to Ecuador and would do it again in a heartbeat.