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Global Health Reflection

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Going in to my trip to Ecuador I had very little expectations for the country. When one thinks of South America, one thinks of Brazil or Argentina, never Ecuador. In fact, I only chose my program initially because it was customizable, cheap and fit into my hectic schedule between 1st and 2nd year. I never expected to fall in love with the country of Ecuador, which is exactly what happened.

For three weeks, I attended the Andean Global Studies Spanish school in Quito, where I took four hours of Spanish/Medical Spanish and worked four hours in a local hospital. Going into the program, my proficiency in the Spanish language was only very minimal; leaving the program I was nearly fluent in reading and writing and only slightly below fluency level in speaking. The professors at the school were very flexible, allowing me to choose the topics covered each day, and even open to exploring the beautiful city of Quito during classes if I so desired. While working in the hospital, I was able to witness first hand the way a South American hospital functions. For three weeks, I worked in the Infectious Disease Department of a Pediatric Hospital, where I saw many patients whose diseases are only seldom diagnosed in the United States. Illnesses like HIV, Tuberculosis, and Dengue were very commonly diagnosed during my time in the hospital. Though most of my work was only observation, it was still interesting to see such rare diseases in person.

While the point of my going to Ecuador was to learn Spanish, there was also free time to travel around the country. Though Ecuador is a small country, it has so many different things to do. When I arrived and found out how diverse the country was, I set a goal for myself: Spend a weekend at the beach, in the jungle, and on the mountains. My first weekend there I spent in Montanita, a quaint beach town by day and raging party town by night. I visited Isla de la Plata, a gorgeous island with tons of wildlife and got to see numerous whales up close and personal. The following weekend I spent in Banos, a town at the gateway of the Amazon Rainforest. There I went rafting, rode a dune buggy around the jungle and through waterfalls, and zip lined through the jungle. It was an incredible weekend and something I consider to be the highlight of my trip. My final weekend I spent hiking one of the many volcanoes surrounding Ecuador. Though the weather was too fierce to summit the mountain, it was still a great experience and left me with some memorable pictures.

From my trip, I gained more than just a proficiency in the Spanish language. I gained a firm understanding of the culture of Ecuador and the people living in the country. I also learned about the health care system of Ecuador and enjoyed comparing the inner workings of the hospital system there to those I’ve worked in in the United States. All in all, I left Ecuador a more cultured individual and would recommend the country to anyone who is interested in visiting South America.