

Andean Global Studies
Quito, Ecuador
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My experience in Ecuador was beyond anything I imagined it was going to be. I am an avid traveler and wanted to take advantage of the last major break we were going to have in medical school. I was a Spanish minor in college but had only mastered reading and writing the language. My fluency was close to nil. Therefore, I wanted an experience that would force me to speak Spanish, give me the chance to explore a new culture and expand my medical experience all at the same time. That is exactly what the Andean Global Studies Program did for me!

I spent six weeks in Ecuador with the Andean Global Studies program. I participated in a 4 week long, 80 hour intensive Medical Spanish Immersion Program. For the first two weeks I took Spanish classes and explored the cultural aspects of Quito. My Spanish classes were tailored to my speaking abilities and interests. For the following two weeks, in addition to the Spanish classes I participated in clinical rotations. I had the amazing experience of shadowing and working with a Gynecologist and Pediatrician in a local clinic. I saw a baby being born for the first time! This experience has triggered a newfound interest in Obstetrics and Gynecology. Furthermore, Ecuador has a universal healthcare plan. All citizens who cannot afford health insurance can receive care through public hospitals. It was interesting to analyze the pros and cons of such a system and compare it to our system here. It was also fascinating to compare and contrast my experiences in a clinical setting in the States compared to Ecuador, particularly in terms of resources in the healthcare centers and the patient-doctor relationship.

In addition to the academic aspect of my trip, I was also able to travel throughout the country for the final two weeks. Ecuador is an extremely diverse country geographically and culturally. I was able to get a taste of the major regions of the country and learn the history behind a place I called home for a summer.

One of the most impactful aspects of my trip was my time spent living with my host family. I had the opportunity to discover the lifestyle of an average Ecuadorian family and become part of their lives. My home-stay experience encouraged me to practice the language and truly immerse myself in the culture. The school also provided several extracurricular activities like salsa lessons and local sight-seeing. Through many of these programs and my experiences in the hospital, I formed friendships with people from all over the world.

After I returned from Ecuador, I have been able to participate in many more programs within our local community. My Spanish has become fluent and I have become more sensitive to and aware of cultural concerns of Spanish-speaking patients. I hope to use what I learned from my time abroad in the way I approach my future patients. This trip taught me the importance of relating to the social and cultural concerns of your patient so that you can provide your patient with the care that he or she deserves.



