

# Here's my Study Abroad Story

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**Major:** Biology and Spanish

**Program:** I studied abroad in the fall of 2012 on the IES Abroad Santiago Program. Everyone, a total of 25 students, arrived to the airport on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July where we were all greeted by the director and coordinators of the program. We were taken directly to our assigned homestays as each student lived with a host family in various "comunas" of the Santiago area. Our first week was filled with orientation activities such as scavenger hunts, tours around the city, fun outings that familiarized us with the transportation system, buying cell phones and much, much more. We also had our first field trip of the semester to Valparaíso and Viña del Mar. Academically, one could take courses at the IES Center or one of the two universities, Pontificia Universidad Católica (PUC) and Universidad de Chile, which provided a wide range of courses to choose from just depending on one's major and interests. In addition to this, the program offered a Health Studies Option that included a clinical observation twice a week in which we would observe the daily routine and demands of physicians and nurses in various sectors of a hospital or clinic. Students also had the option of participating in a Service Learning and Internship course.

**Typical Day:** In Chile, I took some general courses such as Native Cultures (Culturas Nativas), Intercultural Health (Salud Intercultural) and an Advanced Grammar and Usage course (Gramática y Uso Avanzado), as well as some courses offered under the program's Health Options category, which included Medical Spanish (Español Medico) and a clinical observation course (Observación Clínica). On a typical day, I would wake up at about 7 or 8AM and then go on a run around the neighborhood. After my run, I would do what I needed to get ready for the day and then have breakfast, which my host mom, Gladys, normally set out on the table. This consisted of cold cereal, milk, and a piece of fruit or oatmeal, hot water and yogurt. The walk to the Study Abroad Center was about 10-15 minutes and trip to campus was about 40 minutes with a combination of walking and taking the metro. For lunch, my host mom would normally pack me a sandwich, piece of fruit and yogurt unless I let her know that I would be back to have lunch with her or was going to grab lunch with a friend at one of the various restaurants and shops.

After a day of classes and clinical observation, I would return home to eat dinner, which my host mom prepared; normally dinner consisted of a big salad with a little meat and sometimes a side of rice. Occasionally, I would join my host mom to walk their dog, Draco. About a month into the program, I also obtained a gym membership near the Center and started to go to dance lessons (salsa and bachata) once to twice a week.

**Highlights:** I am not sure where to begin on this one, because in all honesty, the whole experience was truly life changing. I very much enjoyed traveling to Pucón, Chiloé, Patagonia, and Mendoza, Argentina where I participated in many outdoor activities such as zip-line, hydro-speed, paragliding, and hiking an active volcano. I appreciated the little moments that are just so precious like watching a parade with my host family during the week of Fiestas Patrias, learning to cook traditional dishes from kitchen workers at a hostel, showing my mom how to make homemade chocolate cheesecake (it is my host sister's favorite), and of course, meeting all of the tremendous people that I did along the way.



**Challenges:** There are the typical, everyday challenges that get thrown your way while studying abroad, but in one way or another, are able to be overcome. I think the greatest challenge is being able to step out of your comfort zone. Whether that means you do something out of the ordinary, simply ask for directions on the street, or have a laptop malfunction (mine completely died) and need to ask store technicians for help and your center coordinators for assistance.

**Advice:** First things first, if you study in Chile in the fall, make sure to pack enough warm layered clothing. Having a local map in my backpack came in handy way more times than I thought it would and the website: [www.transantiago.cl](http://www.transantiago.cl) was extremely helpful. The biggest advice I can give to someone interested in studying abroad is to trust in others and especially in yourself and your instincts. Enjoy the opportunity given to you and make the most of it!