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Entry #1: Far from Home



Bueno... I realize that I am writing this journal after I've already lived here for awhile... I'm not exactly sure what I will be saying, and I want to apologize in *avanzado* for any Spanish words, phrases, or entire blogs that may "accidentally" appear... I mean, living in a Spanish speaking country for 6 months is bound to take a toll on me sooner or later...

I guess I'll begin with what I'm doing here. Survey says..... I have no clue.

I had wanted to study abroad for various reasons- learn Spanish, travel the world, live in a new culture, experience LIFE. And now that I'm here, I didn't know what I had signed up for. But all is well in America del Sur, don't you worry. It is definitely an experience! I will be calling Córdoba, Argentina my new home from February 4 through July 30, studying Spanish through the CC-CS program at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba. Hopefully I will learn a thing or two while I'm here (;

I'm living with a host family: Luis y Raquel, y Belén. I honestly could not have asked for a better family (My thanks go out to Linda- who has recently returned to the states from her own *Aventuras Argentinas*, and whose host family I am borrowing for this 6 months.) They are very welcoming and accommodating and they are *WONDERFUL* cooks- which is *PERFECTO* because I love food. It is good.

I'm really excited to be here, living in this new culture, embracing life. It is really awesome- and I will try to keep you updated on the new things here as much as possible. Yes, I miss my family. And my friends. And pancakes. But that's not going to stop me from greeting each day the Argentine way, with a kiss on the cheek, a smile, and an embrace.



So until next time...
Chau!!!

[Regarding the picture: this is one of many, many ice cream cones in Argentina. They are cheap- less than \$2 (US) and have a billion flavors I've never heard of. Also- there is at least one *heladería* (ice cream store) on EVERY SINGLE BLOCK.]

Entry #2: Argentine Life

So there are a few things I think people should know about this particular study abroad program. Mind you Argentina is the only place I've studied abroad, so I can't exactly compare it to other study abroad destinations. First off, I really love how I can fully experience the culture here. I am living with a family and immersed into the Argentine culture, language, and mannerisms every waking hour. I love being able to ask my family questions about their values and customs because they are so available to converse. Also, they help me with my Spanish, planning little weekend trips, finding cool restaurants, and even making new friends. I love that I'm actually experiencing the culture and not just living a vacation.

I love the culture here. It is so much more laid back than the United States. It takes a little bit of time to get used to the schedule here, especially the eating schedule. Or the fact that absolutely nothing starts on time and people are always late to everything, especially get-togethers with friends. The eating schedule is as follows:

Breakfast in the morning, the same time as in the US (I eat around 8/9 because I don't have class in the morning)

Lunch is usually between 12-2

Siesta is after lunch until about 4pm. Most stores close for this time and the elementary and secondary schools don't have class.

Merienda (tea and a snack, like criollos) at around 6

Dinner at around 10 or later (my family eats at 11pm)

Of course by time dinner rolls around I'm crawling to the table, torn between starvation and exhaustion. Okay that's a complete exaggeration because I'm totally used to the schedule now. It just took a little while.



My friend Josh drinking mate.
Careful, it's hot!

Now, back to the culture. The city is laid out so there are ice cream stores, cafes, and plazas everywhere. This gives the people a chance to chill out, hang out, and just sit around a plaza. Which is exactly what the people do. At merienda time if you walk by a plaza you will see at least a billion little circles of people drinking mate, playing guitar, or just relaxing. It is a very relaxed culture.

Mate. Mate is a tea that Argentines LOVE. They drink it literally all day long. While passing through the park once, I saw at least 12 circles of people drinking mate within my peripherals. The mate cup is a hollowed out gourd, but more common ones are simply made of wood. The straw is metal and called a *bombilla*. It has a metal strainer at the end to sift out the tea. The tea does not come in little baggies. It is straight up tea junk that is all messy and looks kind of illegal, but it's just tea. The tradition is that people gather

together to hang out at a park, chill, talk, and drink mate. The first person prepares it and pours in hot

water that someone brought in a thermos and then they pass it to the person on their right. That person drinks it (its little, only about 3 big sips) and gives it back to the water-filler person who refills it and passes it to the next person. They go all the way around the circle, as many times as they have water or time for. The tea leaves are strong enough for about 25-30 refills. It is an acquired taste, but it is actually super social and relaxing. It's really a fun thing to do (:

Entry #3: Buenos Aires

So... I guess since I'm in South America it would be pretty hard to just "go to Paris for the weekend" like my friends in Ireland (yes, I'm a liiiittle jealous). But I get to go on little random adventures, and I'm planning bigger excursions as well.

So far our class took a weekend field trip to Buenos Aires, the capitol of Argentina. It was a blast, there was AWESOME food, and I learned a lot about the history and important people of Argentina. Plus we went to a few arts and crafts type markets that line the streets and got some extremely cool, authentic Argentine knick-knacks. We saw a Tango show during dinner, went to the neighborhood La Boca (where Tango originated), went to a few museums and the famous cemetery (it's actually really, really cool... but still a bit creepy). I walked across the widest street in the world (Avenida 9 de Julio) and got to hang out with my friends over \$4 pizza.



La Boca



The Cemetery



Arts/ Crafts market

Entry #4: Mini Adventures

Some other adventures including going to Carlos Paz for the day to just chill by the river or have a picnic. We've done that 3 times already.

Also, one day all of our plans to go horseback riding in La Cumbre were thwarted by rain and illness, so I took a day trip to Rio Ceballos with my friend Frank. We walked to the mountains, up the mountains, down the mountains, up, and



down, for about 5 hours. It was a lot of exercise and we never found our destination (a waterfall) but we saw the reservoir and the views were spectacular. It was really nice just getting away from the city for a day.



Entry #5: La Cumbre

We (Kat, Cassie, and I) finally made it to La Cumbre the following weekend to go



horseback riding, and it was the most fun 2.5 hours ever. I was so excited that we finally got to go that I didn't stop smiling the entire 2 hour bus ride there, or back. And while we were on the horses, I randomly would start laughing, mostly because my horse wouldn't stop eating random bushes and grass (always eating... just like me...). We rode the horses nice and easy up the Sierra Mountains, and the view was incredible. It was breathtaking. I love the quiet landscape, the gentle rolling mountains, the nature, the wide open sky... It was nice getting a breath of fresh, clean air. After we descended the mountain, our guide asked if we wanted to go fast, and of course we, being little daredevils, said yes. The horses started running (not even wide open, but it was fast for me), and I went hysterical. It was so exhilarating, yet terrifying (I honestly thought I was going to fall off the saddle) that I couldn't stop laughing. It was awesome.

Entry #6: Argentine Food

So, I couldn't help it. I love food so much I decided to dedicate an entire blog entry to this wonderful thing.

The food here is. Awesome. I love it. Although there are some strange things to eat, I think I can safely say that you will never eat a more delicious steak than here in Argentina. And the empanadas are to die for. But don't get me wrong, although the Argentines love their meat, you can be a vegetarian here too. (I have two friends here that are vegetarian, and so is the assistant director). I just feel bad that they are missing out on the asado (Argentine version of a barbecue).

Let's start with breakfast. Although it is small, like, reaaaally small, you get used to it. I drink a cup of tea and have a few crackers or criollos with jam or Dulce de Leche. Criollos are like layers and layers of flaky awesomeness baked into a biscuit-type pastry. Dulce de Leche is like caramel, but thicker, creamier, and is used as a spread. Or a topping on apples. Or a flavor of ice cream.



Lunch. Lunch is usually the biggest meal because that's when you need the most calories. My host mom will usually make me milanesa. Its breaded meat (usually chicken) sometimes topped with cheese (and tomatoes) and served with a side salad of lettuce and shredded carrots. My host mom also likes to put mayonnaise on the milanesa, but I prefer mustard, or just plain. It is really, really good.

Asado. Sometimes on the weekends families will invite friends, or family members to have a great big asado.

They cook a ton of meat on their outdoor, built-in, fireplace/barbecue. The food is delicious, and the company is really nice too. They love getting together with their families to enjoy a good meal.

Merienda: tea and criollos, crackers, or croissants.

Dinner: we eat a lot of different things for dinner, which we eat for lunch too. My favorites so far are tarta, empanadas, pizza, and ravioli.

Tarta is can be described as a giant pot pie filled with a combination of veggies, meat, and sometimes cheese. My favorite is tuna, spinach, hard boiled eggs, and onions. All of the food Americans are afraid to admit they actually like, baked into a giant pie of awesomeness.

Empanadas: little pockets of awesomeness. There are different styles of empanadas, where the crust is folded in different ways, and there's different stuffing. The usual is empanadas arabes, where they are filled with ground beef, onions, and sometimes cheese or peppers. But you can also get vegetarian empanadas (the spinach ones are good).

Pizza: the crust is more like a thick, crispy flat bread and they don't have pepperoni. The pizza isn't really greasy at all. Although, they like to put boiled eggs on it sometimes, which surprised me at first.

Ravioli: since majority of the Argentines have descended from European immigrants, mostly from Spain and Italy, we don't eat spicy food, but instead a lot of pasta. I love the ravioli here (:

Dessert: you can get ice cream on every block, in every flavor, for a cheap price (a double scoop waffle cone is \$1.50 US). The cakes are delicious, but usually my host mom will just ask if I want a fruit for dessert. At first I found this strange, but now I find myself craving an apple after I finish my ravioli. (Put Dulce de Leche on it and you're golden).

So yeah, that pretty much sums up what I do here... eat food.