



Testimony

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On arrival in Ecuador, I was surprised by how advanced the country seemed in comparison to how i had imagined it-I had come uneducated on the subject and didn't realise that there was so much wealth in the country. As a result i was wondering how worthwhile my volunteering would be until I arrived in El Porvenir, where i would be spending the next three months. Here I saw the first signs of the class divide and difference in wealth, education and opportunity which make the volunteer program so important. The children in the communities we worked in are far less privileged than those in the cities or back in England; their living conditions, while clean, are basic. With no heating, insulation or hot water and precious little electricity. Good grades in school are their way to achieve better jobs and more much-needed money for their families.

In class they are not all saints, but active and enthusiastic none-the-less when you capture their attention. It was intimidating at first with the larger classes but they soon warm to you, and in some schools the welcome you get as the kids rush to hug you, daily, is both heartwarming and gratifying. While, as in every school, there are troublemakers, they are all prepared to make an effort when you grasp their attention. i will be very sad to leave the kids, and will miss them a huge amount when i go back home.

The family we stayed with also helped us settle in to the way of life and made the stay even more pleasant. I found the house very comfortable, if a little cold sometimes-however, the cold will get to some people, so bring plenty of clothes to wrap up warm.

Ecuador is also a great country to be volunteering in, with plenty of places of cultural interest to visit and lots of outdoor fun to be had-in my time here i have been to Cuenca, a beautiful city further south of Ambato and Baños, a great tourist city from where you can hire bikes and ride through beautiful countryside looking at waterfalls along the way or do other outdoor activities such as rafting, horseriding, trekking, or just relaxing in the natural hot baths which the town is named after-here i also got the chance to do a swing jump(same as a bungee except the cord is taught and swings you under the bridge you jump off). My favourite place was Tena, a town just outside the jungle where we were able to do white water rafting, and a trip to the jungle where we got to climb up

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waterfalls, as well as visiting Misahualli, a beautiful little town with an inland beach, populated by tame monkeys. The trips also mean you can eat nice food at cheap prices, which are a change from the meals at home of soup, rice and potatoes, which grow monotonous.

All in all, it has been an incredible experience, and one which i would recommend to anyone who is interested in helping people less fortunate themselves, and making a difference, as well as seeing a beautiful and captivating part of South America.



Drama class



Biking in Baños



With children



Reading contest at the school.