CALS International Exchange Program Student Report

Universidad Nacional de Litoral, Spring 2016

Personal information

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Major: Animal Science

Name of host university: Universidad Nacional de Litoral
Period/Time of Exchange: Spring 2016

Practical Advice

When it comes to the visa everything is done once you are already in Argentina. The people in charge of the international students really help everyone to get all the documents gathered up and ready for when you have to do it. The only negative thing, or positive depending which way you look at it, about the visa is that you have to go to various different cities around the province to gather all documents and complete the visa. This is negative because sometimes it might take more time than the time they give you to complete it (one month from entering the country) and positive because you get to travel and see new cities, and if you don’t get it done by the first month you’ll have to travel outside of the country, maybe Uruguay or Brazil, to have another month to complete it.

Packing is another tricky thing. As you might want to travel you don’t want to bring a lot of stuff to have a light bag for traveling but this is difficult because when you first arrive it is their summer and it is EXTREMELY hot and by the time you leave it's their winter and even though it is not as brutal as the Ithaca winter, it does get very chilly and a jacket is needed. I personally didn’t realize how cold it was going to be so I didn’t bring a jacket, I deeply regret it when we were at 4200 meters above ground seeing the mountain of 14 colors.

When you first arrive, there are various ways you can get to the city where the program is. There isn’t an airport at this city, even though it is the capital, but there is one in Rosario which is just a two and half bus ride away or you could fly to Buenos Aires, maybe a few days before and see this beautiful city, and take a six hour bus ride to the city where you'll be staying. The university has a really good orientation program and it is run by the “tutors,” which each international student will get one or two of. The activities really help to see the Argentinian culture and you get to meet people from all over the world that would be studying a variety of different things.

Academics

The university has different colleges, which they call a “facultad,” and the building for each one are scattered around the city. It is not a big city so everything is close together. The college of veterinary medicine and agronomy are actually in a smaller city just 45 minutes outside of this city called Esperanza. The international office is always very responsive to any questions and concerns but mainly in the mornings as they don’t open in the afternoons. The facilities for those two particular colleges are fairly old but they have everything you might need and they were in the process of building some new and updated buildings. They have a small dining hall that inly serves lunch and for 20 pesos, about $1.25, you get a complete meal. As for social activities, Esperanza
has a large and nice city-center park where people go to chat and drink mate. A newly built 3D cinema, which everyone is talking about. They also have “El Parque de la Agricultura” which is a big park with a lake where you can rent boats, and where people go for jogs and to hang out and again drink mate.

The courses you kind of choose beforehand, they will send you a big list of courses and they will tell you which are the ones you will actually be able to enroll in but this won’t happen until you have a meeting with the academic advisor about a week before classes start. The classes they allow to take are generally not the hardest classes in the school, especially if you are one change with the vet school, not only because of the language difference but because they have a very different and complicated system in which courses are taught and graded. You will try to understand how this works but trust me it is impossible. Depending on the classes you might have exams or final projects and they usually are mandatory to attend, except for a few excused absences.

Research: The group that I was lucky enough to work with focused on chronobiology, which is the study of the circadian rhythm and how it affects different processes of the animal behavior or internal system. The project that I was involved with was with South American felines. This ranged from small native felines like the jaguarundi to the big dangerous felines such as the yaguarte. We would visit various zoos and reserves and place a special collar on this cats, under anesthesia, and we would remove them about a month after. This collars would record the animal’s activity during the various times of days and we would create a graph showing if the animal was nocturnal or diurnal.

Clinical observations: Because of the type of research I was involved in, one of the group’s member also worked at the local zoo and he was able to give me an internship with the veterinarians there. I would go once a week due to my schedule availability and we would go on zoo round making sure all animals were healthy. Some weeks there were schedule procedures such as curing a howling monkey that had been in a fight with another monkey, giving an anti-parasitic shot and drawing blood from a few pumas and curing a broken horn from a deer. The veterinarians at this zoo were extremely nice and always willing to explain and show me everything that needed to be done. There was also opportunities to observe at the small animal hospital and while you wouldn’t be allowed to cut or vaccinate on animals, they gave a lot of opportunities to do everything else related to treating the animals. In the large animal hospital, we weren’t allowed to be observing but something they had big procedures on horses or cows and in the surgery room there is a window where anyone can stand and watch what is going on.

**Life Abroad**

I am actually from Colombia, so I already spoke Spanish, which was a huge advantage for me because in Esperanza almost no one speaks English and all the classes are taught in Spanish. I know that the people that went the year before me had a personal professor come and teach them Spanish before classes started, and apparently it worked really well for them. Spanish is definitely needed but there is a lot of opportunity to learn.

In Esperanza there are a lot of banks but for some weird reason none of the ATMs allowed any of the international students to withdraw money from them. After many of us talking to the different banks it was decided that it had to do with the chips on the card and we had to go to the 45 minute away city to withdraw money. Hopefully this is fixed for the next group of people that study over there. Cash is a necessity, there are very few restaurants and grocery shops that will accept card, and so always having a good amount of cash really helps.

As for housing, the university has a house very close to campus with everything you might need. The house is very big and depending on the amount of people studying abroad that semester you might get one, two or no roommates. The best part about this house is that it is extremely cheap costing about $500 for four month with
all utilities, Wifi and even a maid every day. As with every university housing, there are some strict rules to follow but very manageable.

When in Esperanza most locals travel by bike or in motorcycle. If you are able to find a cheap bike or borrow one, this will be great help, if not, walking is also a great option as everything is very close by. When going to travel to other cities in Argentina or even other countries the cheapest and best way is to take a bus. Buses are always in very good shape, climate controlled, some even offer movies and food. If you don’t want to take a bus, depending on how far you are trying to go, you could take a bus to Buenos Aires and fly from there but it could get a little more expensive, although necessary for some parts like Patagonia.

Overall exchange experience

Honestly, studying abroad has truly been one of the most rewarding and eventful things I have ever done. You get to meet some really amazing people from all over the world, you get to see some beautiful and rare things that would otherwise be difficult to get to, and most importantly it helps a person to see the difference in culture and traditions from not only the host country but all those other countries that you will be able to share with or visit. It can for sure be difficult to get use to a whole new country and how things works but they will try their best to help you accommodate and have a great experience. Argentinians are extremely nice and very welcoming, besides having the meat in the world if you like that. I have and will always encourage everyone to try and study abroad anywhere because it really was an amazing experience for me and I know it is for a lot of people.