

Mexico

AGUASCALIENTES



ACABRIT/ACAMEX Exchange Program

Accommodation

Location(s) – Campestre Fraccionamiento, 10 minutes walking from uni. (Oct-Dec) 2) Santa Anita fraccionamiento, 20 minutes on the bus from the uni (Jan-July).

Price of rent – M\$2,650 monthly 2) M\$1,600 monthly << My salary was M\$6,000 monthly.

Price of monthly bills – n/a all my bills were included, but I don't think they're that expensive normally.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – I just rented a room in people's houses, so they sorted it all out and I just paid them a fixed amount of rent.

Travel

Local – Regular buses running all over the city, M\$6 for any journey anywhere, any time of the day – much simpler! Half-price with valid student card (get the university to issue you one of these as soon as you arrive!) The quality of driving is shocking; don't expect to get a seat, if you do, don't expect to get a seatbelt. But this is all part of the amazingness!

Taxis – M\$30 for a 20 minute journey maybe, very safe, very friendly. This tends to vary a lot depending on the city though; both price and security. In some cities getting a taxi is not a good idea – but you generally have to gauge this from what locals tell you.

National – Coaches are the way to get around; and they are AMAZING! The quality of the transport is really high because the coaches are designed for lengthy travel (Mexico is huge). They give you food, there are films on TV screens, the legroom is incredible, pillows, free radio...it's a luxury! Mexico City-Aguascalientes is 6 hours, you'll pay about M\$500 for a ticket on the day. (£25!) Again, student discount often available on these trips.

International – Flight prices vary depending on season, date of booking etc., but a return with British Airways Heathrow-Mexico City is about £650. Non-direct flights changing in the USA tend to be about £100 more.

AGUASCALIENTES



Tourism

Where to go – Zipline in the Copper Canyon in Chihuahua in the north, go scuba diving off the Yucatan peninsula, see the cultural and heritage sights of Mexico City, check out the amazing pyramids at Palenque, El Tajin, Chichen Itza and Teotihuacan ruins, sample the charming colonial cities of Guanajuato and Zacatecas, observe indigenous tradition at its best in Oaxaca and Chiapas, go for tequila tasting in Jalisco...need I say more?? And once you've done that why not hop over the border to Guatemala, Belize, the USA...?

What to see – What ISN'T there to see?? Crazy jungles, ancient Mayan/Toltec/Aztec/Zapotec/Olmec ruins, glorious unspoilt beaches, some of the best scuba diving in the world, crazy sprawling cities (including the world's biggest city, the DF), deserts and cacti, volcanoes, canyons and mountains, Mexico has it all.

Costs – Cheap travel on coaches, a one-way ticket for a 6 hour journey will cost you about £25. Flights available but prices are steeper.

Social/Night life

A beer costs about £1 with as much lime and free snacks as you want. Mexicans also like to put chilli in their drinks, it's called a Michelada and is an acquired taste...one however I did not acquire personally.

Popular in Mexico nowadays is something called "banda bars"; bars with live music in the style of banda music. For an example of what banda music is, click here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfuC4g1b_zA&ob=av2e

Miscellaneous

Make the most of travel opportunities.

Speak to everyone and anyone; make your language learning everyone's business, get them to correct you.

Try not to think of the whole experience as a holiday; you will have to work, you will have down days, you will have times when you're bored – I think the key to successful integration on your year abroad is that by the end of the year you're living as if you were in your own country; all ups and downs included!!

Your Placement - I worked at a uni

University – Were there any language courses available? If so, give details.

French is fairly well-catered for at my uni, so if you study it to a high level then you shouldn't have too many problems registering for a French course (at least informally). Other languages may be a problem; you can do Italian and German, but neither to a particularly high level...Stage 3 Soton standards absolute maximum.



Your Placement

Work Placement:

Where did you work? How did you organise your work placement?

La Universidad autónoma de Aguascalientes. Part of the Acabrit/Acamex exchange, organised by Southampton Uni

What were your main responsibilities?

I was mainly assigned conversation class work; so I would be given 45 minutes to lead and maintain a conversation class in English with up to ten Mexican students. The students would be of varying ability, for complete beginner to near-native fluency. I also (upon asking to do so myself!) gave presentations about British culture (in English) to various English classes at the university; so I would make a powerpoint and speak roughly for an hour about a number of things, and try to get the students to interact with that. It's worth pointing out that you don't have to do presentations; if you want to prepare games or activities, the uni is pretty relaxed about it – I just found giving presentations to be more my style.

How many hours a week did you work? How much were you paid?

Up to 30 hours a week is what you're contracted for; I ended up doing about 27. I was paid \$6000 pesos monthly (don't convert this to pounds; it will depress you...but remember living costs are much lower in Mexico)

Did you receive any training or pastoral support whilst working? Please give details.

Honestly; not so much. If you go to LA, be prepared to be thrown in at the deep end. The university system is pretty crap compared to what we're used to, and there is very little communication between the departments. Very little was explained to me unless I went and specifically investigated it – again, I think this can be expected in Latin America. However, I will add that the university, specifically my direct boss, was always very approachable, and helped me with numerous things throughout the year, such as accommodation.

How did you integrate with native speakers?

Fortunately it's perfectly acceptable to be friends with students when you're teaching in Mexico, so I made friends with English students and basically hung around with them! Obviously basically everyone in my environment was a native speaker apart from the American guy and the French girl I worked with; so this was one of the easiest elements on the YA!

Why would you recommend a work placement?

It's a fantastic way to get professional experience and to spend a lot of time in an everyday Spanish-speaking environment – plus you get paid. However, although enjoyable at times, working as an Acabrit is not the most fulfilling of jobs; but the fact that it allows you to spend a year in Mexico is more than worth it, to my mind. Finally, it's also worth mentioning that the jobs and roles of an Acabrit can vary HUGELY depending on the city you're placed in. I was in Aguascalientes; I believe the work I had was similar to that of those in Cancún and Colima, but very different to that of those in San Luis Potosí, for example.

Mexico

AGUASCALIENTES



Language Assistant in the local university

Accommodation

Location(s) – With a lovely 60-something y/o lady. Most move out of this place in favour of living with someone younger, but I only spent 3 months in Aguas, so never did.

Price of rent – Not a lot! I can't remember how much exactly. Hopefully somebody else who's been there can shed some light on this...

Price of monthly bills – n/a

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Sorted out for you before you get there, but you are welcome to look for alternate accommodation if you wish.

Travel

Local – Cabs are ridiculously cheap and very safe in Aguascalientes. There are also many buses which are very cheap .

Taxis – M\$30 for a 20 minute journey maybe, very safe, very friendly. This tends to vary a lot depending on the city though; both price and security. In some cities getting a taxi is not a good idea – but you generally have to gauge this from what locals tell you.

National – A great system of domestic coaches, ranging from more basic with companies such as Estrella Blanca/Omnibus (equivalent to your megabus/national express coaches here) to absolute luxury with ETN/Turistar LUJO! (we don't have anything nearly as nice here!)

International – Can't comment as in my short 3 months there I never left Mexico, but there are buses that go to the States which are still quite cheap and planes you can take to the states/Puerto Rico etc should you wish, but these are obviously much more expensive.



Tourism

Where to go – Being a more authentic Mexican city, there's not a great deal of tourism in Aguascalientes itself, but that doesn't make it any less interesting by any means. If you really get antsy for a spot of tourism, you can take a short (albeit 10 or so hour coach journey) to one of the tourism hot-spots on the coast. It's primarily Americans who visit these places, but they're not overwhelming in their presence and I actually met people from many different places out there – Australians, Germans, Dutch...

Also many other interesting cities to visit, which really come to life during certain festivals. The Feria de San Marcos (San Marcos Festival) which takes place in Aguascalientes is one of the biggest in all of Mexico. Anywhere is good on Dia de los Muertos (Aguascalientes and nearby Guanajuato are very popular during this festival). Mexico is not short of festivals, so there'll be plenty to do and you get quite a few lush 4-day weekends ("puentes"), plus usually you can arrange to have 3-day weekends every week (as I did) to ensure you can do as much sight-seeing at the weekends as possible!

What to see – Beautiful beaches on the coast. All round very interesting/culturally rich cities, all just a few hours away on a coach (this may sound long, but Mexico is a VERY big country!) In Aguascalientes itself there are sites of historical and cultural interest in the very centre of town, so don't just head straight for the bars! I'm sure if you've made a friend with a student or teacher there they will show you some of these!

Costs – The main cost you'll incur is the coach journeys which are still quite cheap (varying in price, depending on how luxurious a journey you want!) Obviously things are more expensive the more touristy the places you go to, but still quite cheap by English standards.

Social/Night life

There are lots of bars/clubs in Aguas. You'll no doubt make friends with some of the students/teachers there who will show you around. I found the "merenderos" to be a local favourite, and with good reason! There's a great club ("antro") called Ahma which is the most western of all the clubs, similar perhaps to English clubs, but still very Mexican. In a club, you generally get a table (yes, a table in a club, strange) and order a bottle of spirit and a waiter will bring you "refrescos" (ie, mixers) of your choice and even some snacks

There are even a number of "typical irish pubs" – OK so they're not that typically irish at all, but you have to admire their efforts! If you want a pint of Guinness these are the places to go, although, expect to pay a lot more for these imported drinks (80 pesos for a CAN = £4!).

Plenty of restaurants if you want a break from tortilla wraps with every meal! There are Italian, French, American (ie, Appleby's) restaurants etc etc.

Being in Aguascalientes, you're bang in the middle of Mexico pretty much, so there is so much you can do – even meeting up with your friends from Southampton as I did on most weekends to go travelling to other cities – this is only beneficial for your Spanish if you fully immerse yourself into whatever city life you explore, hence, don't just keep to your little group – go to bars and mingle with the locals!



Miscellaneous

Never underestimate the powers of being a "güero" in Mexico. Most will assume you're American (some calling you "gringo") like me you may want to continuously let them know you're NOT American! Güero, literally just means "pale", but never think that Mexicans are racist, because this is an awful misunderstanding of general Mexican culture. In my experience, Mexicans tend to say-what-they-see, with no intended connotations. They are also quite astounded by black people, as there aren't many in Mexico at all, but like I said, this is not racism, just an interest in something that is novel for them... Especially as a European, depending on where you are, you may be subject to some VIP treatment (I was fast-tracked to the front of a queue for a club on a few occasions!)

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

17/18+ (mostly 18-21)- it's great working with people more or less the same age as you. Lessons can be (and are) really fun, regardless of their level of English.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

20 hours of conversation classes (less if you count the instances where nobody shows up and you can go have a coffee), 10 hours of sitting in other teacher's classes (occasionally asked to prepare a presentation on something or offer your native input, depending on the teacher). Preparation is not a particularly arduous task, but it's a good idea to prepare perhaps a presentation to introduce a theme and (especially for the lower-level students) some form of structured exercise, with pictures etc. There are plenty of English DVDs/videos available there if you wish to incorporate any of these into the lesson! You will eventually have to work a couple of Saturdays, but it was only 4 classes with another teacher, so no preparation needed (unless specifically asked).

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

No teacher training necessary. Just think of your conversation lessons here. Think of a theme for the week and adjust the plan for the different levels of English-learners. You can generally stick to the same plan for the whole week, although it does get a bit repetitive by Friday! With the higher-level students, I found planning was not even necessary, as you can introduce a theme and just have a chat for the whole hour!

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

You'll find Mexican students (mainly the ones with a higher-level of English) very welcoming – they'll no doubt invite you along to whatever party is going on at the weekend, or even just to go have some lunch with them or to the cinema one evening. As a "güero" (white person) you'll be seen as automatically attractive, and most probably asked out by one of your students...

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

You get to spend a lot more time with truly native Mexican people, who won't always go easy on you because you're a foreigner, so compared to an Erasmus student, your language skills will excel a great amount! It's really fun being a language assistant and there is a huge social opportunity available to you. You get a great sense of independence and importance in your work, which is never so much that it interferes with your social life!

Mexico

COLIMA



ACABRIT Exchange

Accommodation

Location(s) – Living with a family.

Price of rent – Not a lot! I can't remember how much exactly. Hopefully somebody else who's been there can shed some light on this...

Price of monthly bills – n/a

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – n/a

Travel

International – London – Mexico City (approx 12 hrs). Approx £800 flexible return.

This plane is booked by the University so everyone travelling to Mexico flies out together, which is really nice. We then spent a few days together in Mexico City before travelling to our respective cities.

Social/Night life

Ooohh Lordy! In Mexico, you can literally party 24/7 if you want to. Plans here are generally made very last minute, but you'll never have a shortage of invitations to parties. Most of the ones I've been to have been BYOB, and those which haven't have been really cheap. Beer is about £1 a bottle and cocktails are about £2. The Uni gives you either Friday or Monday off work as well, so you always get a long weekend! Most parties are followed by an after party, so expect to be out until 6 or 7am from time to time.

I've also got really into Latin dancing since getting here, which is another great way to expand your social horizon. I usually go out to a salsa bar twice a week, and I'm usually home from those by 2am. The only thing I will advise is that drink driving is standard out here, but you can get a taxi quite easily for about £1/£2 if you feel really uncomfortable getting in the car with someone who's been drinking.

Eating out is also staggeringly cheap, and there are a few restaurants with live music where you only pay for the beers and you get served a massive Mexican banquet for free.



Miscellaneous

The thought of going to Mexico was really intimidating: I have a long-term relationship in England and most of my friends are not language students so they will have graduated by the time I get back home, so I will not pretend for a minute that I was 100% certain I'd made the right decision when I got on the plane to come here. But now I know it absolutely was.

Colima is a beautiful city filled with lots of things to do and loads of amazing people to meet, but so are all the other cities across the country! Each of them is different but they're all amazing in their own ways.

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

Most of the students are 18-22, but there are some 16-18 year olds who go to the local high school, and a handful of adult students.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

20 hours teaching a week, but you only need to prepare one hour's worth of lessons each week and repeat it twenty times, as you have different students in each hour.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

Nope, and you really don't need it for this type of work. The ACABRIT exchange is not like British Council, and my classes are really more like conversations and chats. It's very informal and the aim is to get the students comfortable with speaking about normal day-to-day things, rather than the sort of useless crap we tend to learn in formal lessons.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

Haven't done that many classes yet, but simple stuff that allows them to have a laugh and use their imaginations. So far I've shown them some typical English houses like a cottage and a town house and a council flat and made them create families to live in each one, prompting them with questions etc. And I've done one where they've had ten minutes to find out as much info as possible about the person sitting next to them then do an oral presentation about their partner as though they were trying to sell them on a dating sight. The important thing to remember is that you're the same age as them and over the course of the year they may become part of your social circle, so don't worry too much about being really formal. Relax and have a laugh with them. And be prepared for just how crap they are at English.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

Working with people my own age, living with a native family, going to salsa classes ... to be honest, Mexico is a country where you can walk into a party and within ten minutes have ten new friends, who will then introduce you to all their friends, and their friends ... and so it goes! This is a country where you will NEVER struggle to integrate with native speakers!

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

I highly recommend the ACABRIT exchange.

Mexico

MEXICO CITY



Language Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – In the south-west part of the city (San Jeronimo) with a family.

Price of rent – £125 per month.

Price of monthly bills – n/a

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – The Anglo (the company that employs me) found the family. Internet was already set up in the family home and I don't have to pay for bills. I can use the kitchen, washing machine, lounge etc and have my own room and bathroom.

Travel

Local – Small buses called peceros which cost 20p or less. Metrobus which costs 20p. Metro which costs 10p.

National – Coaches from the four main bus terminals.

International – Flights or bus to Guatemala.

Tourism

Where to go – So many places to go! Chiapas, Oaxaca and its beaches, Yucutan Peninsula.

What to see – So much to see! Pyramids, beaches, Mayan ruins, jungle, cities, pueblos magicos.

Costs – Bus to Queretaro (3.5 hours) costs £10 for example. Economy bus to Chiapas (14 hours) £18.

MEXICO CITY



Social/Night life

I have mainly been invited to house parties with the teachers at the school I work at, but I have also been going to some couchsurfing events. I like going out for coffee in Coyoacan, and we often have lunch and drinks after school around Barranca del Muerto. I have also been to some salsa events which are good fun ! The only problem is getting home late at night from the centre as I live far away. At first you will think that the taxis are so cheap because in comparison to England they really are!

I would recommend getting to know Coyoacan. Beer is by far the cheapest drink, and micheladas are by far the best way to drink them!

Miscellaneous

If you have a choice in accommodation, or when you are speaking to the Anglo re accommodation say you would like to live as near as possible to your work. This is really the key to living in the city because it's so big!

Girls, you will get stared at, probably the boys too. I don't know why but it seems that they stare more in the city! You get used to it, but it doesn't really get less annoying.

It is a massive city. I think there are some great places but obviously it could be intimidating to someone who came from a small town for example. If you don't like big cities, don't apply!

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

6-12 year olds. I have found the topics that the older children are learning about much more interesting, but it has often been easier to help the younger children.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

20 hours assisting. No preparation. 8am – 1pm.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

We all had a three day induction to Mexico but no official training. I have observed a lot of lessons so I am learning on the job!

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

I haven't needed to take any classes on my own, I assist and take out children to work or read individually with me. I mainly work with children that need extra help in English. When I am in the classes, I guide them with their work, giving them ideas or encouraging them to work. I also help the teachers and students with pronunciation.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

I work alongside the Mexican English teachers so I interact with them a lot but there is a strong international community.

Mexico

SAN LUIS POSTOSI



Taking English conversation classes at the Universidad Politécnica de San Luis Postosi

Accommodation

Location(s) – In the centre, pretty much - there are two of us here from Southampton. We live above a laundry in a sort of apartment which is actually the upstairs of someone's house. It's great because we have our own privacy but also the family (who speak no English at all really!) can come up and chat, and they often do. We also have a dog, which is completely irrelevant but fun nonetheless.

Price of rent – \$1900 pesos / £95 per month (yes, really!)

Price of monthly bills – Bills are included but we are getting meals cooked for us Monday to Friday for \$200 pesos / £10 (again, yes, really!)

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – There's TV, wireless internet, gas, electricity and laundry all included in our rent.

Travel

Local & National – Throughout Mexico by far the easiest mode of transport is the bus. If you've never been to Central or Latin America before, don't be put off when I say the word bus. It's nothing like National Express back in the UK - for a start it's much, much cheaper (we went to Aguascalientes, which is about 3 hours away for \$135 / just over £7). It's also way way way more comfortable. The seats recline really far and on most buses there is a little flap which connects from the seat in front to the bottom of your seat to make a sort of bed... it's much easier for you to experience it yourself than for me to explain it, trust me though, it's comfy! (And great for sleeping off a hangover after visiting mates in other cities)

I say it's the easiest, I also mean it's pretty much the only way to travel. Driving is not really recommended, we were going to get a car, but we decided we would rather spend the money travelling at the end of our YA. The roads are shoddy at times - for example, on a bus journey back from Guadalajara, I woke up in pitch black darkness and so asked my friend "why are there no street lights in Mexico?", he replied "oh yes, there are, but there's just no cable to power them"... You could fly if you wanted but I haven't tried that yet.

International – I haven't done any international travel yet but my plans include Cuba and Las Vegas for my 21st! I am pretty sure that flying is your best option here but there are long distance bus services so maybe that's possible. I wouldn't recommend going to America on the bus as it would take you North. Never go North from San Luis Potosí, there's not much to see and it's dangerous - that's the advice I've been given.

SAN LUIS POSTOSI



Tourism

Where to go/What to see – There are plenty of places around San Luis Potosí - for example, Zacatecas, a mining town with a cable car and a nightclub inside a mine (I haven't been there yet but I've heard it's great!). Also, Real de Catorce, a supposedly haunted town. You could also go to the Cervantino Festival in Guanajuato (<http://www.festivalcervantino.gob.mx/>) or the balloon festival in León (<http://www.festivaldelglobo.com.mx/>). I've also heard good things about San Miguel de Allende. Being honest, we haven't really done any tourist things yet, I think the best thing to do is make friends in the city because we have been invited to loads of things, such as trips to mezcal distilleries (tequila is a type of mezcal, you HAVE to try it in Mexico) and camping trips... I think going with people who know the area is probably a good idea!

Costs – It's cheap. Bus journeys, even the really long ones, won't set you back too much. Anything you're likely to go and do at the weekend will probably only be maximum £50 return... and believe me, that would get you a long way.

Social/Night life

There aren't as many clubs in SLP as there are in Southampton... well... if there are, I haven't seen them. It's a very different vibe, but this is to be expected since university life is very different in Mexico and you're meant to be working in the week! There are plenty of bars and there are quite a few clubs so there's a bit of variety, but I would definitely recommend asking around as to where you should go. I've heard stories about various different clubs either being dangerous or owned by cartel members - please don't let this put you off coming here, I feel I have to say it because if I didn't it would probably be a bit of a shock. To put your (and your parents'!) minds at ease, I HAVE NOT HAD ANY TROUBLE, and I haven't even seen anything suspicious going on. There are certain things you have to get used to, i.e. seeing police officers carrying guns everywhere.

More importantly (perhaps), drink is really cheap here. For beer drinkers you can get what's called a caguama (tortoise), which is a 1.2 litre bottle of beer for £1.15. They do pretty much all the beers here in this form... forget Corona and Sol, it's not what Mexicans actually drink. Try Indio, Victoria, Leon... the list goes on!

Miscellaneous

I think the main things I would say are get to know as many people as possible and do things when they invite you out. People will be very welcoming and friendly and when they say "para que le ofrezca" (roughly "whatever I can do for you"), they really mean it.

Also, get to know the city yourself by walking around maybe with someone who lives there, it's the best way to see little places to go out.



Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

We work with people from 17-25, at a university. It's good but here in Mexico some are quite immature, but they're easily controlled!

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

We are contracted to work 20 hours a week, and we do about 2 hours a week preparation time - I think we're going to do more in future! A good thing is that we can choose either Friday or Monday off so we always get a 3 day weekend for travelling/hangovers.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

Nope! It's quite fun, if not a bit daunting when the class goes quiet and is waiting for you to say something interesting...

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

They just love talking to a native British English speaker, and they don't know a lot about England so make sure to teach them about stuff like Bonfire Night and various English traditions... also they like hearing about how much we drink at university, they find it very funny for some reason.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

It was really easy, we got shown around on our first day!

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

It's not much pressure, you just turn up, speak to 5 classes and then go home. It's a great opportunity to meet students your age!

Ecuador

QUITO



Voluntary English Teacher

Accommodation

Location(s) – North of Quito.

Price of rent – \$400 USD/month inc. meals (Homestay with host family), cheaper homestays are probably available, even \$200 USD/month.

Price of monthly bills – included in rent.

Travel

Local – Many buses, 3 rapid transit systems (metro, trole, ecovia) with feeder buses too. Bus ticket is 0.25c.

National – There are a few bus stations in the city to catch buses to other regions of the country. Typically costs about \$3 for a 3 hour journey.

International – There's an airport in Quito, Guayaquil (and other places). There are probably international buses, but I didn't leave the country.

QUITO



Tourism

Where to go – Rio Pita (many waterfalls, in Valle de los Chillos- not far from Quito, Baños (thermal pools and beautiful countryside for cycling trips), Papallacta (thermal pools), Mindo (cloud forest, good place to see wildlife and do canopy) the coast, Galapagos (very expensive so I didn't go), the jungle (didn't go, but there are many trips available with agencies), Otavalo (weds/sat for indigenous handicraft market), Cotopaxi (volcano), Laguna Quilotoa (very beautiful lake, only accessible on arranged tourist trips unless have own transport), Mitad del mundo (equator monument), Teleferico (cable car up Pichincha mountain at western side of Quito, amazing views at the top).

Costs – On tourist trips approx \$40/day, otherwise places like Otavalo can be accessed easily by bus for about \$3. Accommodation is available in cheap hostels at Baños and the coast. I'd recommend agency: <http://www.gulliver.com.ec/> and for accommodation in Baños <http://hostalbackpackerbanos.minihostels.com/> was great and about \$8/night.

Social/Night life

Do not go out alone at night whatsoever.

Always stay in groups and be careful with your bag etc.

The region of Quito called La Mariscal (known as Gringolandia) has many bars etc, it isn't very cheap though as it's touristic.

La Ronda is in the beautiful colonial old town and has a much more Ecuadorian feel, you can buy hot canelazo and there are many different places with live music and sometimes street performers.

Miscellaneous

Just be very careful of your possessions, as stealing is very common.

Because of the altitude and change of food etc it's likely you'll get ill at some point, so take it easy at first.

Clothes aren't very cheap, so better to bring what you need.

If you look British you will stand out and get a lot of attention.

It is important to greet people, even when you go into shops.

The culture of the Sierra is quite closed so it can be difficult to get to know people, whereas in the coastal areas they are much more open and friendly.

Ecuadorian people usually like to talk about politics.

The local buses are often super full in rush hour.



Your Placement

Work Placement:

Where did you work? How did you organise your work placement?

I went with the Christian organisation Latin Link. I worked in Elyón school, in REMAR, Quito.

What were your main responsibilities?

Teaching beginners English to all grades.

How many hours a week did you work? How much were you paid?

Work hours varied, I taught about 16 hours/week. It was voluntary.

Did you receive any training or pastoral support whilst working?

Please give details. I wasn't trained; through Latin Link I had a work supervisor and mentor.

How did you integrate with native speakers?

I lived and worked with Ecuadorians, so I had to use Spanish most of the time.

Why would you recommend a work placement?

Because it gives you an alternative experience in the real world and will look good on your CV. If it's voluntary you're helping people, if it's paid then you're earning for the year.

Ecuador

QUITO



Teaching Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – With family.

Price of rent – n/a

Price of monthly bills – n/a

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Electricity, internet, phones all with Claro, other popular phone company was Movistar

Travel

Local – Taxis, Buses, El Trolley (Tram).

National – Buses, internal flights.

International – International flights from the Mariscal Sucre Airport in Quito or the Airport in Guayaquil (in the south). Flights will either go to Spain then London (Iberia), Holland then London (KLM), destinations in the USA (Miami, New York, Atlanta), or of course to other Latin American countries. Ecuador's most popular airlines are LAN (actually Chilean but popular in Ecuador and a decent airline – I flew on it on an internal flight from Quito to Guayaquil (35 min flight)), American Airlines, Aerogal (internal flights but mainly used for flights to the Galapagos Islands), or Tame, a national airline.



Tourism

Where to go – In Quito – El Centro – go to a restaurant called Vista Hermosa, El Panecillo (huge statue of the Virgin Mary on a hilltop giving incredible views of the entire city (Quito is built in a valley). There is a restaurant up there too), El Teleférico – A cable car ride up the side of a volcano, again giving amazing panoramic views of the city and of the surrounding snow capped mountains. El Parque Metropolitano, el Parque de la Carolina, Cumbaya (another valley that is part of Quito), Puembo (countryside outside of Quito), La Mitad del Mundo – the equator line. Go to the equator monument and the museum which is just a bit further up the road and take part in the experiments the guides lead looking at the magnetic power of the equator line.

What to see – Around Ecuador – Cotopaxi Volcano (Worlds highest active volcano) and the lake Limiopungo nearby which gives a spectacular view of the volcano, Cayambe Volcano, Chimborazo volcano (peak of which is closest point on earth to the sun), Lago San Pablo (Massive lake under the Imbabura mountain. Can take boats out on the lake), Otavalo – a town to the north of Quito famous for its markets (Wednesdays and Saturdays) selling all types of typical stuff like llama fur style jumpers and colourful trousers etc. Quilotoa – a massive turquoise lake inside a huge volcanic crater. You walk down inside the crater to the lake (takes about an hour) and get a mule to take you back up, or walk. It is truly amazing. El Puyo or El Tena – jungle on the east of the country. Salinas – the beaches on the west coast. Baños – a town in the Tungurahua province. See the ever active Tungurahua volcano up close and the paths carved out of the hillside by its lava, and go and visit the Pailon del Diablo waterfall – absolutely huge and breathtaking. Papallacta – about an hour away from Quito, it's volcanic springs and hot baths that are naturally made from the waters of the nearby Antisana Volcano. Boiling hot baths and also an ice cold one. The place is nestled right in the middle of the mountains.

Social/Night life

Places – Blues (dance, electro, some nights it is a retro classics night but predominantly dance), Love (mainstream), Colours (mainstream), Flashback de Cumbaya (retro rock classics bar/club, live shows, awesome atmosphere), Turtles Head de Cumbaya (bar/club, mainstream), Strawberry Fields en la Gonzalez Suarez (Gonzalez Suarez is a district of North Quito, Strawberry Fields is a Beatles themed bar, usually people go there for pre drinks before going to a club. Really cool place), Casinos are really popular amongst young people too, a good one is the casino in Hotel Quito (in the Gonzalez Suarez directly opposite Strawberry Fields), Haiku (bar/club with some weird drinks like tragos moleculares), Sesaribo - a MUST GO if you like salsa, or actually even if you don't, because you will once you've been. Amazing music, amazing atmosphere, incredible salsa dancers, some are professionals that go there to practice on their days off, and so much fun to get up and give it a go.

Plaza Fosh and Plaza Yuyu (near the Avenida Amazonas, a main road through northern Quito) are really cool little squares filled with bars and cafes and music. They can be quite dangerous at night but worth going.

Ecuadorians also love karaoke. There are some great Kareoke bars on la Avenida Eloy Alfaro, especially a bar called La Tokata which has karaoke upstairs and live music downstairs.



Social/Night life

Clubs change their names and get re-done around every six months to a year. Some shut down completely and the space turned into a shop or vice versa. That's the norm out there. The ones listed above are the ones that were the best when I was there (sept 2010 to sept 2011). House parties are also really popular.

Prices – entry is usually about \$5 or \$10 which sometimes includes drinks up to that value. Usually you get a 'card' on the door which is basically how you keep track of your tab and you pay for it at the end when you leave. Drinks bought in bottles between groups. Be prepared to start liking whisky if you don't already.

Dancing is almost always in pairs, people will casually ask you up to dance some salsa, merengue, reggaeton or whatever, or if you are a boy then they might expect you to do the asking. They are excellent dance teachers though, so there is no pressure.

Miscellaneous

To eat – Ceviche, Canelaso, Chicharron, as many parrilladas as you can, empanadas, humitas, chugchucarra, cangrejadas, choclos con queso (sold everywhere on the coast), arepas, encebollado. An awesome restaurant is Los Choris. Los Hotdogs de la Gonzalez and Tropiburger are also amazing for post party munchies. Las Menestras del Negro is also a good restaurant.

To do – la cicleada (they shut down some major roads to cars on Sundays and hundreds of people ride the route from the southernmost to the northernmost tips of Quito by bike, takes about 2 or 3 hours there and back, great views, you get to see the city from a whole different perspective.)

Shopping centres – Quicentro, El Jardín, El Bosque, Quicentro del Sur. In Guayaquil – Mall del Sol. Supermaxi and Megamaxi are the biggest and best supermarkets. Clothes can be expensive because they are imported but have some cool shops.

Take clothes for a perpetual springtime if you are going to Quito. There will be lots of scorching days as there will be weeks of rain. It is cold at night in Quito due to the altitude, but in the southern provinces every room in the house must have a fan.

Taxi companies – Unitaxi (north Quito) Can no longer remember the number! But it is a commonly used taxi firm, reliable and safe. It will be easy to find the number once you're there. Taxi journeys of about 15 or 20 minutes in flowing traffic should cost you about \$2.50, the taxi should have just a 30 cents initial charge on the meter. With traffic, this journey could be about \$4.00 MAXIMUM.

Take part in the fiestas de Quito celebrations (early December).



Your Placement

Work Placement:

I worked in the Bolsa de Valores de Quito (Quito Stock Exchange). I sent emails to lots of different companies, and got my job at the Stock Exchange through family connection, although I was offered another job too simply through emailing the company.

I worked for one month in the legal department and nine months in 'la rueda' – the stock exchange floor. My responsibilities were to monitor the daily activity of the market and make sure all payments of interest and capital were up to date on the system. I also had to deal with the printing and handing out of the physical copies of the bonds or shares traded, amongst other general duties to do with the database. My job description was 'manejando la base de datos'. In the legal department, my responsibilities were to read through and check the applications of companies wishing to join the trading market.

I worked 9-5 Monday to Friday. I was paid \$200 a month to start with which covered my taxi and food costs, then had my salary increased to \$350. Be aware some work experience jobs do not pay at all. I received training in both the legal department and the stock exchange floor before being given any actual responsibility. On the stock exchange floor, during the first couple of months my work would always be checked, as any error could have serious consequences.

Everybody who worked in the Stock Exchange was fairly young – a lot of us were around 21-27 (which is the case in a lot of businesses as it is common in Ecuador for people to have a full time job whilst still at University) and then of course the managers and older staff. Everybody was so helpful, so friendly, they really tried to help me out whenever I had a problem, my boss and the president of the Exchange would often stop and ask me if I was enjoying my time there and offer any relevant advice. My group of friends whilst in Ecuador came from those I worked with. Everybody had at least a basic knowledge of English (although you will probably find they don't speak much English to you as they find the accent hard to understand), but spoke to me in Spanish, even in social settings outside of work.

I would definitely recommend a work placement. It's really great to get some work experience, and I can promise you that the people there are so welcoming no matter what job you land in, they will give you work according to what you are willing and able to do but they will also push you as they know you are there to speak Spanish (i.e. they made me answer the phones to clients). You will really improve your Spanish as I guarantee you will probably be the only foreigner there and you will speak absolute minimal English (I took one call from an American lady in my entire 10 months and was asked to translate just two documents) although if you can I would definitely ask if you could work just mon-thurs, to give you a bit more time to do your dissertation comfortably. Also, if you work until 5pm, call a taxi in advance!!! 5pm is getting to peak rush hour time, and Quito traffic is a sight to behold. There is a system in place called 'Pico y Placa', in which every car's number plate ends in a digit, and depending on which digit, there is a certain day in which you cannot drive your car during peak rush hour times. However, it is so easy to get a loan and buy a car in Quito; people have just bought more cars so that they are never stuck with Pico y Placa. Also great to work because Ecuador has an insane number of bank holidays so lots of days off. Please let me know if you would like the contact details of the Bolsa de Valores de Quito. There is also a Bolsa de Valores de Guayaquil (a southern city on the coast, it is Ecuador's business capital).

Chile

CONCEPCION



Studying

Accommodation

Location(s) – Centre of Town.

Price of rent – \$112,000 (CLP) a month + bills (£140 ish).

Price of monthly bills – \$40,000 - \$60,000 (CLP) divided between 4 (roughly) (£50-£75 ish).

Travel

Local – Beaches nearby, Volcano's nearby to go skiing during the winter, waterfalls nearby.

National – North of Chile – the desert, mid-north famous beaches (Val Paraiso), Santiago, skiing near Santiago, mid Chile various volcanoes, mid-south of Chile Pucon (volcano with lots of sport activities e.g. rafting, zipwire, paragliding etc), Valdivia (german influence, famous for beer) and sea lions, Chiloe island, South of Chile – patagonia – glaciers, penguins etc.

International – Easy to get to Argentina – Buenos Aires and Mendoza (wine tours), easy to get to Bolivia to go to salt flats, La Paz, Lake Titicaca, then go to Peru, other places are possible too although a bit further but can get a decent flight or go on the bus.

CONCEPCION



Tourism

Where to go – The volcanoes nearby, the waterfalls or travel further e.g. Santiago or south of Chile.

Costs – About \$7,000 (CLP) (£8.70 ish) one way to Santiago (6 ½ - 7 hour bus ride north), about the same one way to go to Valdivia (7 hour bus ride south), accommodation has generally been \$6,000 - \$8,000 CLP (£7.50 - £10.00 a night).

Social/Night life

A lot of house parties, you can get cheap alcohol in shops, e.g. a bottle of Havana club costs about \$8,000 (£10,000), beer in most bars costs about \$1,500 - \$2,000 for a big bottle (£1.80 - £2.50 ish) In clubs it's a lot more expensive, e.g. \$1,500 for a small bottle of beer and mixers are generally \$2,000 (£2.50ish)

Miscellaneous

Bit difficult to give advice on the uni because there have been student strikes for 7 months and the uni is shut, so we only have classes with other exchange students, so not getting the "real" experience, and as Concepcion is the second largest student city in Chile, it's hard to know what it's usually as a lot of students are either living in the university, or are living with their parents in different towns to save money on rent.



Your Placement

University:

Were there any language courses available? If so, give details.

Yes, there were Spanish grammar courses and communication courses, although these are mainly for the American students (they have a different exchange programme), and we were offered these as not all courses that are normally available were available to us. It is possible to study French here, and they also do other language courses.

What sort of modules did/could you take? Any specific recommendations?

An introduction to Chilean Politics, English-Spanish translation and Spanish-English translation.

How were you assessed and what sort of level of assessment was expected from you?

Politics we have to do 2 essays, it's all foreign students so the level of expectation probably won't be as high as if it was a course for Chileans. The translation modules involves weekly translations and a number of in class tests, the expectation is the same as the expectation of Chilean students.

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How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

Was there sufficient pastoral support? Where could you find this?

The woman who does international pastoral care was good.

How did you integrate with other native students?

There is a group called "OFIS" which is run by a group of Chilean students and they were really good with organising for us all to go out and meet the other international students and Chileans.

Why would you recommend a University placement?

I wanted to do a university placement because I wanted to carry on with the student life, it's easy to meet other people your age with similar interests, and because you keep on studying it won't be a huge shock when you get back in fourth year.

Chile

CONCEPCION



Studying at la Universidad de Concepción

Accommodation

Location(s) – Pensión familiar - living in an apartment with a family in city centre

Price of rent – 210 Chilean pesos/month, about £260 (includes 3 meals a day, internet, washing and all bills).

Price of monthly bills – Included in rent.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Wifi included in price.

Travel

Local – Lots of 'micros' (small public buses charging 400 Chilean pesos per journey, about 50p go to various different parts of the city but everything in the city is within walking distance. Plenty of taxis for travelling around when micros stop running at around 11pm.

National – 2 bus terminals within 15 minute bus journey of city centre from which you can get hourly buses to Santiago (7 hours) for about £7-9 each way. Long distance buses to places such as Valdivia, Puerto Montt and Valparaíso.

Airport on the outskirts of city which has flights to and from Santiago and other places.

International – Most international flights from Concepción change in Santiago and it can be cheaper to just get a bus to Santiago and fly somewhere rather than flying to Santiago and changing there. International buses to Lima, Mendoza, Buenos Aires and other Argentine cities tend to leave from Santiago too. It is possible to cross into Argentina from southern Chile via Temuco and arriving in Neuquen.

CONCEPCION



Tourism

Where to go – The waterfalls at Salta de Laja, about an hour from Conce, are stunning. El bosque nativo in Parque Alessandri is a good day out and the beach at Tomé to north of Conce is pretty too.

In Concepción itself there is not too much to see or do for tourists but it's location in central Chile means that you are not far from the Lake District in the south and places like Valdivia, or volcanos and snow-capped mountains and ski resorts in places like Pucón. You can also head down to Chilean Patagonia which is stunning. To the north there is Santiago and close to the capital Vina del Mar and Valparaíso are coastal resorts. Then in the far north is the Atacama Desert which is incredible.

Argentina and Bolivia are easily accessible as well either by plane or bus.

Costs – Prices vary based on location and season but generally speaking you can get a half decent room in a hostel from 5000-6000 pesos/night and this will usually include breakfast and free internet use. You can get return flights to La Paz, Bolivia for about £150 and the long distance buses are very reasonable and surprisingly comfortable. For very long journeys, you can get meals and drinks included in the price.

Social/Night life

Concepción is known in Chile as a student city and I have met Chileans who think of it as a party city. There are endless bars throughout the city but many are found around Plaza Perú which is opposite the entrance to the university campus and some others in the south of the city in Plaza Espana. Many have live music during the week and at weekends and drinks are reasonably priced. You can get a litre bottle of Chilean or imported beer for about 1500 pesos/£2. Specialist Chilean drinks like Malta con Huevos (malt beer with raw egg and loads of suger mixed in), Bourgona (red wine with crushed up strawberries mixed in) and Michalada (lager with lemon juice mixed in and a mixture of salt and chilli flakes around the rim of the glass) are often cheap and very good too. There are loads of other good local drinks too but what is most popular when out clubbing is the Chilean spirit, Pisco which is strong and often mixed with coke or juice. It is also very cheap to buy from shops too - from about 2500 pesos a bottle/about £3.50.

Unfortunately, the nightlife is not massively diverse when it comes to clubbing so you often have to put up with wall-to-wall reggaeton on a night out. There are clubs around the city that play 'electronica' which is basically anything from techno to minimal to house but they are far less common. Some nights you have to pay to get in but it is not usually more than a few 'luka' (thousand pesos).

It has to be said that Concepción is not always the safest place to be at night. People do get mugged and things like phones and wallets get nicked from clubs regularly. If you have been out it is best to get a taxi home which, even at 5am when the clubs shut, is easy to do and not overly expensive. If you have to walk home make sure you are not alone or visibly drunk because you will become a target.

CONCEPCION



Miscellaneous

If you start your placement in August/September it will be in the middle of Chilean wintertime. Concepción, being so far south, is far colder and wetter than Santiago so bring hats, scarves and warm clothes. Waiting until you get here to buy clothes to save space might not necessarily be the best idea because, although there is loads of choice, you will find that you save very little, if any, money compared to buying clothes and shoes at home.

In terms of money, I have just been using my debit card and bank account from home. I get charged about £2 pounds per withdrawal but take out money in large quantities. Getting a bank account sounded like too much hassle and I would have had to wait to get my ID card to get one which takes a few weeks anyway.

Your Placement

University:

Were there any language courses available? If so, give details.

Before going into details about my placement it should be noted that my experience will have varied a lot from those people had who did this placement before me because for the duration of my stay here the university has been shut because of the student protests. We have had specially arranged classes but they have been cancelled regularly and our choices as to what to study have been severely restricted. I think it may have been possible to study French but I think it was in an extra-curricular class and I am not aware of any other foreign language classes going on at the moment.

What sort of modules did/could you take? Any specific recommendations?

I am studying English-Spanish translation, Spanish-English translation and an introductory course in Chilean politics as my 3 modules. We were also offered classes in English/Spanish interpretation, a class on Spanish grammar and another about Chilean literature.

How were you assessed and what sort of level of assessment was expected from you?

Chileans assess their students on a scale between 0.0 and 7.0 with 7.0 being the top mark and very difficult to achieve. 4.0 is a pass and most decent students get marks of at least 5.5 which is not too hard to get. In my translation modules we would do about one text every 1 or 2 weeks and have it assessed. We do an original draft and bring it to class to talk about any difficulties or correct errors and we are then expected to hand in a final draft which will be marked. We have also done a few in class tests. In the politics module we are assessed on 2 6-8 page (about 2500 words) essays which are written in Spanish.

How did you integrate with other native students?

Integrating with Chilean students has been near impossible because none of them have actually been here! But we have met Chileans through the members of OFIS and some sports teams and societies have been running despite the strike. Meeting other Spanish speakers has been easy as lots of them do the translation courses to improve their English. Also there are Germans and French students too so if it would be possible to practice other languages if you needed to.



Your Placement cont.

How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

My university experience here has been very similar to university at Southampton. Having done 3 modules all together the workload has been manageable with enough time left over to go out in the evenings and enjoy weekends away as well as being able to spend time on the YARP. There is pastoral support available and the UdeC has a group of students called OFIS who all speak fluent English and help the exchange students to settle in and find accommodation. They also organised nights out for us in the first few weeks. The university itself has been pretty helpful in helping solve any problems that have come up. The exchange students are also looked after by Monica Zambrano and she is good at replying to emails and is often easy to find in her office on campus if you need to speak to her in person.

Why would you recommend a University placement?

You should remember that getting a student visa to study in Chile is not cheap, costing almost \$800 US. Some people have said that it is possible to just stay in Chile on a tourist visa (which lasts 90 days) and when it expires to leave the country for a few days and then come back in with a fresh 90 day allowance. I think this is technically illegal and could possibly cause problems at the university here but I think it has been done in the past so might be worth looking into as an option.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to ask email me at am28g09@soton.ac.uk

Chile

SANTIAGO



Student - Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Accommodation

Location(s) – I am currently living in an apartment in the centre of Santiago. I would recommend living in the centre because that is where the nightlife is and it is easy to get to university via the metro to campuses such as San Joaquín which is further out. Try and be near a red line or green line station. I live with an Australian and an Ecuadorian so I get a bit of Spanish practise in as well. Although a house with Chileans is another option.

Price of rent – 130000 Chilean Pesos which includes bills. It roughly equates to £170. This price is a bargain but you should look for prices between 130000 to 200000 for a decent place.

Price of monthly bills – Monthly bills are all included in the above price.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Acquired the apartment through Contacto Chile- an agent that requires a commission but are very helpful and friendly. There is also the website compartodepto.com which is good for looking for a place. My owner had all of the utilities sorted before I moved in and the majority of places do.

Travel

Local – Travelling via metro or buses are good options during the day since they are very cheap and efficient. And after a night out a cab is a safe and cheap option home (only black and yellow cabs with a meter). However, another advantage of being in the capital is that as you get your bearings you will soon realise you can walk to pretty much all the places in the centre with ease.

National – You can travel by buses to the majority of places and if you want to go further there are also internal flights as well.

International – Chile is the perfect location to go off and travel the rest of South America. Flying is quite expensive but still just about affordable. I have used the bus a lot to travel, especially across the border to Argentina which only takes 6 hours. Bussing is a fantastic choice as it is cheap and you get to see more on your journey. The only hindrance is obviously journey time if you are travelling on a tight schedule.

SANTIAGO



Tourism

Where to go – Chile is such a diverse place due to its long shaped landscape. You have the desert of Atacama in the North whilst the glaciers of Patagonia in the South. There are lots in between as well, such as the beach area of Valparaiso and Vina del Mar. You can even travel across to Mendoza in Argentina for the weekend.

What to see – There is a lot to see here so I would recommend having a read of the Lonely Planet which has a lot of information. Just to mention some for Santiago: San Cristobal, Mercado Central, Human Rights Museum, Santa Lucia Market (alpaca jumpers) and Bellavista.

Costs – Costs vary depending on how you organise it. If you do it off your own back it can be sorted out for a lot cheaper. However, there are the advantages of using a company as they organise it all for you but for a slightly more expensive. It is all based on preference. If you are travelling just in Santiago it is all very cheap. The majority of the things mentioned don't cost anything.

Social/Night life

Because you are in the capital you obviously have a lot to do. There are nights out all week, from the trendy bars and clubs of Barrio Bellavista to the nights of Miercoles Po- a club night every Wednesday where the venues change each week and extranjeros get in free.

Places to specifically recommend are Galpon 9- a big club in Bellavista and if you miss Jesters then there is another Palace/ Palacio called La Piojera. Rather than a Jesticle they are notorious for their Terremotos – wine topped off with pineapple ice cream. Don't knock it till you have tried it! Another drink to try is Pisco which is the National drink. Have it with a mixer as it is very potent. If the drinks are not up your street, Santiago still has a night life for you as the people are friendly and there is a good buzz around town. Price wise, nights out are very cheap as general drinks are cheap and entry in the majority of places are free for extranjeros.

Miscellaneous

Here are a couple of ideas that you should be wary of:

I recommend that you organise your accommodation in Chile and not from the UK.

Also make sure that you are a strong character. This will be important especially when you will be here for a while and won't be able to casually return home like people in Europe.

There is no fresh milk here and all is UHT.

The accent may throw you at first but it improves a lot after the first month.



Your Placement

University:

Were there any language courses available? If so, give details.

There are currently Spanish, German and Portuguese classes. They vary in levels; however, I am not sure how good they are as I have not taken any. If you are studying joint honours with another language you don't have to just study at university as there are lots of foreign students from all over especially France and Germany.

What sort of modules did/could you take? Any specific recommendations?

I took modules for extranjeros in my first semester. Cultura Chilena, even though it was quite intense with its 2 hour class, was really helpful with my dissertation as I was able to get a greater understanding of Chile from all aspects: economic, social, social integration eg. with the Mapuche (the indigenous group), political etc. Although when you get here you have a wide selection of modules to choose from and even do something you wouldn't have done at home.

How were you assessed and what sort of level of assessment was expected from you?

There is a diverse amount of ways you are assessed. It is just like home where there are opportunities to do presentations, essays and exams. It all depends on the modules you take. You can find out via the university website what each module entails.

How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

The grading system here is 1 to 7 with 7 being the highest which is different to our mark of a percentage.

Was there sufficient pastoral support? Where could you find this?

Everyone is very helpful here and the advantageous thing of university is the resources to help you with your project. However, be prepared to be pushy with replies for emails etc.

How did you integrate with other native students?

I spoke with a lot of natives at university due to classes and they all are very friendly. It is important to integrate into their culture and get to know lots of people.

Why would you recommend a University placement?

I definitely would recommend this avenue as you meet so many people on exchange. Integrating with so many different cultures is a rare opportunity and it is good to keep up your 'work ethic'.

SANTIAGO



Your Placement cont.

How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

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