

Three month update from Rio Cuarto, Cordoba

First of all I need to once again say a huge thank you for granting me with the generous scholarship. As you know I would not have been able to go through with the exchange without it.

So I have just made it to my three month mark in Rio Cuarto, Cordoba, Argentina, and what an amazing first three months it has been. Life is beginning to become more normal for this innocent New Zealander. No more do I get overly suprised by the different way of life.

The first three weeks consisted of my family and I acting out everything in order for me to understand, but now we are containing ourselves as I have learnt such a large amount of Spanish by studying and being immersed in the language at school, in my family and just everyday walking down the street and in shops. I learnt very quickly that you must just say what I want and don't not say something because you are too scared of getting it wrong or embarrassing yourself. And with that people helped me, correcting me so I will learn the proper structure. Now I am having conversations now, not fluent, but I get by and people understand what I am saying. The excitement for me is when I go into a shop and explain what I want and they actually understand more or less what it is. For example I needed some eyedrops from the Pharmacy, but I had no idea what they are called, so I went in without saying I didn't speak Spanish, but it would have been of course, and asked for 'something like water for eyes'. Straight away she went to her draw and bought out eye drops.

The hardest thing for me at the start definitely had to be my limited speaking. As all my friends and family back in New Zealand know I love to talk and it could be said a little too much, but I found it difficult not being able to always say what I was wanting or just to make conversation. I really did miss just being able to talk to someone and them understanding me. But I quickly got over that as I knew I would have to and it wouldn't be like this forever.

An exchange definitely is not a walk in the park I must say. I have learnt to not think too much about situations and to just have fun. Sometimes I think back to my first month and I wonder how I got through some situations but I have made it to three months so I must be doing something right. I think I have coped with the culture difference quite well. Of course it was different, I don't think I can tell you something that is the same as New Zealand. The traditions, people, food, school, routines and times for doing things are completely different. For example I start school at roughly 7.45am, depending on when the teacher arrives, classes are very relaxed and not everyone is determined to do their best unlike my school in Dunedin. Then we finish at 1.30pm, home in time for lunch then everyone sleeps siesta for a couple of hours then life starts back up again until dinner at generally 10 or 11pm. Every family is different I know, but my family's average time to bed is 12.30am then back up again at 6.40am. I have now settled into this but I have to admit it was difficult.

The highlights so far would have to be the first month, when everything was so amazing as it was different and new. Then the week holiday to the north of Argentina with my family was amazing, a real eye opener. Then just past was my 18th Birthday. My class and I went to the sierras of Cordoba on a camping trip for the long weekend. It was a relaxing time away with talking, soccer, playing cards, listening to music, lying by the river and eating. I loved spending time with my classmates as I got to know them more. However, everyday is a highlight. Each day I go to bed feeling that fraction more confident, either with my Spanish or just fitting into the Argentine life.

But the main thing I have realised is that Confidence is key. You have to have confidence to get through each day, confidence to be with your friends, confidence to talk, confidence for everything makes daily things easier. Already I have developed more since I have been here, and I am hopping by the time it is up, I will be a much more confident Beckie Wilson.

Once again Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to become an Argentinian.
Rebekah Wilson