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Growth through travel

Hannah Gallant

Andrews University, hannahg@andrews.edu

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Growth through travel

In 1961, Andrews University was one of the leading Adventist institutions involved in the process of creating the Adventist Colleges Abroad (ACA) program. At that point in time, there was a huge need to prepare missionaries to work in places where English was not spoken. Consequently, the study abroad opportunity was made available to all majors, both then and now, who want to interact with people from other countries and cultures or go abroad as missionaries.

This past school year, Jessica Newkirk, a sophomore nursing major, studied Spanish at the Universidad Adventista del Plata in Entre Rios, Argentina. For her, the time with ACA opened doors.

While she was learning Spanish in this immersive environment, she had the opportunity to visit Peru, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Patagonia. "Being able to visit so many places over the course of eight months was amazing," Jessica says. "I really loved watching the famous ballet in the Buenos Aires Theatre Colon. I also enjoyed going to Machu Picchu. It was so much bigger than pictures can capture. The beaches in Brazil were incredible, filled with surfers and so many coconuts and acai bowls. And, of course, seeing the glaciers in Patagonia continuing on for miles made me realize how small I am and how awesome of a creator God is."

While Jessica admits that being away from everything familiar was difficult, she was grateful to experience new things and, above all, learn more about her own heritage. "My mother was born in Chile and lived there until she was six. I wanted to be a part of and experience my heritage," she says. "I think the way God blessed me the most was letting me meet my cousin. I had known who she was, but



Photo courtesy Jessica Newkirk

▲ Jessica during her ACA travels

we had never met. She was so loving to me, and we spent quite a bit of time together. She, her mother and her husband made me feel at home away from home."

Prior to her year of studying abroad, Jessica had only been on mission trips to Guatemala and Thailand. Both of those trips awakened her desire to travel, and it was ACA that helped her desire become a reality.

"I think I needed that year abroad to experience life differently," she reflects. "Being in a place and doing things that push you out of the familiar forces you to grow. You can either fight that growth or you can let that growth change you. No matter how big or small that growth is, it is important. I would say that the experience was a positive one for me, and would recommend it to anyone."

Jessica's attitude is reflected by many students who participate in the ACA program. Pedro Navia, chair of the Department of International Languages

and Global Studies, and Sonia Badenas, assistant professor of French, say their students often refer to their study abroad experiences as the best time of their lives. Navia explains, "In such a globalized world [as] we are living in, it is highly important to develop cultural competencies, and ACA provides an excellent venue to achieve them."

To learn more about the ACA program, visit andrews.edu/inls. ■

Hannah Gallant, University Communication student writer, Andrews University



Photo courtesy Jessica Newkirk

▲ Jessica enjoyed going to Machu Picchu