

Day One

Santiago, Chile



“Sometimes, traveling to a new place leads to a great transformation.”

I kid you not, the above was my fortune from P.F. Chang’s the day I left for Santiago. I have spent less than a day in Santiago, and I can already feel some changes.

My name is Emily Geisler and I am a senior at the University of Cincinnati studying International Business and French. I am sharing with you my thoughts, pictures and adventures as they happen during the College of Business three week trip to Santiago. As you can probably guess, I know no Spanish. I have 7 years of French behind me and a very small amount of German. I hope that through this blog, you will learn from my mistakes and be motivated to study abroad through my (crazy, fun) adventures. I will attempt to point out hints and tips along the way to make your stay in Santiago a bit easier.

It took me hours to pack. Literally. Everyone said you don’t need half the stuff you want to pack. Well, even getting to the what do I want to pack part is hard. I decided to pack 6 short sleeve tops, three pairs of jeans, one pair of shorts, two long sleeve shirts and one pair of dress pants with two blouses. I will let you know if this ends up working. In any case, my bag was 44.5 lbs! Weigh your bag before you go to the airport! You will not regret it.

My flight was uneventful which was great. I arrived in Santiago after almost a whole night’s sleep (7 hours). Luckily, my friend Sebastian was a saint and picked me up from the airport so I could get an “insider” view of the city. We drove around the more “third world” parts of Santiago, and then to the very nice side. It was strange how quickly it went from almost slums to huge tall skyscrapers. And yes, there was a Starbucks. ☺

The weather was hot today but not too humid. The city is gorgeous and overwhelming in its own right. A bit of European style, a bit of American style. The people are very warm and welcoming. I will admit that while my friend Sebastian were at lunch, a small boy (maybe 4 years old) kept staring at us. I soon realized that pretty much everyone was. We were talking in English and it certainly wasn’t something they were used to hearing. This happened several times throughout the day. At first it was kind of

unnerving, but now I am starting to get over it. Everyone here seems to like Americans and want to learn more about our culture. That works, since I am anxious to learn about theirs, too.

Day Four

Santiago, Chile

Buenas dias

After spending some time in Chile, it makes me sad to think about all the stereotypes I had before I came here. Yes, I actually wondered if some areas would have running water. Crazy, I know. But all the movies I've seen portray South America as a jungle, full of drugs and poverty. And maybe that's true in some parts, but certainly not here. Chile works so hard to be a developed, respected country. This is an economy and a culture that Americans should notice and admire. I'm not saying there is nothing bad here, just that Chile is a lot more like us than we realize.

I actually spoke Spanish for the first time yesterday. It is so easy in a big group of English speakers to just point at what you want, and make gestures and not even try to speak the language. So for those of you not into languages who want to do this program, by all means I promise you will be fine. You may look kind of silly trying to make gestures at the supermarket, but you will make it. But I would strongly encourage anyone to try.

I am trying Spanish. It's not easy for me, with 7+ years of French training behind me, especially with the pronunciation. I was told by some Chileans that I speak Spanish with a French accent. Oops! The more you hear it the easier it gets. I would highly recommend getting a pocket sized phrase book (not a dictionary, too big and hard to use) before you come here. It will get you so far and are often broken down into sections like transportation and menu reader. My biggest regret so far is not taking enough time to work on my Spanish before I came down!

We have already done so much in the past few days from bus tours to company visits and classes . Today we learned about the Chilean economy, language and culture. It was such an interesting day. All the professors at UDD (the University here) are so kind and proud to speak about their country. Some of the things they bring up like the barriers to doing business in Chile are so interesting and things you wouldn't think of!

My biggest challenge so far is just to try. Try the food, try the way they greet each other (one kiss on the cheek), try the language (broken and French-sounding as it is), and just give this experience everything I can. That is my best advice. Don't fight it.

Day Seven

Santiago, Chile



trato de hablar español

It is so crazy to me how much stuff we are doing on this trip. I don't think they can absolutely explain to you everything that you will experience in Chile. Your days are literally packed. A lazy afternoon will include hiking to the top of a waterfall or touring a vineyard. Basically, this entire trip you realize how far away you are from Cincinnati and how big the world is.

The weather here is so much hotter than I thought it would be. So far my recommendations would include packing an extra pair of shorts! My roommates and I bought some detergent at the nearby grocery store and have been doing our own laundry pretty effectively and saving some pesos! Be sure to bring a clothesline if you want to go this route. I was very impressed with how well it worked...I always thought washing machines did something magical...not the case!

Our Chilean Spanish and Culture class has been the most interesting so far. We actually wrote a paragraph in class in Spanish class on Friday, after only three classes. I wouldn't say they were all grammatically correct, but we got our point across. I never would have thought I would be able to do that.

Tomorrow we leave to go to Concepción to be with our host families for a week. I can't wait for this experience! Hopefully I will learn some more Spanish and understand a little more about the Chilean culture.

Day Fourteen

Concepción, Chile



la familia es lo mas importante

The week that I spent with my host family was easily the highlight of my trip to this point. My first day in Santiago I got an e-mail from a 25 year old UDD student named Victor who said I would be his buddy. He

said his English wasn't very good, and I responded that my Spanish wasn't very good. This of course was a source of some stress for me. Would I be able to communicate?

I shouldn't even have worried. As we got closer and closer to Concepción, you could feel some tension on the bus. Some students hadn't heard from their buddies at all, some had just seen a Facebook picture, or had a few short conversations. It didn't seem like enough introduction for living almost a week together. We all got off the bus awkwardly, the gringos on one side of the street and the Chileans on the other. I recognized Victor right away and he immediately smiled, gave me a hug and took my bags from me. Like I said, I shouldn't even have worried.

His sisters were so sweet and also spoke English really well. However his parents didn't speak a word. This led to several animated conversations with all three siblings translating for me and their parents. The family dynamic to me was amazing. It was obvious the siblings were all very close with each other and their mother was the stereotypical doting, indulgent mother I had read about in books about South American culture. There are no words to describe how generous and welcoming his family was and every other UDD buddy I met throughout our time in Concepción. They were so excited for us to be there and to learn everything they could about the United States and our culture. We were also anxious to learn about them and take a break from busy, dirty Santiago.

Every night they had a party planned for us or an outing of some kind. It was a lot of fun, but everyone slept soundly on the bus ride back to Santiago. I know that I have made a lifelong friend with Victor and his family. He is talking about coming to UC to study and I hope he decides to do it!

The companies that we visited in Concepción were varied and capitalized on the diverse natural resources that Chile has to offer. I went down into a mine (probably something I will never do again), toured a forestry company and took a boat ride near a major export/import dock. This was between classes on the fishing industry and plenty of other topics.

I loved my time on Concepción and can't wait to return for a few days during my free travel time. 😊

Day 18

Santiago, Chile



consejo

After two whirlwind days in Viña del Mar and Valparaíso, we are finally back in Santiago. It's silly, but throughout this trip I've found I always feel like Santiago is "home" here. You really do get settled into the Kolping House and this area. Our time in Viña was fast but fun. The first day we had time to lay out on the beach which was so nice considering all of us knew it was snowing in Cincinnati. We had the opportunity to tour an oil refinery, take a city tour and visit Valparaíso's port as well.

As the trip is winding down, I have been thinking about what my main pieces of advice would be to other UC students wanting to come here. Most of the things on this list were said during orientations and meetings (and some weren't) that I stupidly thought I could ignore.

Emily's list of tips to get along in Chile:

- 1.) Be careful with taxis.

Several people in our group, myself included, had trouble with local taxi drivers. A cab ride that should have cost 2,000 CLP cost my cab 20,000! One group got a taxi ride across the whole city instead of directly to the Kolping House. The unfortunate thing is this is hard to prevent. My advice would be to put as many people in the cab as possible (maximum is 4) and try to have one semi-speaking Spanish person with you. Have the address where you want to go written down and know how to say it in Spanish. If you're feeling gutsy, confirm the price before you get in, especially if you've travelled to that area before and know about what it should cost.

- 2.) Pickpockets—keep stuff out of your front pocket.

OK, I know that they tell you to put your wallets/ valuables in your front pocket to avoid pickpockets. However, my friend and I both on this trip felt people putting their hands into our front pockets while in big crowds in the city. Luckily, we both had our money elsewhere. I would just say to be very careful and don't just worry about who is behind you.

- 3.) Budget \$200-\$300 more than you think.

I had the disillusion that everything here would be very cheap. This goes along with most of my stereotypes of South America, most of which have been proven wrong within the first week I was here. Basically, everything here is about the same as it is at home, if not a little more expensive. Very few things are cheaper here, food especially. I would highly recommend budgeting like you are going to Europe for three weeks instead of South America. That rule will more than likely leave you with extra money, which you will appreciate when it comes to your free travel time!

- 4.) Go grocery shopping.

Do it! Buy breakfast food and some stuff to pack a lunch a few days a week. You will save a ton of money. In our room we also took turns cooking dinner in the evenings. It helps feel a little more like home and believe it or not, eating out every day does get old.

5.) Don't drink the tap water!

This fun tip comes from firsthand experience. Just don't do it. Bottled water here is common and cheap, just be sure to ask for it "sin gas" if you don't like bubbles!

6.) Bring a towel.

Yes, this is on the packing list. I thought it would be too heavy and be too annoying to bring one. I ended up spending \$12 US to buy one when I got here. Be sure to pack a big one so you can use it on the beach as well!

That's about all I can think of for now. I hope that some of this will be helpful to you!

Day 21

Santiago, Chile



adios

After three weeks in Chile, the program is finally over. Most of us have mixed feelings, especially with leaving our host-about-Santiago, Felipe. It doesn't seem like it should be over so soon. The time passes quickly here for no other reason than you are so busy you don't have time to worry about how much longer you are here.

Our last day in Santiago together concluded with a visit to P&G and Ohio National and a barbacoa hosted by Daniella and Felipe, our hosts from UDD. It was fun hearing about where everyone will be going on their free travel time. When I booked my plane ticket I thought that by the end of the program I would be so tired and homesick I would want to go home immediately. I am shocked to find that I wish I could extend my stay here a little longer.

I learned a lot during my time in Chile. I learned how to communicate in another language, some days better than others. I learned when to ask for help from one of our hosts and when to try on my own. I learned about industries that I had no idea about. Embarrassingly, I feel like I know more about Chile's economy than the United States'. I have learned that I am ready to come back to South America, hopefully sooner rather than later. This is perhaps the most shocking thing to me, considering I never thought I would travel outside of Europe.

When I was thinking about doing a trip abroad, I could think of a thousand reasons not to do it. It's expensive, it's time away from my family and work and I don't know the language. The thing is that you only need one good reason to go. For me, I wanted to do something that would challenge what I knew about the world. I didn't know anything about South America. Now I feel that I could move here for a job if I needed to or speak confidently in a board room about Chilean consumer characteristics firsthand.

My only regret about my study abroad is not going sooner and not staying longer. I hope that everyone gets to experience something like this in their lifetime.