Caryn’s Major: Spanish, Certificate in Criminal Justice

Program: CIEE Santiago Liberal Arts

Academics: In Chile I took four different classes as well as a three-week orientation course called Contemporary Chile. Three of my classes were through the premier private university in Chile called Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile (PUC) and the other was through the CIEE program. My PUC classes were integrated with Chilean students, while my CIEE class was taught by a Chilean professor but was much smaller (as in four people) and only had people from my program in it. I found that my professors were very helpful and friendly towards international students. In fact, one of my professors had a special farewell for all of the foreign students where she gave the class snacks and made traditional Chilean mulled wine.

Most Memorable Moments: One of the most memorable experiences from my time abroad was my 4-day backpacking trip through Patagonia. I decided to go for it even though I had never been backpacking in my life. I am so glad I went, because not only did it push me out of my comfort zone, but I got to see some of the most striking landscapes. One afternoon during our hike, we even witnessed an avalanche. The journey was difficult but incredibly rewarding, and it culminated in a challenging uphill climb to the magnificent Torres del Paine. Looking at the iconic rock towers over the glacial lake was spectacular and unlike anything I had ever seen. I will never lose the sense of self-sufficiency I gained from living out of a backpack for four days, and my experience inspired me to be more adventurous and “outdoorsy” in the future.

Tips for Other Students: I would definitely encourage students to branch out while abroad and try something new. Start by making friends who aren’t from the UW. Or even from the US. I made some really wonderful Chilean friends, who not only helped me improve my Spanish, but also taught me so much about Santiago and the Chilean way of life. Don’t count out new experiences either. Even though I hadn’t planned to hike through the mountains, tour a pisco factory, or visit Montevideo, they ended up being unforgettable experiences. You may only get one chance to study abroad, so I suggest taking advantage of all of your opportunities. Don’t turn anything down, and leave your skepticism in the US!

“I am excited to talk with people in Spanish now, and I am confident enough to put myself out there whether or not I make mistakes.”

Caryn in southern Chile