**ARICA, CHILE**

**MEGAN GRAY**

**Program:** SIT Public Health, Traditional Medicine and Community Empowerment

**Megan’s Major:** Kinesiology

**Academic Life:** For the first six weeks we stayed in Arica, taking a Spanish class in the mornings and a Public Health Seminars class or a Research Methods class in the afternoons. All classes were with the 25 students on the program (from the U.S.). During the second month, all 25 of us traveled together to Temuco, Putre and Tacna (Peru) to learn about traditional medicine and community empowerment.

**Field Work:** During the last month of my program, I did an independent research project at a school for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. It was based in a school in Viña del Mar, but I also visited four other centers so that I could see Special Education in a variety of settings. Each day I would go to the school, hang out with the students, observe classes and talk to teachers. Even though there was a language barrier, I think that working through this barrier greatly improved my interpersonal skills and self-confidence.

**Chile as a Second Home:** I lived with two separate families in Arica and Valparaíso during my program. Both welcomed me into their families, including me in all of their daily activities, meals, movies on the weekends, barbecues with the extended families, holiday celebrations, etc. I had a great time with both of my families and it was definitely hard to leave them at the end of my time in Chile.

**Tips for Future Students:** When you study abroad, it’s very normal for things to be awkward the first few times you do them, especially if there is a language barrier. The best thing to do is to just accept the fact that you won’t always know what’s going on and just go with the flow, because usually the greatest adventures are the ones that weren’t planned.

“Research gives you real-world experience in a different country. You learn a lot more about the culture than you would from university classes alone.”

Megan on the “morro” overlooking Arica.

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