Andrea's Majors: Biology, Spanish

Program: Ceiba Tropical Conservation Semester: Galapagos, Andes and Amazon, Spring

Academic Life: This program offers an excellent academic education, but the majority of learning takes place outside of a conventional classroom. Students spend about a month at the beginning of the semester at La Universidad San Francisco de Quito studying Spanish, with Ecuadorian professors, and conservation biology and tropical terrestrial ecology with professors Dr. Catherine Woodward and Dr. Joe Meisel from Madison plus a tropical marine ecology course added later in the semester. For most of the program the group learns in the field: at Tiputini Biodiversity Station in the Amazon Rainforest, on a yacht cruising through the Galapagos Islands, in cabins in the dry forest and cloud forest of the Ecuadorian coast, and in mountainous national parks near Quito. Lectures are held in makeshift classrooms and are complemented by instructor-led hikes and field projects. The program concludes with a 4-week internship focused on a conservation topic of your choice.

Andrea's Internship: I did a four-week internship at Rio Muchacho Organic Farm on the coast of Ecuador, near Canoa. I worked as a volunteer farmhand, shovelling pig poop, planting crops, digging irrigation trenches and helping tourists with cultural activities. The farm is rooted in permaculture and agroecology, so I learned the theoretical and practical applications of sustainable farming.

Advice for Someone Considering this Program: I would say go for it! You absolutely will not find another program where you swim in a river in the Amazon, wake up to the howls of monkeys in a tropical dry forest, snorkel daily with sea turtles in the Galapagos, visit historic cathedrals of Quito and straddle the equatorial line.