QUITO, ECUADOR

CARLY VINKAVICH

Carly’s Majors: Political Science, Environmental Studies, BAC

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

Academic Life: The classroom experience was as unique as it gets. We had the classic classroom lectures for the first month of the program at the local university. After that, Ecuador was our classroom as our classes were in the field. My favorite ‘classes’ were in the Galápagos Islands because our classroom was the reefs of the islands. Our classes were Conservation Biology, Marine Biology, Terrestrial Ecology, Conservation Internship, and Spanish. Our classes were just the Ceiba group, all American college students. The course is taught by Catherine Woodward and Joe Meisel who also run the Ceiba Foundation.

Carly’s Fieldwork and Internship: Our fieldwork was generally a project on one subject. We did species surveys in paramo, insect surveys in the dry forest, macro-organisms survey in the coastal tide pools and research projects in the rainforest and Galapagos. My internship was in the Chocó Rainforest working on an organic cacao farm and learning organic agriculture, bird communities and chocolate making. I learned new farming techniques and about permaculture and micro-enterprise in a developing country. In the future I want to work in local farming systems to produce food in an economically stable way that is also environmentally friendly.

What Carly Learned About Herself: I had lived a pretty sheltered life before Ecuador. I had travelled most of the United States and lived in tents but I had never been disconnected from the outside world. Ecuador changed everything. This program tests your boundaries, and sleep schedules. Every single day is an adventure. I learned to travel alone, speak Spanish with confidence, eat exotic foods, make new friends, and even touch very large bugs. What I have learned about myself as a result of my experiences in Ecuador is that the limits are endless. I feel as though the world is just another mystery to be uncovered.

“You learn an unbelievable amount about the ecological and economic systems of Ecuador.”

Carly conducting a research project on sea lion behavior.