Program: UW Water for Life: Sustainability and Community Health in Ecuador, Summer

Kendra’s Major: Molecular Biology

Academic Life: The academic and classroom experiences were unlike anything I have ever experienced before. Often time, lectures were outside at the reserve we were staying at. Most learning was hands on, varying from laboratory procedures in a lab, to learning field work techniques outdoors. We also conducted our own field projects, and learned in a very short amount of time how to work all the equipment, as well as how to apply that knowledge to projects that interested us.

Advice for Someone Considering Ecuador: Why haven’t you signed up already? It was honestly the best experience I have had at UW-Madison. For someone who has always wanted to do a study abroad trip, but never seems to have the time in their schedule, this is the perfect alternative. You get so much done in two weeks and really get a feel for the culture.

Housing: For most of the trip, I lived in a bamboo hut. It was elevated off the ground, and had a kitchen, common dining area, and six rooms with four beds in each. We slept in bamboo nets at night, there was no electricity, and we lit candles for light at night. Outside there were multiple hammocks we would relax in after classes. The conditions were different than anything I have experienced before, but I would not trade it for the world. It was so nice to disconnect from the world for a bit.

What Kendra Learned About Herself: I learned that I’m interested in ecology and the impacts that humans are leaving on our world. After seeing the beautiful conserved forests around Ecuador, I became frustrated how forests all around the world have been destroyed. I learned that I want to help in conserving these forests in some way, and to assist in doing research to provide information on all the benefits these forests have.

“I feel like I have an entirely new appreciation for other cultures.”