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

Kendra’s Major: Genetics

Academic Life: The students were all UW-Madison students and the classes were mostly taught by Catherine Woodward with the addition of a few guest speakers. The classroom experience was usually in a university classroom setting, but some class experiences were different. For example, when we stayed in a forest reserve, the classroom experience was more on-the-move as we looked at different levels of biodiversity and adaptation.

Housing: For a portion of the trip we lived in a hotel in Quito that was very Americanized. The more interesting portion of our living situation was when we were living in Bosque Seco Lalo Looor, a dry forest reserve. We lived in a large hut/house complex that was not completely closed off to the forest. It was hot and there were no flushing toilets or normal showers. I loved living outdoors because we could hear the forest as it lived and breathed as well as see the animals interacting in their natural habitats.

One Significant Cultural Difference: Ecuador is highly Catholic while I am very atheist. What interested me was how Catholicism interacted with their government and everyday life. What I found most intriguing was the “bad rep” that birth control had in Ecuador.

Mary’s Fieldwork: Our fieldwork was in a nearby village. We went to homes and took samples of tap water and bottled water to see how clean the water was and if it actually lived up to potable standards. Doing fieldwork abroad is much different than in the US because many of the supplies you would usually use in the US are not available abroad. This makes you think on your feet and teaches you to problem solve.

“I’m so much more willing to go out and learn about how others live and to be open to their way of life.”

Mary riding a horse on the beach.