Nicole Wargon
South Africa

Life After Study Abroad
I studied abroad the second semester of my junior year in Cape Town, South Africa. While in Cape Town I studied at the university there and did a brief volunteering program working with English language learners in an impoverished school. When I returned to the U.S. at the end of the program I knew that I hadn’t had enough. Since returning from the Southern Hemisphere I have graduated from UW Madison and moved back abroad. I now work as an ESL teacher in Vicuna Mackenna, a rural town in Argentina. I live with a local family and am working to become fluent in the Spanish language.

Impact on Life, Goals & Career
Living in Cape Town for six months opened up a door of incredible experiences and lessons. I was exposed to the benefits that come from immersing yourself into a new culture and community. I learned not to be afraid of uncomfortable situations. More directly, my newfound interest in international public school systems pushed me to seek out an ESL teaching position, which I have now in Argentina. The most prominent thing that I took away with me when I left South Africa was lifelong friendships. During my experience I was surrounded by people, within my program and in my university, who share a similar interest in travel and have an open mind for new cultures and ideas. Since returning from Africa and graduating, I have stayed in touch with all of my friends from the program and we have pushed each other to continue exploring our passions both personally and professionally.

A Favorite Memory from Abroad
A favorite memory from South Africa is a sunrise hike I did up to the top of a small mountain called Lions Head. My international housemates and I woke up at 5 a.m. to make the trek up to see what the locals see. Watching the sunrise in the crisp air and overlooking the entire city gave me one of those unique feeling of not wanting to be anywhere else in the world and wanting to be everywhere else at the same time. I think it is this feeling that pushes people to travel and to never stop traveling.

Advice for Returning Students
Bring your abroad attitude back home with you. People are often more willing to try new things and be open-minded when they are not in their natural environment but the opportunity to be adventurous does not remain overseas.

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