



David

from

Kitchener

to

Paraguay

“You are going to ~~Ecuador, Argentina,~~ Paraguay!”

Hola mis amigos! It is I, David, writing to you all the way from sunny San Lorenzo, Paraguay. I have been here officially for 3 months, so I hope that I will be able to give you an enlightening summary of my experience so far. My pre-exchange experience was definitely an interesting one. I had been initially told I was going to Ecuador, then to Argentina and finally finding out that Paraguay would be my home. Let's just summarize that experience as stressful.

My journey started on August 14th. My flight, Pearson to Panama and then on to Asuncion, was approximately 10 hours with an additional 2 hours in layovers. When I hopped off the plane at ASU (Silvio Pettirossi International in Asuncion) I knew I was in for an amazing experience. I was greeted by a crowd of 20 people from Rotary, and was promptly kissed and hugged by the women and given very firm handshakes and hugs from the men. Definitely a different culture. That night we went out and ate Lomitos, an Argentinean/Paraguayan sandwich. Delicious! On our way home my host mom was eagerly pointing things out to me, interesting don't get me wrong, I was just extremely tired.

My current and only host family so far, is my favourite so far. They are shooting stars. My host mom is just such an amazing woman and definitely doesn't get enough credit for all that she does. She is really high up in her government job, has 3 kids (myself included), organizes 5 schedules and still has time to sit at the table and help me learn Spanish. My host dad is pretty cool; he's a really important criminal defense lawyer so I don't see him all too much, but it's pretty common for men in Paraguayan culture to play a pretty chill role in the family. My sister is a gem; although she loves to wake me up early on the weekends and tell me a huge list of chores my host dad has "assigned" me. In reality she says it to get me out of bed. But she is 7, so I choose to ignore that fault and love her because I know she means well. We have a lot of fun, swimming, drawing, watching

Netflix and I wouldn't change it at all. Also I have a maid/nanny and she is awesome always cleaning and cooking.

The city I live in is called San Lorenzo; it's a suburb of the capital city Asuncion. It's a nice city and pretty big also. The national university is located here and there are also two major shopping malls in my city. Paraguay is a very interesting country because it has only been a democratic society for about 20 years and unfortunately corruption still runs rampant. Society has changed a lot however, and it's for the better. Sometimes when you're in Asuncion and driving down the streets it seems as if you're in Beverly Hills with the palm trees and the mansions, and then you get into the country and you're quickly reminded that this is infact a developing nation.

I started school the first Monday I was in Paraguay, so 3 days after I got here and it was an extremely different experience. I attend a school called San Sebastian and it's about a 5 minute drive in the mornings (7 a.m is the start) and a 20 minute walk home (12 a.m is when it ends). My school is pretty crazy, I'm pretty much allowed to do whatever I want at school (because I'm an exchange student), but let's be honest, all the other students do whatever they want as well. I kinda understand school, especially the students talking to one another, but most classes just lose me. I don't understand chemistry, physics or biology in English let alone in Spanish... School is officially over for me currently, because in Paraguay school runs February to November.

I had a very fun orientation weekend with all the other inbounds. Getting to know so many people from such diverse backgrounds and ethnicities and becoming instant friends with them is something truly unique to the exchange student experience. We had plenty of lectures about Rotary information, but at night we would have dance parties as well as a paint war. It was awesome.

Well my Spanish is coming along nicely, in my opinion, and as my vocabulary continues to grow so does my confidence in my language skills. At my orientation weekend I got to view the large and varied skills of Spanish of all the exchangers. My skills, although I do rarely study (something I should improve on), we're considerably further advanced than the other exchange students. I would probably rank myself in the top 10 percent of all the exchange students, in terms of Spanish skills. I am 90% sure that the reason I have been able to learn so quickly is because of my knowledge of French.

I am loving every single minute of my exchange and as I prepare for my trips to Patagonia and Northeast Brazil, I am beyond grateful to Rotary. I would like to thank my home club the Rotary Club of Kitchener as well as my host club, the Rotary Club of San Lorenzo. As well as my Districts, 7080 and 4845, my home and host districts, respectively.

'Till next time friends!

Chau for now!

David