

Wrapping it all up: News from Our Outbounds June 2008



EMILY MORRELL-NYOKKA

5/15/08

IN BELGIUM

A lot has happened since I last dropped a line, and I seem to in all the excitement find myself so near the end of this adventure. The first thing to report on is Greece!!! I went to Greece with Rotary and I have decided to move there instead of coming home, just kidding, I can't wait to come home, but yeah. I will certainly be moving there at some point in my life, you should go it is truly amazing. I never thought that so many great stereotypes could be true, goats, feta, olives, ouzo, dancing, just all around greatness.

We took a boat there, which was a whole day and a half adventure of its own, and then we went all around to see all the amazing ruins, which to most seemed like just more rocks but to me were all new and thrilling in a historical, fascinating way. I love Greek mythology so I was in heaven! We were in Athens, Port Helli (spelling ah!) Olympia, and a lot of other little towns that I can't remember the names of but that took my breath away. We swam in the sea, ate olives and feta, yes drank a bit of ouzo, but didn't over do it, in my case at least, amazing!

From there we got back on a boat to head to Venice, also beautiful and historical in such an amazing way, it was great. It was a bit touristy for me though, and I was a bit sad to see my new-found home become distant so it was a bit hard to love the same way.

4-days after we got back to Belgium, I moved host families, and this is by far the best it has been. The other two though great in certain aspects, but I found that we were just too different and I couldn't do anything right, as hard as I tried. I guess it is always that way, when you try harder than before you just seem to make more mistakes without knowing it. I am with a single man now, who I was a bit nervous about but he is great, he is almost as relaxed as me and we have not yet had a problem. He totally understands that I am 18 and though not an adult, not a child either, I have a lot of respect for him and so as far as I know it is perfect. I can finally laugh and talk comfortably. My French has gotten soooooo much better. French, French, French is good now but wow it was nearly impossible at first, I am so happy that it has finally come, and I am able to talk with ease. I know that it is not perfect but I guess all I can do is keep asking questions, which I do all the time.

Well, that is all that is up I think so I will leave you here but I will write again with more when I get back from Spain!!! I am going to see my host brothers who live there! Thank you soooooo much for this wild ride, I wouldn't give it back for anything!



KATELYNN WILEY

5/30/08

IN CHILE

Chilean Email - Episode 5, Part I: "Family Camping"

The last time I wrote was midway through my summer vacation. I was, at that point, anxiously awaiting for two big trips. The first was a camping trip with my Host Dad and his friends. The second was a Rotary excursion up to the very tippiest-top of this ridiculously tall country I'm living in.

I found out about the family camping trip only about a week before going. Luis (My host Father) and I were waiting for Diego to get out of his dentist appointment. I don't know why, but I always thought that everything would always be more interesting in a foreign country. As if I could always think to myself, "Hey... I'm in school... in Chile!" and *POOF* I'd be magically entertained. I suppose it was like that for about 2 weeks. However, in the end, school still involves a lot of sitting, grocery stores are still filled with food, and dentists offices are still boring. So it was good timing to drop the news on me about the annual camping trip. It turns out that it actually does help to be able to think, "I'm in the dentists office... but in 5 days I'll be hundreds of miles away!"

Of course we couldn't go without company. This is Latin America we're talking about, everything is a party and bigger parties are the better parties. We were 4 families and 16 people in all (11 of those people being under the age of 18) It was destined to be a fantastic trip.

We started out camping right beside a ginormous lake in a *pueblito* called Lican Ray. The beginning of the camping trip seemed to stretch on into forever (as does the first part of any vacation). The other 10 kids and I found infinite things to do in our free time. We swam everyday, throwing each other from the docks or racing for stones, we went up to the general store and played foosball in a room overlooking the lake, we challenged each other to quick games of dominoes, we sprinted across the hills while playing tag and hide and go seek, we ran down to the beach to skip stones or climb on the rocks, and we obviously played a lot of football (and by football I of course mean soccer). In truth, the adults didn't pass their time much different than we did. They swam, they played dominoes, and they were the ones who made sure we played a full game of football at least once a day.

They also stayed true to every adult's self given purpose: Not ever letting the kids just relax. One day we were dragged from our sleeping bags bright and early (much to the dismay of me and the other 3 teens). We drove for a few hours until we got to a ski lodge situated on the side of a volcano. We obviously weren't going to ski in the middle of summer, so why were we there? Clearly we were there to hike. Of course even with all of our vast intelligence no one remembered to bring water. We ended up chipping desperately away at the little bit of snow we found at the "top" (meaning as far as we could go without dying in the process) and eating that to fend off our dehydration.

Don't let the existence of snow fool you though. It was HOT. For 3 grueling hours we hiked through dusty volcanic rock underneath a sweltering cloudless sky. None of us were prepared in the way of footwear or clothing. I myself was wearing converse, but luckily enough had thought to put on shorts. Several of the guys were in jeans. Every time we took a step we would slide back some, so that every sloping foot of ground was more like 3 sloping feet of ground. Every couple yards we would become exhausted and have to take a break. Needless to say I was semi-very glad when we were back in the car. I *did* have fun though. I have always enjoyed idiotic adventures.

We were in Lican Ray for about 5 days. Afterwards we drove farther south and camped in a place called Playa de Maqui. There was not a lot to do there. We played some more football, although less because the field wasn't as good as in Lican Ray. There were no foosball tables or interesting rock formations to climb. There was a lake, but us being farther south meant that the temperature had gone from a pleasant summer heat to COLD. What I do remember about Playa de Maqui is that it was there that the competition began.

By the time we changed camp sites I had become pretty good friends with some of the kids. My three best friends in that entire group would have to be Fabian, Andres, and Chicha. Fabian is a quiet kid with an aptitude for sports (besides maybe being a little clumsy) and a hatred for cameras/any photo ever taken of him. He loves North American music and movies and is the least Chilean of any Chilean I've ever met. Andres is his little brother. He's basically the same except louder and clumsier. I do consider him one of my best friends, even though he's only 12. Last there's Chicha, a meat loving and football obsessed 13 year old. He was always trying to be patient with my Spanish and talk to me a lot. It probably would have helped me if his own Spanish weren't so terrible! haha. His entire vocabulary is a thousand slang terms thrown together into a garbled mess. In short, he doesn't actually speak Spanish. He speaks perfect Chilean.

It was with Chicha that I had the competition. It started with the cards. As I stated before, there wasn't much to do in Playa de Maqui. Dominoes had gotten old, the beach was freezing, and the soccer field was a terrible muddy mess. So, while sitting around doing nothing one day, I thought to ask, "Hey... does anyone have cards?" Fabian produced two decks from his luggage and handed them to me. With those I taught the older kids how to play Egyptian War. For anyone who doesn't know what I'm talking about, all you really need to know is that this game lasts forever... It's quite possible to play for 5 hours straight and still not be near finished (It's also possible to end to game in under 10 minutes... but that hardly ever happens). It's also very addicting.

The very first time that Chicha ever played he made it into the final two. The other person was me of course because I'm a pro at Egyptian War. Haha. After three hours of intense concentration and some near broken fingers (Part of Egyptian war involves being the first to slap the deck to win cards and it can get violent) I won. Chicha was logically frustrated and instantly challenged me to another game. It's ahrd to keep Egyptian War a private game however so we were joined by many people. This time Chicha didn't even make it into the final two. I still won though. He once more challenged me. Be it some random twist of fate or no... he won. I demanded a rematch to save my honor.

Chicha agreed to it. He said that whoever won this game was the official winner between the two since we had each won once. This time we did make it one on one, absolutely forbidding anyone else to join in. The game was intense. It lasted for 2 1/2 hours but in the end I won.

Chicha was once more frustrated. "Football," he said, "I'll beat you in football." He did of course. But it was the beginning of the competition. He had a point for football and me for Egyptian war. For the rest of the trip we were constantly finding things to compete at. "I bet I can climb higher in that tree than you." "Ya?" "Ya." And we were suddenly sprinting for the tree.

If we were ever walking side by side and had an even semi-clear path a head of us there was always a danger that one of us would say, "Race!" and start sprinting. It served its purpose. We were mostly always entertained for the rest of the trip. It's possible to compete in nearly everything.

After Playa de Maqui we made our final stop in Chiloe. It is a little island off the southern cost of Chile. It is gorgeous. The Spanish dialect and the natives reminded me of Texas. When they spoke their words were slow and drawn out with a bit of a drawl and lots of the older men were wearing cowboy hats.

Chiloe is well known for having its own set of mythological creatures. Probably the most famous (and ridiculous) is that of the Traico, a short creature of a man who would hide in bushes and rape young virgins. He is also, supposedly, responsible for any erotic dreams had on the island and often plays a part in them himself. Haha.

It rained a lot in Chiloe but at least we were staying in a cabin. It was on a hill filled with horses and overlooking the ocean. I went for walks up in the hills almost everyday (Always looking out for the Traico. Haha) It was gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. To anyone who ever goes to Chile I thoroughly recommend going south and taking the ferry out to Chiloe, if even just for a day.

My stay in Chiloe went by incredibly fast because it was the end of the vacation. At the cabins, Chicha tried to get us to play football in the rodeo pit everyday, even when it was muddy. I normally declined that week. I play bad enough on solid ground. Trying to do so in the slippery mud seemed like a potentially humiliating idea.

We left the cabin everyday to do something around the island. That I am thankful for, because on the first day the adults went out and bought a huge bag of live shellfish. Our cabin smelled like them the whole time we were there. Icky!

One day we went to go take a guided penguin tour on a boat in the ocean! The tours started at a really pretty beach. Chicha's new favorite pass time was trying to teach me how to juggle a football without ever touching it with my hands, not even to start off with. All day he kept grabbing me to make me practice with him. Once I became so sick of constantly practicing football that I refused to get up off my butt. I told him I was sitting right there, next to the car and playing in the sand. It was at the time that Andres came over and started randomly digging a hole. I joined him in his random hole-digging and we started talking. We were joking around about Chicha... out in the sand playing with his precious football. I don't remember whose idea it was, but we decided

to bury it... not for good of course, that would have been horribly cruel. We only wanted to bury it for a few minutes so that we could laugh as Chicha paced over it again and again, searching madly. We agreed that I would distract Chicha and get him to leave his soccer ball behind for a moment while Andres utilized some super fast burying skills. I knew exactly how to do it too.

I called Chicha over. He of course came with his ball. I stood facing the ocean, him next to me. There was a moment of silence and then I yelled "RACE!" and took off at a sprint towards to ocean. It wasn't more than 100 meters from the car to the water so I would have to think of a way to distract him once we were down at the water line. I beat him easily and then gloated extravagantly while I waded out in the water. He argued back the whole time, saying that it was unfair because I had surprised him (we always had this argument after a race).

Andres buried even faster than expected. I only had to distract Chicha for about ten seconds. Then I walked back up to Andres with Chicha. It only took him about 5 seconds before he asked where his ball was. Apparently he didn't notice that the giant ball sized hole had disappeared as well. He searched in and under every car from our group. He asked everyone. Fabian hadn't participated in the actual hiding but he had been witness. After a while, the 3 of us stopped pretending to have no idea where it was and started giving him hints like, "Look really far down." And "You're REEEEEALLY close to it." Eventually Fabian couldn't keep quiet anymore and said, "You're standing on it idiot!" Even then it took him a few seconds to realize what that meant. He dug it up laughing and just shook his head comically at us the rest of the day. Haha.

Within five minutes he had hassled me up from beside the cars to continue my training.

The next day we were heading back up north to Talca. We said our goodbyes on the ferry. From that point on we would be travelling on our own, each family heading to their separate houses.

The trip was long and we arrived in Talca long after dark. Diego and I stayed in Luis' house for the next couple of nights. All of his sisters and their children were there. I can say that I was thoroughly relieved to finally be home when we arrived at Ana's house a few days later. I don't know how much longer I could have handled being around so many people all the time, especially all of those small children! Those big Latin American families, you know? Haha.

My favorite part about the entire trip was the very end though, when I ran up to Ana to give her a hug and ask her how she'd been, one of the very first things she said to me was, "Kate! You're Spanish! It's so good!" :)

My summer escapades were far from over, however. I still had one trip yet. It was off to the North with Rotary next, and yes... it was destined to be interesting.

To be continued....



SARAH SCUDDER
4/17/08
IN ARGENTINA

Hey Everybody!!!

So today is April 17th and I have been in Argentina for almost 7 months, and i'll be home in less 7 weeks! Its pretty crazy how fast it has gone by. I was never going to be able to be here a full year but its a shame it worked out to be less than 9 months. The summer in Argentina passed wonderfully. I stayed with my first host family the Aliagas until about 3 weeks ago. Ana and Luis were my host parents and Tomi (20), Trini (18) and Sofi (17) were my siblings. They were all amazing. Trini shared all of her friends with me and we really bonded because she was preparing for her exchange to Austria and I had had a lot of similar experiences getting ready to come to Argentina. December with Christmas and sun was beautiful. In January I spent a lot of time with my host brother and sisters and we visited our grandparents a few times (they live in a city called Jesus Maria thats about 1 hour away). I was able to be with my first host family for so long that I not only bonded with them but with

their grandparents (Lulu and Lala) and cousins, aunts and uncles. My host brother was often busy visiting his girlfriend Kaly (who also became a good friend of mine) and Sofi spent 2 weeks of January with her friends in the country. On Jan. 23rd Trini left for her exchange to Austria. We talk with her often and it sounds like she is having the time of her life. She especially loves the chocolate, haha. I spent a ton of my time during the "summer" with my friend Lauren from South Africa, she came to Argentina for a short term exchange from December to January. We had a ton of fun together and I can't wait to one day visit her in Cape Town or have her come to California. She ended up going home on the same day my host sister left for Austria so it was a really sad day.

In February my family took me on vacation with them to the beach in the province of Buenos Aires. We rented a house in a tiny town called Mar Chiquita that was beautiful but lacking the joda (festivities, parties? something like that) of my city Cordoba. We drove 15 hours to get there and arrived the evening before my birthday. At midnight (when it officially became my birthday) Tomi took Sofi and me out for my birthday. We went to the boardwalk they had in the town and then to the only bar. There were about 5 people there when we arrived a little before 1am, not because everyone had already left but because no one had arrived yet, a little different then from in the states. We stayed around playing pool and foosball and awkwardly trying to make new friends in the tiny town until about 3am when we decided no one else was coming and we went home to sleep. The next morning my host parents had found donuts in a panaderia (bread store) so we ate cake/donuts for breakfast at noon when Sofi and I woke up. That was my really un-Argentinean birthday that was still awesome.

We got back from vacation on Feb 18th and I started a German course. Ich liebe dich! Haha, I had a ton of fun with German but I missed 4 classes while I was on vacation and then later 3 more because i was sick so they wouldn't let me take German level 2 when I finished. So instead I am starting French after the trip I am on right now.

In March my siblings started school again and I continued with German and attended a few philosophy classes that were okay, but ended up being too much of a pain to get to (they were an hour from my house). I also re-started at the gym that was a half hour walk from my house so that was great for my self-esteem.

Then, in the end of March I finally changed my host family (this normally happens every 3 months so 5 was a lot to be with one family). I moved in with the Caballeros, My new parents are Sandra and Ariel (Ariel sounds much more like a guys name when its said in Spanish) and I now have 3 younger siblings, which is so fun because Sofi and Trini were my first younger siblings and they were barely younger. My sister Carolina(Caro) is 17 and happens to be one of Sofi's best friends so I still get to see her a lot. Federico(Fede) is 14 and Natalia(Nati) is 12. Fede is a 14 year old boy so he lives completely in his own world of school homework and futbol (soccer) but we've had 2 bonding moments while playing basketball because Nati and Caro I don't think have ever been interested in playing with him before, but he's really a sweetie and is going to have all the girls swooning when he grows up. Nati is a total sweetheart and so are all her friends who are almost ALWAYS in the house, but they don't bother me too much, I let them ask me any questions they wanted about youth exchange, the US and my impressions of Argentina, so they were happy after that and I'm not quite as exciting as I was at first for them. I had a ton of fun with my new family for two weeks and then the trip to the north of Argentina arrived so now I have been gone about 5 days. and its AMAZING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We are 49 youth exchange students (plus 2 Rotarians, 2 tour guides, and 2 bus drivers) all traveling together to Mendoza, Tucuman, Jujuy, Salta, and Iguazu (the waterfalls) for 2 weeks. Mendoza was beautiful and freeeezing at the same time. We have been to two wineries, which were fun, but let's just say I still have no taste for wine. The third night of the trip we stayed in cabins instead of hotels and they were not only beautiful with a really great soccer field but also had stoves, so in the morning my friend Mariah who's from Oregon and I made scrambled eggs. They were AWESOME. yummmm and then yesterday we arrived in the province of Salta where it was finally warm again, and our hotel had a pool so of course at least half the girls were out there tanning within 5 minutes of arriving. We visited Incan ruins in Tucuman that were reconstructed but still cool and then we spent almost a full day in Talampaya National Park that was absolutely amazing (I'll include some pictures). Today we are traveling to Salta capital where we will stay for 3 days. There is another girl from

Arcata living in Salta this year with AFS so I am sure I will get to see her while we're there and we will all be trying empanadas saltenas (which are supposedly the bests in all of Argentina). On the 20th we leave Salta for Iguazu and spend the night in the bus (we always get the best nights sleep when we sleep on the bus haha). In Iguazu we will spend 3 days seeing the waterfalls including one day where we cross the river on a boat and ride up through the forest to the bridge crossing point in 4 x 4's. So to sum it up we have had a great trip so far and awesomely still have a week left! I'll try to get another email sent out not too long after I get home from the trip. but the weekend after the trip is one of my best friends birthdays so it will probably be another week or so. I hope life is treating each and every one of you wonderfully and I would love to receive replies to this if you have time to tell me what you've been up to, anything new or old in your life, I'd love to hear it! And if I don't hear from you, you can catch me at the Arcata airport on June 4th at 3:19pm.
Love, love, love, love and lots of hugsssss



SARAH SCUDDER
5/31/08
IN ARGENTINA

Hi again!

So I am slightly a failure as an exchange student, not having sent out any giant email yet about how I'm doing in Argentina, but here it is, I wrote that part above more than a month ago and never sent it, now I'm doing a final update and it will be sent!!!

Okay, so the North Trip finished wonderfully and I've been really content with my life in Argentina ever since. I tried a French class (but I had missed the first two weeks because of the north trip, so I ended up being a little too confused to keep going) but French is my next language goal and I'm going to study this summer and hopefully be able to enter a 2nd level French class in college. After 2 weeks of French, I started a Spanish course to prepare me for the DELE exam, which is a Spanish exam from Spain that will certify my level of Spanish; I studied a ton up until last weekend and took the exam last Saturday. I'm pretty sure I passed, but I have to wait until late August to find out, so cross your fingers for me!

Now that the test is over with I have just been spending time with friends and family and making sure I have everything more or less ready to leave next Tuesday. today will be my last shopping day. go buy a few last minute gifts and hope that I'm not forgetting anything because I won't have time over the weekend or on Monday to get that stuff done. eek!! its crazy how soon I'll be home, and so weird to think of leaving the home I have found here. But there is so much life to look forward to that I can't be sad and I know I'll see these people again, and with the internet I hope I'll be able to stay in contact with them. Tomorrow is my Despedida (going away party) so it should be really fun and then Sunday we're having a big family thing so like a second Despedida but with all family. I'm hoping they will be fun enough that there won't be time to get sad. Monday I'll be making sure I have everything ready and Tuesday going to the airport and Wednesday arriving in California!!!

I can't wait to see all of you and catch up on our last year and learn about everything that happened in the states while I was here that I might have missed. I want to share "mate" and a yummy cake I learned how to make! Well I better get going to get my stuff done or I'll never make it home haha. I hope everyone is doing really great and I can't wait to see all of you when I get home, tons of love from faraway,