

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Ecuador



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COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Hi everyone,

October is here and once again it has been a very busy month. Last weekend we had a social with the volunteers, which everyone had a lot of fun. Great food was enjoyed and this was a way for us to thank you all for coming to the island and working hard on all our projects.

We have also started "English for tourism" language classes for our host families. San Cristobal Island is the first destination in the Projects Abroad family where they will be offered. We hope that this will help the community to become closer to the volunteers and make their stay here more enjoyable.

As for the conservation project, we have started building a hut in the Projects Abroad nursery in the Highlands to shelter everyone from the sun or rain. The nursery continues to develop thanks to your hard work.

Today we had a community clean up. We tidied up areas and had the community involved, including the municipality. I would like to thank all the volunteers for helping out with this activity as the whole community is very happy to have a safer, cleaner environment. The conservation and preservation of the Galapagos continues to be our priority.

As always, we thank each and every one of you for giving up your vacations to spend time developing our island. When you leave, you are our new ambassadors, and we hope that you will all return in future to maintain the relationships you have built and refresh your memories about the time you have spent in this enchanted part of the world.



William Puga
Country Director, Ecuador

MY CREATIVE ARTS PROJECT WITH LOCAL CHILDREN

By PETRA PETERS, GERMANY



In August I arrived on San Cristobal Island – tired and jetlagged, but really excited to begin my journey after quitting my job and going abroad.

Now I have spent nearly three months here in the Galapagos and it has been an amazing time so far. I do not want to leave and therefore extended my stay for another six weeks. I am looking forward to it very much.

The first days were a little challenging for me, because volunteering in a creative arts project was a new experience. I have been working with little children between the ages of four and eight years old on

my own, without knowing a word of Spanish. The Spanish language classes have helped me to learn a new language and understand the children much better. Now it is much more fun to work with them and it feels good to see lots of smiling faces. The children are creative while expressing themselves through painting.

In my free time, I go to the beach, go out with friends or travel to other islands. There is so much to see around here. I have visited five other islands and each of them is different and has its own beauty. It really is a paradise here, with all its beautiful nature and wonderful animals. Seeing lots of different animals in their natural habitats is amazing.

My host family or “Galapagos-family” as they are also known, has given me a second home. Living with them and their two adorable little girls is awesome. They really care about me and make me feel welcome. I hope that I can come back to the Galapagos one day and visit them again.



Everyone on the islands is very friendly, and I have met many nice people – locals as well as volunteers. My time here would never have been the same without them. I will miss every single person when I go home.

Thank you to all of you who have made my stay so special.

Muchas gracias!

Petra

CONSERVATION PROJECT

By LEONARD MUELLER, GERMANY

My name is Leo and I am from Germany. I joined the conservation project in September and have been working at it for almost six weeks now. We have seen and worked in the Galapagera, the Tortoise Breeding Centre, with the giant tortoises, and completed the rat poisoning hike several times, which is a truly adventurous hike. We have helped local farmers all over the island, planted coffee and plantain plants as well as cleared loads and loads of Mora bushes with machetes. We have also helped out at the nursery, filling plastic bags with soil and later putting endemic plants in them to grow and plant in the National Park when they are big enough.

We have visited the most beautiful beaches of the island, like Punta Carola and La Loberia to track the sea lion or marine iguana populations. Everything we do at the conservation project is a perfect mix of sometimes hard physical work, learning about the Galapagos, its nature and species, and experiencing the beauty of this place. The work part alone is already great, but it is also the people I work with that turn even the sometimes exhausting and monotonous work into a very enjoyable experience.

I also live with a great host family, which is really important considering I will be here for another four months.. We do a lot of things together and I honestly feel like part of the family already. I spoke almost no Spanish before I came here, but now I am already able to communicate properly and have a good conversation with my host family.

Finally, I have already gone on a four day trip to the island of Isabela with some friends, which will definitely be one of the most beautiful memories I will keep from my stay here. During my free afternoons and at the weekend I meet other volunteers and we do fun stuff, like snorkeling, surfing, going to the beaches and along the Malecon pier or meeting in the evenings to eat and drink something together.

MY EXPERIENCE TEACHING LOCAL CHILDREN IN THE GALAPAGOS

By EMMANUELLA GEORGIADIS, AUSTRALIA



My name is Emma Georgiadis, I am 27 years old and I am from Australia. I arrived on San Cristobal Island a few weeks ago to embark on the experience of a lifetime; volunteering in one of the most beautiful places in the world.

My volunteer work has mainly involved teaching English to students aged five to 16 years old. I have taught an afternoon language course helping children to improve their English skills, as well as in a high school, specializing in improving students' language in the areas of tourism and hospitality. Both have been challenging at times, but also very

rewarding. There is something quite special about walking down the street and having a little local call out, 'Teacher, teacher!' and running up to you to give you a hug. I have also had the opportunity to join some conservation projects, which have included amazing experiences like feeding Galapagos tortoises as well as a lot of physical work.



Most volunteers work for half the day, so the rest of the day is free for exploring the island. Some highlights have included snorkeling with sea turtles at La Loberia, swimming with sharks at Kicker Rock, watching surfers at Puerto Chino, planting mangroves at Cerro Brujo, squelching in mud while climbing a volcano and watching sunsets with the sea lions at Playa Mann. Weekends are free to take a trip to another island or to party with other volunteers. Some of us have even taken up salsa dancing lessons!



One aspect of this experience that I have enjoyed the most has been immersing myself into the culture of the Galapagos by living with a host family and seeing the way the locals live. At first, I thought the fact that I did not speak any Spanish would make things very difficult, and while it has been challenging, it has also forced me to learn Spanish. I can now communicate well enough to go to the shops and buy anything I need or to chat with my family about my adventures. My family has also started learning English, so we all help each other practise. Over the past few weeks I have grown quite close to my host family. They have included me in many local activities that I otherwise would not have experienced, such as watching a local soccer grand finale, dancing the Bailoterapia and attending a rodeo and cow milking competition in the Highlands. My house here has really started to feel like home. It is always filled with music and laughter. My family has been so caring, hospitable and positive that I will be sad to leave them next week.



While I initially came to San Cristobal Island planning to help others, I have encountered many situations where I have had to completely step out of my comfort zone. As a result, I have created unforgettable memories and grown more as a person than I could have imagined.

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION - TEACHING PROJECTS



CREATIVE ARTS PROJECTS



SOCIAL EVENT – DIRTY DAY CLEANING THE TOWN

