

Lumos Final Report

As I reflect on my Lumos travel experience, I am continually filled with gratitude for the people I met, places I saw, and things I learned. My project was nothing like what I expected, but because of that, I certainly got a lot more experiences out of it than I expected!

Contained in this report are descriptions and pictures of the various projects and experiences I had during my time in Ecuador. I had so many opportunities to do so many new things and even though nothing went according to plan, I wouldn't change a thing!

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Posing with Yoli the Alpaca at the Quilotoa Crater

Haley Smith

I. Homestay/Host Family

One of my favorite parts about my experience in Quito was my homestay family. My family was so kind and I truly feel as if they became my real family. I lived with a host mom (Pilar), host day (Vicente), and host grandpa (Bolivar). Pilar and Vicente fought like an old married couple and Bolivar was 92 years young, so there was never a dull moment in the house! Pilar and Vicente have four children and eight grandchildren, all of whom I got to meet as they often came over for dinner and family get-togethers. I enjoyed the opportunity to live a typical Ecuadorian life, speaking in Spanish and eating traditional foods with an incredible family.



My host family attending my choir concert



Me with my host grandpa, Bolivar



Me with my host mom, Pilar

Haley Smith

II. My Original Project: Sinamune

Originally, per the program I applied for and committed to, I was going to be interning at an organization called SINAMUNE - Sistema Nacional de Musica para Niños Especiales (National Music Foundation for Special Children). However, this project was nothing like what I expected or had been promised, so it turned out to be just one of the things I did during my time in Ecuador. Although I was told that Sinamune served children with disabilities, it turned out that most of the students were adults, with a few teenagers. The age range was 13-48 years, with the majority of the students in their 20s or 30s.



Sign saying "Welcome"



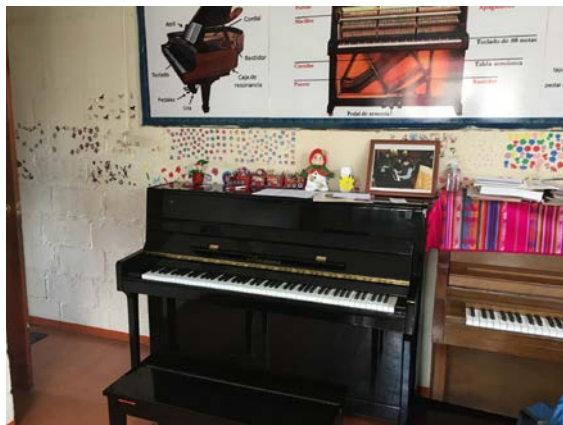
SINAMUNE sign outside



SINAMUNE Building

Haley Smith

The first day I arrived at Sinamune, I spent the entire day painting a classroom. That was not what I expected, but I was so excited to be there and open to anything that I didn't question it. There were no students there. I quickly learned that despite being told that the summer months at Sinamune were spent doing a summer music camp, that was not the case. Some days no students came to Sinamune at all. Other days we accompanied the students on field trips around the region, to parks, zoos, and restaurants. Other days the students came and basically just hung out in their classrooms. On those days, the staff would give us interns a list of students to "teach" or "do music therapy with." While I was there, there were two other interns that I got to work with and become friends with. One was a dancer and one was a flute player. We commiserated over the lack of communication and how nothing was what we had expected. I did my best to teach and run music groups with limited knowledge of the students and organization. That was what my day-to-day was like in July. In August, things got even worse. All of us interns had been told by the program while we were applying that Sinamune would be on break for two weeks in August and that we would go to another music program in the area. It turned out that Sinamune was on break for an entire five weeks in August, and there was no other music program that anybody knew anything about. This was frustrating, but fortunately our program coordinator organized another opportunity.



Pianos in one of the classroom at Sinamune



Chairs arranged for one of my music groups

Haley Smith

One of the only things happening at Sinamune in July was the presentations for tourists. Part of the way that Sinamune funds their work is by partnering with a foundation that brings tourists to Sinamune to see live music and dance performances. The students play in the orchestra and dance. I had the opportunity to play piano and sing in the orchestra, and it was a lot of fun. It was also difficult because all of the songs were traditional Ecuadorian pieces that took me a while to learn. I definitely learned a lot through the experience and I had fun getting exposed to music I had not known before. It was also cool getting to see the tourists come and experience the amazing work the students were doing. Although there wasn't much happening while I was there, I could tell that Sinamune was an incredible place for the students and gave them opportunities that they probably otherwise would not have had.



My spot in the orchestra



My view of the performance hall



The dancers of Sinamune

Haley Smith

III. My Additional Project: Núcleo Pichincha Choirs

Once we realized that Sinamune was essentially closed for all of August, my program site coordinator arranged a partnership between us interns and the cultural arm of the provincial government. We would teach classes in our specialties at La Casa de La Cultura in the historic downtown section of Quito. We were very excited about this, as we got to design our classes, choose our age range, and teach in a beautifully restored historic building. We even had a photo shoot so that the government could create promotional materials about our classes. I would be directing a choral music class called “Voces Alegres.” We would teach two 2-hour classes M-F, divided by age. I asked for my classes to be divided by 7-12 years and 13-18 years. However, either someone forgot to put that info on the promotional materials, or they decided that was not an important factor, because my first day I had a very interesting mix of students.



Instructora	Horario	Lunes	Martes	Miércoles	Jueves	Viernes
Haley Smith	14:00 a 16:00	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto
Haley Smith	16:00 a 18:00	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto
Cosetta Bardani	14:00 a 16:00	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera
Cosetta Bardani	16:00 a 18:00	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera	Flauta travesera
Paige Sturup	11:00 a 13:00	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica
Paige Sturup	16:00 a 18:00	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica	Danza Clásica
Paige Sturup	11:00 a 13:00		Danza Contemporánea		Danza Contemporánea	
Paige Sturup	16:00 a 18:00		Danza Contemporánea		Danza Contemporánea	

Haley Smith

My choir age range was 6 years old to 60 years old, so that made for some difficult lesson planning. However, I did the best I could, and everybody ended up learning a lot and having a wonderful time. My students were all so grateful for the opportunity to learn more about singing and I had so much fun teaching them. They were so patient with my Spanish, as I didn't know a lot of the advanced vocabulary and terminology related to music and singing. One student, an older woman who had taken voice lessons, actually lent me a vocal pedagogy textbook in Spanish that her teacher had published. It helped so much! In addition to the daily classes in August, I continued teaching class two days a week in September because many of my students wanted to keep singing for as long as I was there!



The view from my classroom



My student Koraima



My Solfege wall décor



Standing in my classroom

Some of my choir members

Haley Smith

IV. My Most Unexpected Project: Teaching in the Pueblitos

I had one more unexpected experience in store for me! One day while I was teaching my choir at the Núcleo, one of the staff there came up and told me that they were so excited to have me come teach in the pueblito during September. I had heard nothing about this, but I quickly learned that they were expecting me to travel three hours one way each weekend to give music classes in some little towns northwest of Quito. I wanted to have the experience doing this and share music classes with these towns, but I also had so much going on in Quito and it would mean I would be working all day every day, even weekends. I ended up compromising and agreeing to teach two out of the four weekends. I taught classes in a little town called Pedro Vicente Maldonado and another even smaller town called Andoas. It was a lot of travel, but it was interesting to see the smaller towns and the children I taught seemed to really enjoy the classes. Overall, I am glad I agreed to do this as well.



Classroom in Pedro Vicente



Street in Andoas



Classroom in Andoas

Haley Smith

V. Bonus Experiences

I had so many wonderful unexpected experiences and unplanned opportunities, but perhaps the best one was accidentally joining the Coro de La Casa de La Cultura Ecuatoriana and getting to perform in a concert with them. I loved getting to sing in a choir and I made so many wonderful friends. I still can't believe that I got to perform in a concert with them!



Me with the choir director, Fer



My lovely choir friends

Performing at the concert

VI. Conclusion

Even though nothing went as expected, in so many ways it could not have gone better. I learned so much about myself, and I grew a lot as a person. I became more flexible, more patient, more adventurous, and more loving. For future Lumos travelers, I would recommend that you embrace any challenges your travel throws at you, and be open to new experiences. If something goes wrong or doesn't go as planned, seek out how that disappointment can become your greatest joy. In conclusion, I am so grateful to the Lumos Foundation for giving me this experience, and I know it has formed a lot of who I am today. I will definitely be going back to Quito and working with Sinamune one day, and that never would have happened without the Lumos Foundation. Hasta luego!