
FALL 2020

Argentina

College of Charleston



by Mallory Watford

STUDY ABROAD AMBASSADOR

I went to Buenos Aires, Argentina in the spring of 2020. Writing that, I had to check myself to make sure I wrote the correct year—it now feels like so long ago. During an incredibly unexpected and unprecedented year, I am grateful for my six weeks in Argentina even though the program was supposed to be about 12 weeks originally. I fell in love with the city, the culture, the language, and especially the people. Having so many things I love there made leaving that much harder. One person that had the largest impact on my time was my host mom, Cecilia. When I was staring at my housing application for what seemed like hours, making sure everything was just right, I had a feeling I should select “single woman” for my host family. I have always gotten along very well with older people, especially older women.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

I ended up getting paired with Cecilia, a single woman living in a two-bedroom apartment in Recoleta, Buenos Aires—a beautiful neighborhood that borders Palermo, where most of the other students lived. When we first met, Cecilia was so welcoming and I instantly felt comfortable. She took me around the city that day, showed me how to get to class, where she worked in la Plaza de Mayo, how to use the busses and trains. She took me under her wing immediately, and that first day is one I remember so fondly. Cecilia and I clicked, and it was a seamless transition living together. What I enjoyed most about it was eating dinner together every night. Cecilia wasn't the biggest cook, so she had her housekeeper make us vegetarian meals for the week since I am vegetarian and she isn't a big meat eater—that meant a lot to me.



We would begin every night playing the radio, listening to her son's radio show and music. There were a lot of laughs, singing, and dancing; she taught me how to do the dance "la cumbia" which is pretty simple but made me feel like a true Argentinian. Our dinners would inevitably go on for about two hours because we would always lose track of time talking. We spoke about our childhoods, our families, pop culture, Argentine politics and government, life advice, and so much more. I didn't expect to instantly admire someone like I do with Cecilia—let alone my host mom who was a stranger to me a few months ago. As a host mom, she is a great communicator, so I knew how she liked to keep her house and how to live there. I believe that is crucial to having a positive host family experience. She also asked me if I wanted her to correct me when I spoke Spanish, to which I answered yes, and she helped me improve dramatically with my vocabulary and grammar. The fluidity which I spoke also improved largely because of her and how often we spoke.

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As a person, she has a flair about her that I admire which I think comes from her young soul. Cecilia has a lot of convictions about life and I was lucky that she shared them with me. She imparted wisdom on me that guided me through my experience abroad—I am so grateful for that. Cecilia shared her home, life, and family with me. I was able to go to dinner with her nephews and sister which she spoke so highly of. The nephews were all around my age and it went so well that they invited me out to their family's country home. In another instance, Cecilia invited me to go to her tap-dancing class with her which she went to every Tuesday.

Unfortunately, I was sent home before I got the chance. But was this generosity and inclusion that made me feel at home. Studying abroad in Buenos Aires was a dream I didn't want to wake up from. I think everyone in my program had great experiences with their families—but everyone knew how close Cecilia and I were. The biggest thing I learned is that you will meet people who impact you in big ways no matter the location, culture, or language difference. Make the effort to have as many experiences as much as you can and do not be afraid to try new things because the people you meet along the way will make it all worth it.

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