

## J-Term Uruguay Student Testimonials

**It's quite unbelievable how deep even only a month abroad in this beautiful country can touch you.** Never have I felt such a deep connection to a place as I did while in Uruguay. As we were reminded frequently, the program provides a very unique opportunity to immerse yourself in a foreign culture, and if you take advantage of it correctly, you can truly gain a lot. **The J Term program in Uruguay challenges the common conception that all Latin countries are the same, and opens your eyes to the unique history of Uruguay.** Aside from the cultural experience, I felt my Spanish bettering even after only 3 days. The country radiates liberty and hospitality. As I navigated around, I encountered the nicest, deepest, and the most genuine and open people.

**Jayleen Salas, 2018**

I don't think you can really prepare for everything you will learn studying away in a foreign country. I have found that living in Uruguay and immersing myself in the Spanish language and Uruguay culture has allowed me to experience the beauty and struggle of people I would have never had the chance to meet. **From a social justice perspective, I was able to learn about the impacts of power and privilege from a whole new angle.** For the first time in my life I was nervous walking into a grocery store because I was worried I wouldn't know how to respond if the clerk asked me a question. Before I traveled to Uruguay I never truly considered or experienced the privilege of language, and now I have experienced it first hand. Additionally, the opportunity to live with a host family was one of the best parts of this trip. I was able to be apart of an Uruguayan family and learn what family looks like there. Traveling to Uruguay, a place with a culture and language different than my own had the unique ability to change how I see myself and the world in which I exist.

**Susan Schowalter, 2018**

I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to study away in Uruguay for J-term 2018. **Four hours of Spanish class a day definitely contributed to improving my language skills, but I loved that I was able to learn outside of the classroom as well.** From living with a host family to navigating public transportation and buying food at the grocery store, there were endless opportunities to hear and speak Spanish. One of my favorite things to do during my time in Montevideo was to go for runs on the Rambla, a 22-mile path on the coastline that was just five blocks from my house. I usually went in the evening when the sun was setting, and could hear bits of conversation in Spanish as I ran by the hundreds of other people that were out enjoying the warm weather, gathering with friends or family, biking, rollerblading, walking, simply going about their daily lives. Through this program, I was able to see and do more in a month than I would have thought was possible, and stepped out of my comfort zone in many ways.

**Hannah Hutchison, 2018**

My time in Uruguay was truly an indescribable experience. It is a funny thing: when you are told that you will study away you start to get excited and anticipate the

experience, but it is very difficult to understand how much it can truly change your life and how much you can really learn until you have experienced the cultural immersion. What I loved most about this program was its openness to every level of Spanish speaker. **Although you will spend your entire time hearing and speaking Spanish, there is room for growth for a student at any level, whether you barely know Spanish or you are nearly fluent.** The people of Uruguay and the faculty at the school were very instrumental in helping my growth in Spanish speaking, comprehension, and in my knowledge of South American cultures. The professors challenged me in ways that I have never been challenged before and the added immersion experience improved my abilities tremendously. I was able to practice the language on a daily basis in class, with my peers, and with Uruguayans. Every person I met in Uruguay was inclusive and curious. I am so thankful to have had this opportunity to take a step outside of my comfort zone into a cultural experience that has had a profound impact on my life.

**Jordan Jasorka, 2018**

**At first, the idea of studying away scared me because I'd be fully immersed into a completely different culture and a different language.** I was also nervous because speaking is something I try to avoid, let alone in another language. But going to Uruguay J-term 2018, for me, helped me grow in several ways. It was hard to adjust to a new environment but my host dads were amazing and made me feel at home; the professors were wonderful and I could really see their interest in my learning. **Though the course was intense and the days long; the content and experience of actually being surrounded by Spanish in every aspect really did help me to improve and allow me to practice my Spanish speaking skills on a daily basis.** The trip was a bodacious opportunity for me and I am so glad I took that little step into a giant world of unknown. If I ever have the chance to study away again; I'll definitely take that leap.

**Biankha Pablo, 2018**

**Studying and adventuring in Uruguay during January 2014 was absolutely a top highlight of my PLU education!** This cultural immersion was my sole opportunity, amidst the Bachelor of Science in Nursing curriculum, to travel abroad during my undergraduate career; I wouldn't have traded it for anything! **Complete immersion in the Spanish language for an intense month was an excellent challenge that could not be replicated in a PLU classroom.** Personal highlights included: becoming family with my host mother, weekend adventures to rural cities, small classroom environment taught by a lively local educator, and experiencing everyday Uruguayan life by daily navigating transportation, shopping, and supermarkets. I highly recommend this Jterm study away opportunity to anyone interested in a splendid Spanish immersion.

**Kimberly Belleville**

My first time traveling outside of the country was when I traveled to Uruguay for J-term in 2014. I can still clearly remember the day that I heard about the program. Without spending much time to think, I applied, because I had a gut feeling that it would be an experience that I couldn't pass up, regardless of the fact that it felt out of my comfort zone. Nearly three years later, I have traveled to fourteen different countries with

family members, other students, and on my own. I have not only grown academically, but as my own person and member of the world. I truly believe that participating in the J-term program to Uruguay was the catalyst for all of this. **As a prospective graduate of the nursing program, I feel immensely grateful that I had the opportunity to travel to Uruguay within the rigorous structure of the program because it allowed me to recognize my desire to incorporate Spanish into my career as a Registered Nurse. All in all, I can't thank this program enough- it truly was a turning point in my life.**

P.S.: I am willing to leave my contact information so that people can come to me with any questions that they have. **Christina Maxwell, [maxwelcc@plu.edu](mailto:maxwelcc@plu.edu)**

**I had the privilege of completing my last four college credits in Uruguay and I could not imagine a better way to conclude my time at PLU.** I knew almost nothing about Uruguay when I signed up for this trip, but was delighted to discover that this tiny country is full of rich history, beautiful landscapes, and kind people. **In addition to learning about Uruguay's unique culture, I can safely say that I learned more Spanish in this single month than the several semesters before it combined.** Some of my most distinct memories from Uruguay are walking along the sandy shoreline and collecting beach glass, attending a candombe parade, and eating empanadas with my host family on the balcony of our apartment.

**Selina Mach**

This abroad experience was a wonderful way to deeply engage within a language, culture, and landscape, without taking the entire semester. While I loved my semester study away program, this J-term trip was an amazing opportunity to be immersed and quickly expand language skills. Additionally, the amount of things we were able to see in a month was impressive! We were always on the road exploring, and while this was exhausting at times, we definitely got our moneys worth! **The homestay enhanced our cultural experience and definitely improved my language skills. I would definitely recommend this program and hope it can continue to grow!**

**Kristin Hayes**

When I stepped off the plane in Montevideo I wasn't sure what I was getting myself into. Since Uruguay is such a small country, it can be difficult to find information readily available like you could with Spain or France. Uruguay quickly turned from an experience of excitement and uncertainty to an incredible life- changing month. **The Uruguayan program is perfect for first years like me, people who haven't had a lot of traveling experience, and for those that have.** While there is structured class and after class activities, there is a certain level of freedom to explore the city which I found to be most challenging but also most exciting. There is really is no experience comparable to taking the public transit system in a new country for the first time. While the classroom education is critical to any Hispanic Studies degree, I found that the immersion component is what really helped me develop my Spanish. It was really beneficial to be able to bring words or phrases that I had heard at the grocery store or on

the bus to class and learn what they meant. I would highly recommend this program. **By being able to take a Spanish class during my J-term of freshman year, it put me ahead of my peers and I'm finishing my degree a whole year early because of it.** Also, J-term is always a great option for those that are science majors or who have a very rigid schedule in which they can take classes. **Uruguay gave me the experience of a lifetime and a piece of me will always be there.**

Skylar Larson

I had my first Spanish-speaking-ONLY family last Friday-Saturday [October 2016], on the progressive care unit (a step-down from ICU). While there was a MARTTI audio-video machine that could call an interpreter with a few easy button presses, it wasn't always convenient to use this for quick questions.

But, I walked in and gave it my best shot, and I was actually able to perform almost all my care that weekend without the interpreter, and still making sure that my patient's pain was managed, the family's needs were met, they understood procedures and medications, etc. To me, that was probably the biggest accomplishment of my career, since you so often see hospital staff walk into a room, talk AT a patient, ask if they understand (to which the confused family nods and says, yes, in an attempt not to offend) and then leave, never confirming that the family had any clue what just happened. One of my biggest pet peeves is healthcare workers not making sure that patients of different languages and cultures have their needs met just as well as everyone else, especially when there are resources available!

**It was just so wonderful to be able to talk with my Spanish-speaking patients. Even though I stumbled over grammar, I could get my point across, even in a medical context. I know that there is NO WAY that would have happened without my experience being immersed in the language both in Uruguay with PLU and later in Guatemala on my own.** I loved learning about the culture and history of Uruguay, and staying with a host mom right on the Rio de la Plata, just a block away from the shining gold sand and soccer fields. I adored walking to school each day past the flower stands and bakeries, having the locals say hello every morning even though we had no idea how to make small talk back, and seeing baby hawks and other exotic animals at the market. Those are experiences that I never would want to miss out on!

So yes, I highly recommend that PLU continue the J-Term trip to Uruguay, and that every student who can squeeze onto the plane sign their name up and get the wonderful experiences that I had. It's worth every penny. And **it was the only chance I had to study away as a nursing student, so please keep the J-Term option. :)**

Muchísimas gracias por todo,  
Tess Sawatzki