

## Testimonials

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What People are Saying About : VENAEcuador

Paul Copperman pcopperman@ucdavis.edu

Program Type: Building and teaching project/other stuff

Location: Puerto Lopez - Otavalo

Start Date: July, 07 - 2010

End Date: August, 30 &ndash; 2010

After my first year of college I was still utterly unsure of my direction so I wanted to get out there and do something exciting and different. After looking at a lot of different programs I finally found VenaEcuador. From the moment I started talking to Mariana on the phone about coming to Ecuador I knew I had found something special. It just makes sense, that if you want to have an intimate South American experience that you go with a program located in the country and that truly cares about the volunteers, as opposed to behemoth organizations located in some other country and that charge a ridiculous amount for an experience that is sheltered and routine.

I had such a great time in Ecuador. The program VenaEcuador was incredible. Mariana takes care of you and makes you feel welcome and at home. The flexibility of the program was especially nice and I was able to spend a month on the coast teaching English and then a month in the Andes working at a daycare. I was definitely nervous about teaching without prior experience but after a class or two I started to get the hang of it and realize you just need to interact with the kids and have fun with them. I think it is so important to frequently get out of your comfort zone and experience new things, and if you're willing to take that chance it always pays off. The daycare near Otavalo was a ton of fun. I really did fall in the love with the kids there. They crawl and jump all over you and I was tempted to sneak a couple in my suitcase back to the states with me.

I'm trying to pinpoint exactly what makes VenaEcuador so great. Mariana is definitely a huge part of it, all the locations are beautiful and the families I stayed with were both wonderful. When it comes down to it though, you get out what you put into experiences like these. So what I think makes the program special is that it gives you that push you need to really get out of your comfort zone and done something real.

Overall I enjoyed my trip immensely in Ecuador. Rarely are you going to find people so willing to take you in and treat you with such kindness. The people are generous, the views are gorgeous, the work is rewarding, the kids are adorable, and the women are beautiful. Jeez I miss the girls. But seriously, here is an opportunity to do something helpful and at the same time have a ton of fun.

Paul Cooperman

Aracelly Ortiz USA E-mail - ortiz424@optonline.net

Program Type: Nursing

Location: Ambato Ecuador &ndash;Hospital & Orphanage nursing care Dpt.

Start Date: December 6 - 2010

End Date: February 24 &ndash; 2011

I always wanted to volunteer abroad and I couldn't think of a better time than right after my college

graduation. It gave me time to reflect on myself and relax from four years of studying in college. I graduated from nursing and start looking for an organization I come across with VENAEcuador the program coordinator, Mariana Lara made it possible for me to volunteer and also apply my nursing skills and knowledge. I worked in Ambato, Ecuador in an orphanage and a hospital providing nursing care. In the orphanage, I helped promote, maintain and restore optimal wellness to 28 children from 2 months to 18 years. In the hospital, I worked under the supervision of another nurse and rotated around the emergency room. I completed night shifts and completed nursing care activities that pertained to the unit policy. The people I came across were very supportive, kind, patient and accommodating to my needs and interest. These 3 months were very rewarding knowing that I was helping others to the best of my ability. This experience was useful not only for my spiritual well-being but also for my career. My resume looks complete and I have an additional advantage over other new graduates looking for a job. I would recommend VENAEcuador foundation to anyone looking to volunteer abroad and grow as a person.

Aracelly Ortiz

Alicia Gaynor USA     adgaynor@wisc.edu  
 Program Type: Medical Internship and Teaching English  
 Location: Quito  
 Start Date: May, 21 - 2009  
 End Date: June, 21 - 2009  
 Ecuador Personal Statement

Ecuador was both a learning and fun experience. Through my internship I was able to explore the medical profession by being completely immersed into their everyday life. As I learned about medicine I simultaneously established strong relationships with the numerous doctors within my clinic. They welcomed us with open arms and did what they could to insure I was involved in the medicine as much as possible. I witnessed births, surgery, all while standing shoulder to shoulder with the surgeon! It truly was an "only in Ecuador" opportunity! During the weekends we would have the ability to travel and explore the beautiful different climates of Ecuador. We climbed mountains, zip lined through the canopy of the forest, swam in waterfalls and did it all in good company! Overall, Ecuador was an international experience that taught me about my interests, my abilities and me; and the friendships I have aboard will never die! Thanks to venaecuador family.

Alicia Gaynor

Jefim Vogel (Germany) Email Address: jefim.vogel@web.de Voluntary service in Puerto Lopez, Ecuador  
 February & March / 25 /2010  
 Municipal education-center for kids of 0 - 6 years) & English-classes)

Venaecuador is an organization that literally helps everyone involved: First to be mentioned, it helps the volunteers who are given the opportunity to share their time and skills with those who really need and appreciate it, the opportunity to help directly where help is needed, the opportunity to actually make a change in the lives of the ones whom they help. At the same time, they are given the opportunity to change their own lives, to get to know and

understand another country, another culture, other people, mindsets, habits etc., eventually all so different from what they have known from their home countries. They don't only learn another language and a lot about a different part of the world, but also about themselves, making experiences of a lifetime that will change them &dash; positively- as a person, making them more self-confident, more open-minded, more reflective.

The projects offered for volunteers are designed in a way that the volunteers will have a good time, enjoying their work and definitely also their free time, as Ecuador is one stunningly interesting, beautiful and diverse country. Volunteers are usually accommodated in Ecuadorian host family and, that way, rapidly integrated into society and everyday life plus fully immersed into Ecuadorian culture, customs and habits.

But not only are volunteers given a project to work in and a host-family to live with, but during the entire time of their stay in Ecuador, they find support at whatsoever they might need, be it an airport pickup, help with the visa, a city-tour, a contact of other volunteers, suggestions and help for travelling etc. To sum it up, in the time of his stay in Ecuador, a volunteer with venaecuador is very well cared of and helped in any situation. Secondly, it helps the project-sites and communities. The project-sites are given a volunteer helping them (for free) at what they need the most, the volunteers oftentimes being more qualified and/or more motivated than most locals would, e.g. when teaching English or when doing community work. Furthermore, as the volunteers learn a lot from the entirely different life and culture in the communities, so do the communities learn from the volunteers (this also improves the international communication and exchange). Additionally, venaecuador helps improve the living circumstances in the community by using the money from the volunteering-contributions to make all kinds of necessary adjustments. For example, it improves the quality of schools and child day care centers by supporting them in building urgently needed toilets, libraries, class-rooms etc., in fixing decrepit parts in the building like broken windows or leaky roofs, supplying them with educational materials and equipment, toys etc.

It helps improve the medical and hygienically standards especially in small and badly-developed communities, helping build a clinic and firefighters with necessary equipment

It even supplies poorest families with the most needed of food and the basics to live.

Thirdly, the organization helps itself or, more precisely, the coordinator and director helps herself, this being Mariana Lara, the head and heart of venaecuador and an absolutely remarkable, admirable person - a person who does what she does to help others, the volunteers, the communities and host families. Helping others gives her the entire fulfillment she can think of, which is why she uses to say that helping others she also helps herself.

And not only does she, what she does, for a good motif, but she also does it outstandingly well. She really makes the difference to other organizations, because she personally developed and chose all the project sites, volunteer placements and the host families that are part of the program. She travelled to all the places, saw the conditions and talked with the people there herself. She personally knows loads of people, places and organizations all over the country, which is why she can offer a great variety of projects and places all over the country, custom-shaped to the individual needs and wishes of the volunteer, and which is what makes her able to organize everything a volunteer might need very quickly and effectively. Knowing so many people, places, host families, knowing all of the country's attractions and having partnerships with many travel agencies, she even is of great help when the volunteers travel around.

She personally takes care for all of her volunteers always making sure that everything's alright and that they're having a good time and helping them at whatever they might need, also beyond the time of their volunteering.

I myself volunteered in a child day care center/preschooler educational center in Puerto Lopez, additionally teaching English to a group of neighborhood-kids for (unfortunately only) 6 weeks. I really enjoyed working and living there and took so much out of it, as to my understanding of country, people and culture, my moral concepts and ideas, my level of Spanish etc. I am totally inspired as to finding means of helping more and I am sure that this experience has made and will make a difference in my life. I am really glad I got the opportunity to do this and am eager to repeat or continue this kind of experience. Also I am glad I did it through venaecuador because they were able to offer me a project that appeared to be custom-designed for what I wanted and because I know that the money and time I spent were used for the right thing. I am so grateful to Mariana and venaecuador for all their help and I'd really like to thank them for all what they did for me.

On the website, venaecuador describes itself as an organization that can give everyone a custom-shaped volunteering experience of a lifetime, as an organization that makes all the difference. - And after having volunteered through this organization and having received so much help with visa, travels and whatsoever, having met and gotten to know the director and coordinator, Mariana Lara, and the way she works, I can confirm every single one of these words.

Venaecuador makes all the difference, because they are really good at what they do AND because they really care about parties, the volunteers and the communities.

After all, I highly recommend volunteering through venaecuador to anyone who wants to help those in need while at the same time having a good time, learning so much about life, culture and mindsets in another country, learning a language and making an experience that will change his life.

Michelle Furlong USA E-mail - MichelleLFurlong@gmail.com  
Program Type: Dental Medicine  
Location: Galapagos  
Start Date: December, 21 - 2009  
End Date: January, 01 &ndash; 2010

"My experience with VenaEcuador was incredible. The program director (Mariana) was friendly, organized, and very accommodating of her volunteers. I stayed on the Galapagos Island of San Cristobal and volunteered in a dental office that was located inside the local hospital. In my 2 week stay, not only did I learn about their culture and dentistry, but I also explored the breathtakingly beautiful Galapagos Islands. It was the experience of a lifetime."  
Sincerely,

Michelle Furlong

Mathew Evans E-mail mdevans1@asu.edu  
Program Type: Nutrition and medicine, Spanish classes, Galapagos  
Location: Puerto Viejo  
Start Date: June 18/2009  
End Date: July 10/2009

Una cuenta de mi experiencia. Disfrútenlo!  
In Ecuador, everything is possible but nothing is certain. If you are the adventurous type, this phrase shouldn't scare you but pique your interest. If it does, then VENA Ecuador is a great organization to help you discover South America. I started in Quito and stayed with the most amazing lady I've ever met. I wanted to take her home and pay her to be my mother/care giver/personal cook back in the US. She was by far the best host out of all of the already extremely nice people of Ecuador. I then traveled to the Galapagos Islands for a week just for fun. My wife and I loved the action on the island Santa Cruz and the beautiful beaches and animals on Isabela. We then spent about 3 weeks working in a town near Portoviejo, (which is right near the "canton" Santa Ana). I worked with the local doctor in very rural areas and my wife worked with the assisting nurse. I was able to see a wide variety of ailments that are not as common back in the US. I am trained in nutrition so I gave lessons, or "charlas", about nutrition and diabetes to different groups. It helped me develop my medical Spanish speaking skills, and I know it will help me a great deal in my profession. We tested for free approximately 600 of the locals for diabetes, provided advice to those with concerning blood sugar levels, and referred the diabetics to the medical center where we were working. We really feel like we contributed to bettering the health of the local population, and I was very satisfied with the work I was able to do. Since we traveled all over Ecuador (Quito, Otavalo, Guayaquil, Santa Cruz, Isla Isabela, Baltra, Canoa, Manta, Portoviejo, Santa Ana, Visquije, Olmedo, Pescado, and others), it was great having Mariana help with the travel plans. We were also able to deliver a water pump to the Galapagos island of Isabela to be used by a small elementary school. You should feel confident that most of the money you invest in the foundation will be forwarded into good causes just like these. So get out there and have the time of your life! I hope you can see some of my pictures on the website. Our

experience will be absolutely unforgettable.  
Much love to you and the rest of the VENAE family!

Mathew Evans

Tulay Yalcin Canada E-mail: [tulay\\_yalcin4linden@yahoo.ca](mailto:tulay_yalcin4linden@yahoo.ca)  
Location: Puerto Lopez - Ecuador  
Start Date: July, 13 - 2009  
End Date: August, 13 - 2009  
(Municipal education-center for kids of 0 - 6 years) & English-classes)

“Volunteering overseas in a country I have never been to before was a first for me. After researching many organizations online I decided with VENA Ecuador. What attracted me to this organization was that it was not for profit and they work in many different places in Ecuador doing various projects. I was very nervous, as this was one of the biggest decisions I was about to make. I was going to stay in a country I have never been to, I didn't know the language and I was going to stay with a family I have never met. Everything I experienced during this volunteer experience was a first. Looking back now this was one of the best things I have done in my life. I wish I had done this sooner! Mariana the coordinator made everything easy. She always kept in touch with me in case I had questions or concerns before arriving. She was of great help. For those who are doing this for the first time, you are in good hands. Mariana is great. Once in Ecuador Mariana's assistant Mercedes (who is amazing) took me to Puerto Lopez, where I met my host family. My host family truly became my family. I spent most of my days with them once I was finished working. For half of my day I worked with mothers who have preschool children and later in my day I taught English to women and kids in the neighbourhood in one of the family's rooms. VENA Ecuador has many projects around Ecuador that work towards empowering women, families and the community. I was fortunate to visit some of these projects. In my trip to the Galapagos Island of Isabella, I met the newly elected mayor, who in his speech thanked the VENA Ecuador volunteers and Mariana for all the work they do. In his speech he also talked about a project he was assisting VENA Ecuador with in which they were going to create space for the elderly in the community so they can socialize with others and do hands on activities to keep them active. All in all I highly recommend VENA Ecuador. If you have any questions Mariana has my contact information. I am more than happy to provide more information. For those in doubt I say go for it! It is a very rewarding experience.

Tulay Yalcin