

Colegio Anglo Colombiano, Bogotá, Columbia

Emma Levy'17

Going anywhere on your own is extremely frightening, however going to a new country where you don't speak the language and know practically nothing about its culture and ways of life brings frightening to a whole new level. The opportunity to live in another country where you know nothing is incredible. Although it can seem scary, it is a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience that is worth every bit of anxiety and fear.

Being that my world had already changed drastically before I even as much arrived at the airport, I knew early on that my time in Colombia was going to be amazing! Earlier, my exchange student in Montreal, Marianna, had previously lived with me for 7 weeks. We formed an incredible bond, and she became much more than the quiet girl who followed me to all my classes. She became my sister. Watching Marianna leave was devastating, but that being said, I got the easy part of the bargain. Luckily, when I arrived I already knew someone! This was incredibly reassuring.

However, I soon learned that this wasn't going to help me when I was alone in the Bogotá airport. Flying to Toronto was a breeze because I had been in that airport multiple times. Naïvely, I thought having completed one flight, I was in the clear and my trip was going to be a piece of cake! I got onto the plane and slept through the majority of my 7-hour flight to Colombia, however the hardest part was yet to come. As soon as I entered the Bogotá airport, everything was written in Spanish only! I mean everything. I was extremely confused, so much so that I waited in the wrong line for half an hour before realizing what I was doing. Once I asked Siri what the sign in front of me meant, I frantically switched lines and waited in the correct one for almost another hour. Although I did not have to endure a 20-hour flight like those of my friends who went to Australia, my time in the airport also felt pretty long.

After finally finding Marianna and her family, I was relieved. Thankfully, there was no time difference so I didn't feel jetlagged, however, since Bogotá has a very high altitude I did have some trouble catching my breath a few times. Even though I was safely with my exchange family and my trip was just beginning, about 10 minutes into the drive I went into complete culture shock. Everything about Bogotá is totally different from Montreal; just the drive itself gave me a taste of something I had never experienced before. The streets are much more crowded and the entire city is surrounded by mountains. It is absolutely astonishing!

So far, I have had the amazing opportunity to venture to the centre of the city called *a Candelaria*; I tasted traditional Colombian food like *arepas*, *obleas*, and *arequipe*. We also went to an incredible museum.

The centre of the city was very different from where Marianna lives. This area was very crowded, not only with people, but there were many pigeons and even a few llamas! It

was interesting to see the contrast between these two parts of the city.

Colombia is a beautiful place to be and I am so excited to continue to learn about it and incorporate its lifestyle into mine.

Adios!