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My Ecuador

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My Ecuador

Ecuador means many things
to many different people
To them it means third world,
unsophistication, natives running naked
It means soccer fanatics, bad drivers,
talking a mile a minute,
and lots of drugs and violence

But to me, it is...
Where a piece of my heart
will now always be
Where four months of learning
turned into a lifetime supply of knowledge
Where memories were made that will
never, ever leave me

Ecuador is...
Where English is not the native language
Where I spent countless hours
trying to understand a foreign tongue
Where I slowly but surely
chipped away at the language barrier day by day
Where I had some of my favorite conversations
with people who became some of my closest friends

Ecuador is...
Where a bus ride to school takes you past the prettiest valleys
And an active volcano or two
Where there is always someone trying to sell you
something on a bus or on the street
Where a couple planes, trains, and automobiles
are the only thing standing between you
and the Amazon rainforest or the Galapagos Islands
Where a long, uncomfortable bus ride
can take you just about anywhere in the country,
even if leaves at midnight and takes 10 hours

Ecuador is...

Where school definitely
did not come easy
Where I sank a few times
while learning to swim
Where Spanish anthropology essays were
more overwhelming than physiology exams
Where I bonded with fellow gringos
and met some pretty great Ecuadorian students

Ecuador is...

Where there's a party every night of the week
Where the salsa music captured my soul
and I learned a move or two from the locals
Where one drink led to another
with friends that kept me up with the sun
Where every song made my hips shake
and every club felt like a magical fortress of celebration

Ecuador is...

Where basketball may not be
said the same way
But is played and loved just the same
Where I spent most of my afternoons
in the gym with my team
because it felt like my safe haven
in an ever changing environment
Where I truly learned how much
I could have in common with these people
Where a basketball tournament gave me a shiny medal
and some of my fondest memories
Where teammates became my temporary family
4,140 miles away from home

Ecuador is...

Nothing that I had ever expected
but everything that I had hoped it would be
Where my eyes were opened
to a whole world of possibilities
Where my whole being wants nothing more
than to return to this incredible place someday

Where a piece of my heart
continues to be
And where all of my extraordinary experiences
will eternally be a part of me