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## The Galápagos! Beach Sun and Awesome Bakeries

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# “The Galápagos! Beach Sun and Awesome Bakeries”

## 02/28/2013

Hola, ¿que tal? In my last blog entry I began to explain how the last week of our Mountain Geology class took place on the island Isabela in the Galápagos Islands. Our journey to the Galápagos on Sunday was a long trek in itself and involved multiple bus rides, a plane ride and two boat rides. Once we got situated in our hostel in Isabela we were given the rest of the afternoon to explore the (small) town. So of course, most everyone took to the beach at the first chance we got. As different as the Galápagos is compared to Hawaii, there are a lot of physical similarities. The color of the ocean, the types of volcanoes, the lava flows, the warm air, strong sun, the fauna and flora even draw similarities and remind me of home here on the islands...even the people remind me in a way of my tropical island home. Not just because they are more tan (ha-ha) but the way people meet, treat, and greet each other here; the people on the islands have a strong close connection as a community; the town's very small and quite different from what most of us are used to, especially those of us students who are city folk. It is comforting to return to the island lifestyle where I can jump in the ocean and let my stress fall away into the sea breeze.

While in Isabela, we alternated days of class lectures with day field trip hikes to the volcano Sierra Negra, so in total, we had three class lectures and two days of hiking. Unfortunately for me, a wasp stung me on my ankle the Sunday we arrived in Isabella and incidentally I discovered my wasp allergy. The painful sting didn't produce any initial swelling, which gave me a false sense of security, but by the end of lecture Monday morning, my foot had begun to swell, and after hiking eight hours up volcano Sierra Negra on Tuesday, my ankle had turned a nice shade of purple, blue and red. At this point I could hardly walk and my professor advised me to go to the local hospital to get it checked. That evening, after answering a couple of the doctor's questions, the doctor suddenly pulled out a big syringe and motioned for me to move to the other room without even telling me what the shot was for or if I consented to having one! Anyways, long story short, by the end of the week I had received two shots in very embarrassing places, received multiple piggy back rides from people (including my professor!), became known throughout the town as the crippled girl (and to my friends as Gandalf, due to my walking stick), and became very adept at using crutches up the sides of volcanoes. On the other hand, I did get to use my horseback riding skills on the ten-hour hike that Thursday! Although my ankle caused me to miss a lot of explanations my professor gave about the landscape during the field trips, I did learn a lot that week about the formation of the islands and drew many parallels between the volcanoes here and in the Hawaiian Islands. Furthermore, it was a great reminder to me that you never quite know what will happen when you travel; by doing so, you are opening yourself up to a whole world of mistakes, mishaps and uncertainty, but it is the adventures, friends and self-learning along the way that make it all more than worthwhile. Plans are always going to change and things are going to “get in the way,” but it's important to find something to smile and laugh about, and sometimes, that thing is yourself.

Now I am currently on the island San Cristóbal, the island we will be staying on for the remainder of our study abroad journey. I have been here for five days and have settled in with my new host family, who of course, is wonderful. I have started an anthropology class called “Organizations, Development and Volunteerism” and it is a thought-provoking discussion and volunteering-based class where we choose our own organizations to volunteer with and bring our volunteering experiences together within a broader context with our in-class discussions about society and the meaning of development and progress. We are still finalizing our volunteer sites, but starting next week we will each be volunteering with our respective organizations. It is only my second week here on the islands but it is my eighth week here in Ecuador. Ecuador has given me so much happiness and I feel an eternal gratitude for everything I have experienced and learned. I feel it is high time for me to start giving back to the place I have gained so much from.