

# Erika Savitt – Exchange at Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand) & Exchange at Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez (Viña del Mar, Chile)

**Major:** Management | **Minor:** Real Estate

## **I studied abroad because...**

I wanted to study abroad to immerse myself in a new culture, learn the language, eat the food, meet people, and what better way to do that than making that country your new home for a semester.

## **One of my biggest challenges before studying abroad was...**

finding housing in Chile because not many people spoke English, and the university didn't provide contacts or recommendations.

## **A typical meal I had while studying abroad:**

Most meals were typical Thai street foods for about 1-3 dollars per meal. We enjoyed Pad Thai, Green Curry, Cashew Chicken, and much more at the university and the food vendors near our apartment.

## **My favorite spot in my host city:**

In Viña Del Mar, my favorite spot was actually the lawn at the university. The school is set atop a hill overlooking Viña, Valparaíso, and the ocean, so it's the perfect place to enjoy lunch but best of all the amazing sunsets.

## **One cool event I got to experience while abroad:**

While in Chile, I was able to travel to neighboring countries and see the Salt Flats in Bolivia, do vineyard tours in Argentina, and visit Machu Picchu in Peru.

## **The most memorable experience for me while abroad was...**

while I was in Thailand, their king passed away after 70 years in power. The entire country went into mourning, and we wore black and white for the next few months. It was so eye-opening seeing the whole country come together and put aside politics and other issues to pay respect and honor to their beloved king.

## **A habit I picked up while abroad:**

Living so close to people from all over, I noticed that I picked up some phrases or words that aren't used here. Also there were many activities, such as hiking mountains, surfing, etc., that I would love to do again.

## **What I found most challenging while abroad was...**

the language. I knew a couple words in Spanish and of course Google Translate helped, but not enough to successfully communicate everything I needed. Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez offered a basic Spanish communication class where I learned a ton, and by the end I could have short conversations and understand locals.

## **What surprised me most about study abroad was...**

how quickly this new city becomes a home to you and how much you miss it when you leave. You make such close friends and memories and those times and places will always stay close to you.

## **My last bit of advice:**

You may never have another chance to live and study abroad for almost half a year. Study abroad doesn't have to be expensive and you can take all the classes you would be taking here abroad. Lastly once you are abroad and Hiking volcanoes in Indonesia, spending a day caring for elephants, traveling around Patagonia or seeing Machu Picchu, you won't have a fear of missing out on Gainesville. Everything will be waiting for you when you get back!