

Emily Yedinak, a Fulbright Alumni Ambassador and her changing experience in Chile.

She arrived in Santiago in 2014 from the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology as a U.S. Student Program grantee to spend almost a year at the Facultad de Química y Biología of the Universidad de Santiago, USACH, and here is her story at the Weekly Fulbright Student Program Posts.

Dear Potential Fulbright Applicant

By Emily Yedinak, 2013-2014, Chile



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If you were anything like me, you may have heard that a Fulbright grant is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but that the application process is rigorous and very competitive. Perhaps you are filled with a lot of questions. You may even, like me, be filled with self-doubt. And for that reason, I want to share a small piece of my story.

Fulbright changed my life and I mean it changed my life in a colossal, momentous, and fantastic way. I didn't know that when I stepped off the plane in Santiago, Chile, I was embarking on the biggest adventure of my life. I had read books about Chilean culture and history in preparation for my departure, but no book would have told me the depth of kindness I found in my peers as I slowly crawled, stumbled, and fell head-first into my Chilean life. I also would have never realized how difficult it was going to be adjusting to an entirely different world. But the incredible thing that I discovered was there were always people willing to help and guide me. The Chileans I met not only accepted me, but treated me like family – whether it was taking care of me when I was sick, helping me grocery shop and cook dinner after I had dislocated my shoulder, or lending me money when my wallet was stolen. The connections I made transcended cultural boundaries.



Emily Yedinak, 2013-2014, Chile, taking a moment to admire the view from Easter Island and welcome lunch in Cajón del Maipo

As a scientist (my grant was in engineering, you can read more about my research [here](#)), you are taught to observe and draw conclusions from the world around you. I found in Santiago a bustling, colorful city full of life. I curiously observed the memorials scattered throughout Chile commemorating its recent and bloody history. I savored the new flavors, smells, and sounds. I watched as one of numerous political marches or soccer ("fútbol") celebrations passed by on the streets. I collected a hundred photos of the most beautiful street art I had seen. I strained to listen as Santiago whispered to me all that it had seen and survived. I also explored Chile in its incredible diversity. I gazed over the vast Chilean deserts in the north, hitchhiked in search of snow in the Andes Mountains, traversed over the hiking trails in Patagonia, and quietly looked in awe as the sun rose over the Moai statues on Easter Island. Chile surprised me in the most unexpected ways.

To you, Potential Fulbright Applicant, I say apply, no matter how unsure you are. Keep an open mind to any opportunity. If you are not set on any one single place, you can significantly increase your chances of being accepted for a Fulbright grant depending on the country you choose to apply (all the statistics are listed on the website). You may be just as surprised as I was to fall utterly in love with an unexpected place. (I have pretty much accepted I am Chilean by heart.) Allow yourself to take the chance of a lifetime, because it will, guaranteed, change your life.

Sincerely,

Emily Yedinak

Fulbright Alumni Ambassador 2016

Have questions for Emily about her Fulbright experiences in Chile and as a Fulbright Alumni Ambassador? You can reach her at EYedinak.alumniambassador@fulbrightmail.org.