

Samantha Corn
International Experience
July 12th, 2018

An experience that I have dreamed about, but never truly thought would become a reality. That is how I begin to describe this experience to those who ask me about it. Something that a person with the passion for agriculture, education, and sheer life experience, could only wonder about. When In 2016, when I got news that the Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador program was taking a select few of participants on the International experience, I knew then that I had to push myself throughout my ambassador ship to qualify for such an experience. Fast forward to 2018, the day that I received word that I was accepted to partake in this year's trip. I have never felt so much excitement in my life, I immediately left class to call my family and inform them of the wonderful news. For a few weeks after, I spent so much time researching Argentina's different agricultural practices, businesses, and even how their government works. However, the reality of the trip never settled in until I went to apply for a passport. Since I went to the courthouse in my hometown, I knew everyone in the building. When I explained where I was going, as expected, all the women who watched me grow up immediately asked why on earth I would be crossing the equator. In that instant I took the opportunity to share my story as an ambassador and how I reached the point to be applicable for this trip, I was able to educate the people who once taught me. This was the time where I realized how much I have grown through this program, how much has been offered to me, how much I have learned, and especially how much more I had to learn.

Take another second to fast forward to June 19th, 2018, the start of everything. This was our first official day in Argentina, we landed in Buenos Aires the night before and had this day scheduled to sort of ease ourselves into everything. We started the day by taking a city



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tour of Buenos Aires, during this time our tour guide was able to give us a few fun facts on Argentina, the history of it, and the significance of the holiday they were celebrating. While we were within the city we were able to see most of their capital and where their legislative acts take place, we even got to see the Casa Rosada (the Pink House); which is their version of the White House. During our tour a lot of things caught my attention, however, one of the main things



that stood out to me was the poverty level of the area we were in. There was very unstable building everywhere that were obviously still being occupied by families, trash and other forms of garbage was scattered all throughout the streets and ditches. Despite them walking the border of being a third world country, I was very shocked to see how well these people strived through the hardships of this poverty. The ways people have adapted to the area and the circumstances the recent economic distresses is very impressive. Little things here and there that caught my attention and showed me ways to make the best of any situation. Little things such as how on almost every balcony of every apartment building, there were plants, not just ivy's or flowers for decoration,



but small crops. These people were taking their financial dilemmas into their own hands and being extremely resourceful. Now I know that we see people doing this in America, but I have personally never seen it taken to such and extreme

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as it was in Argentina. It was truly eye opening to see how well the citizens made it through their situation.

The second day in Argentina, we made our way outside of Buenos Aires and into the city of Peragamino, which just so happens to be within one of the most fertile provinces of Argentina. This province is most easily compared to the Corn Belt that runs through America. Here we met with the Calderon family, we were able to tour their family farms and ranches. We spoke with the daughter of Alejandro Calderon about their production practices. She explained that they raise wheat, oats, sorghum, corn, and green peas. Growing up in the Brazos Valley, I am familiar with these types of crops, so I was able



to really get an inside view of how different and similar our production is compared to theirs. We



then visited their packaging plant and view their storage buildings. Here we were able to see how they sort through their crops, we learned about the requirements that must be met for the crops to qualify for market. Though we never got an exact dollar amount of the produce per ton, it was obvious how vital this part of their business was to the family's income. From there, we traveled a to one of my favorite stops of the whole

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tour, which was the Sociedad Rural, which was similar to a county fairground. This is the moment that made me really see how similar everything is to American. While walking through the fairgrounds, we saw where they held the swine and where they were shown, we saw the cattle pens and how the infrastructure is almost exactly the same as ours.



Once we wrapped up our tour, we were invited inside for lunch, this is where we ran into a group of Australian Agriculture students who were on a study abroad program. They had been traveling for about five days throughout Uruguay and ended up meeting us in the middle of their tour. This instance was where I feel that the true meaning of the Ambassador program came out. Here we were, Texans, in Argentina, telling our agriculture stories and experiences with a group of Aussies. I was able to sit with a few of them and create a conversation about the dynamics of



American Agriculture with them, we were able to compare our practices with theirs, and then also talk about the practices in Argentina as well. So, by the end of this mingling session, not only had I created friends from a different country, but I basically received an Australian version of our international experience. After mingling with them, we traveled outside of Peragamino into the small, rural, town of Rosario. Here we were able to tour their cattle ranch and learn about their

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operation. On this family owned and operated ranch, they run a seed stock system of about 400 head of black and red angus cattle. Mr. Alejandro spoke with us about how they rotated pastures, fed their cattle, bred them, and how they marketed their cattle. Getting to see how a system so similar to my families was very interesting for me, I was shocked to hear how similar our practices were.

The next day started with an early three-hour drive to the Port of San Lorenzo. There we toured ACA (Argentine Cooperative Association) which is the largest grain terminal in Argentina. As we visited ACA, we were able to watch as large trucks brought in fresh grains straight from the port, into the quality testing

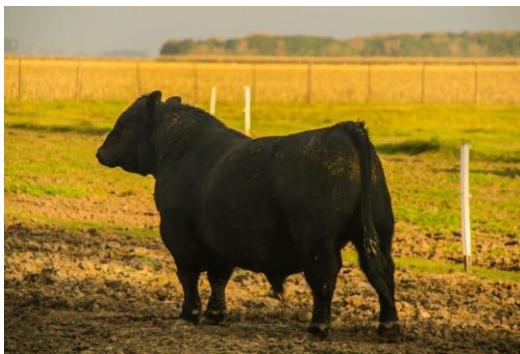


discarded. This process is like some of the quality assurance acts we enforce at home. A very prominent point made that only the best grains are sent through ACA. From there we went to the packaging part of the process, we were able to see the trucks being lifted in the air to empty the

plant. Here we were able to see upfront how they go through small amounts of each grain at a time and test for the best quality in each load. They were testing the different nutrient levels of the grains, and if it did not reach the minimum requirement, it was

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grains into large bins and one-ton sacks. To wrap up our tour of the grain terminal, we were taken into the headquarters and command center for the water ways. We were able to see how the computer systems redirects the ships coming through the port, and how they track them to see when the next shipment will be arriving. It was very intriguing to know that if one thing is off in the command center, it can know the rest of the port off schedule for the rest of the day, causing a delay in shipments and potentially a loss of income.



After our in San Lorenzo, we hopped back in the charter bus and traveled to Santa Lucia where we visited the Las Mercedes Feedlot. A 25,000 head feedlot that is based around Herefords, Red Angus, and Black Angus. The unique thing about this feedlot was not only the size, but the rotation of cattle. While the owner was speaking with us about the dynamics of his feedlot, he explained that the cattle only stay for 60 days before they are sent to market at 900-950 kilos. To just about any American, that sounds a little crazy. But we had to take into consideration that every bovine animal that goes through there is used strictly for human consumption, so they must raise easy feeding, efficient cattle that put-on weight quickly. All of this is so they can ship cattle to market on a weekly basis, in order to maintain a constant income, and so they can continue to provide for the local business and families.



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Soon after our tour, we traveled out of town to a small café. As some know, the World Cup has been going on, and soccer is a very important sport in Argentina. So, we sat in the back of the restaurant, ate some very interesting pizza, and watched Argentina take on Croatia. Sadly, they were defeated, however the experience of getting to first handedly witness so much pride in one's team and country was very amazing.



Day four in Argentina was by far my favorite day of them all! We traveled into the city of Buenos Aires to tour a livestock market, which is their version of an auction barn. And if you're keeping up with what I said, then yes, we traveled INTO the city to tour this facility! Mercado de



Liniers (Liniers Livestock Market) is located in the middle of down town Buenos Aires. When we arrived, you could imagine just how confused we all were as we tried to find the market. Once we got to where we needed to be to tour, I was already beyond amazed! This market was immaculate, and incredibly large! We spent our tour walking the catwalks overhead of all 12,000 head of cattle and on hand gauchos. Our tour guide walked us through the process similar to which the cattle go through as they

arrive at Liniers. We started at the scales watching them be unloaded from the trailer to immediately be weighed by the load, not head. The tour guide explained that they are sold by pen ranging from 4-25 head in each pen, and all sold to only one buyer that is the highest bidding on

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that pen. As I stated when I talked about the feedlot, all animals are sold strictly for consumption, so as expected, here they are as well. However, the catch is that all animals sold each day are taken directly to the slaughter houses and harvested within two days of purchase. This means that there are no middlemen between the auction barns and the slaughter houses. If you own a feedlot in Argentina, then you ship your cattle directly to be harvested, you do not buy them, feed them out, and then harvest, everything is only sold once. With all the facts I just stated about Liniers, you can see how different things are done there, however I was more shocked by the similarities than anything. As



a person who has grown up raising cattle in Texas and has taken part in all aspects of this industry, I am so interested to learn more about the cattle industry in Argentina and I am so glad that I was able to make this connection across the equator so early in my career. After our tour was completed and we were able to do a bit of shopping, we boarded a plane and flew northwest of Buenos Aires to Mendoza; which is located along the border of Chile at the base of the Andes Mountains.

Day 5 began at an olive plantation and oil processor. Though it was like the olive plantation we toured while in California, this was unique in many ways. We were able to tour the land where their olive trees ranging from 4-120 years old were planted. As most of the businesses in Argentina, this was a family owned and operated company that had been passed down for so many generations. The man we spoke to was able to inherit the plantation from his grandfather and has been running it on his own for several years now. After we toured the plantation and processors,

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he took us to their company store for olive and olive oil tasting. There we studied the difference in intensities, acidic tastes, and overall flavor, and do a bit of shopping for oil as well.

Next, we travelled only a few miles out to Norton Winery and Vineyard. Upon arrival, you could easily see the history within this business. From the thousands of hectars of land accumulated

by Norton, to the statues, landscaping, and many new additions to the winery. Since it is the beginning of winter there, we were not able to see the vineyard in harvest condition, but that did not faze us from seeing just how large this place was. As we stood in front of the building, we were able to get an impressive view of the Andes Mountains while listening about the long line of history this business had accumulated since 1895. Though it was sold to many owners between then and now, the Norton family customs have been upheld to this day. Fast forward to inside the



winery, we stood with twenty-foot-tall stainless-steel tanks, which were obviously very new to the company. Our first part of the tour consisted of us walking through the newest part of the winery, learning how they process grapes and eventually how they make their wine. We finally made it to

the older part of the winery, which was built in the 1920's and is still in use. Being able to stand with one foot in an early 2000's updated wine processor and one that is almost 100 years old was

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pretty eye opening to just how much we have modernized things, not specific to wine making, but in every aspect that goes into agriculture. After relishing in the enormity of Norton Winery, we took a walk underground to their wine cellar that has been in use since the business started. Just imagine, walking through tunnels of hundreds of years of wine, history, fame, and so much more, its completely mindboggling. After trying to take it all in, we were seated for the best dinner we had the entire trip and some quality time to take in everything we had experienced thus far!

Our next day in Mendoza was one of the most interesting to me, we travelled through the outskirts of Mendoza passing the Aconcagua Mountain while learning about how the citizens, farmers, and ranchers adapt to this semi-arid climate. Being in a desert area, only 3% of the land is cultivated and all the water used by farmers and ranchers is from mountain snow runoff. Since this city is prone to earthquakes, the locals have had to adapt by widening streets to fit people during an earthquake. Another impact the earthquakes have made on this city is the air quality.



Since the earthquakes can bust pipes, crush buildings and so much more, toxins have been emitted into the air and have caused fatalities. So, in response to this issue, they townsfolk have begun planting over 100,000 trees throughout the city in hopes to purify the air, also to increase

humidity and moisture levels in this dry area. Once we left Mendoza, we began to travel west, entering the Andes Mountains. For the next several hours, we spent the time driving amongst the Pre-Andes and the Andes. During this tour, we were able to get an up-close view of life in the

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mountains. Since the environment is so harsh, only certain crops can survive here, so they primarily produce onions, sweet potatoes, potatoes, garlic, and some people have begun vineyards here! With these crops being grown here, Mendoza has grown to be one of the primary produce shipment cities in Argentina. We were also able to see how the ranchers worked within the mountains. Adapting to the environment has taken a long time, and only certain operations last there. The tour guide explained that most of the time, the gauchos raised cattle and horses for the same business, and throughout the course of the year, they take turns (so to say) as to who lives in the mountains with the stock and who is working them on a daily basis. Alike to the other cattle operations I have spoken of, they are still raised for consumption but primarily for the villages within the mountains. Seeing the ways of life within the mountains was very interesting to say the least and seeing how they use the same practices we do in the Andes Mountains was so captivating! I cannot believe all of the similarities there are between here and there.

As we expected to travel back to Buenos Aires the next day, we ended up having to stay an extra day in Mendoza due to a peaceful protest that was taking place within the public service communities. However, we made the most of it by travelling back into the Pre-Andes for some fun. We made our way to a resort within the mountains for a day of ziplining! We hiked about five miles worth of mountains to reach the highest peaks for the ziplines, then descended between mountains and hundreds of feet over the huge Mendoza River. Though we were able to witness the beautiful scenery from the bus the day before, there is no way to compare the breathtaking views we had



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midair! By the end of the day, we were able have some time to reflect on the trip and even have a small reasons contest over a class of Angus bulls we had seen at the Calderon Ranch earlier in the trip.

Our last full day in Argentina was chocked full of opportunities to explore the city and get everyone out of their comfort zone. That morning we flew back to Buenos Aires and loaded back onto the bus for an in-depth tour of Buenos Aires. During the tour we were able to see not only more of the third world side of the city, but the wealthiest houses, buildings, and parks. We passed by the house of American Ambassadors, and even got to get out and tour the largest and most famous cemetery in South America. That night we went to Tango Porteno for Tango Lessons! Not only did we partner up and learn this historic dance, but we then got to eat dinner with a wonderful show!

Rounding out to the very last day away from the states, we got to travel the city by foot and explore so many things within the area. Early that morning we visited the Buenos Aired Cathedra where Pope St. Francis was once a bishop. This was one of the most breathtaking buildings I have ever seen. I feel that spending the day within this church was my favorite way to end this trip. As I sat basking in my own faith and seeing the faith of other come out, I was truly able to reflect on this trip and understand how incredible it was. I was able to sit



alone and take in not only the beauty of the cathedral, but the beauty of life itself.

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I have stated many times how much I enjoyed this trip and all that it entailed, however, as I prepare to move out and enter my new life as a college student I don't think words will ever be able to express my gratitude towards this program. I not only found myself within this organization, but I grasped that persona and used it to lead and guide me to where and who I am today. I have crushed what I used to call a comfort zone and learned so much more than I ever thought was possible. I am so proud to say that I spent my high school years as a Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador and can honestly say that I have never had an experience as life changing as the ones I have endured within this program. Thank you to all who took part in making this once in a lifetime experience possible, and to those who have taken part in supporting this program in any way.