

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Natalie Freeze

Program: Honors Ecology & Legacy - Summer 2019

Major: Communication

Earning the Research Experience Badge:



My partner Ember and I studied whales and where they were located across various bays. We scanned the area from our observation point, searching for as far as we could see and took note of any whales we saw. Then, we identified if it was a solo whale, a mother calf pair, or a surface active group of whales. Next, we plotted where the whale or whales were spotted by making a grid of the area and noting where it was. Our objective was to find if mother calf pairs were located closer to the shore and in shallower waters.

I was hesitant coming into my study abroad because I had no experience conducting research and I knew that it would be pretty research-heavy. However, my nerves were quickly calmed as I realized there were other students feeling the same way and we were all learning as we went. We also did small and more simple research before tackling our massive whale research project which built my confidence and abilities.

Transferable Skills:



Locally, our research is important for the whale watching tourism agencies that rely on knowing where the whales are so that they can satisfy their customers. There are also many laws and regulations surrounding whale watching boats and how they interact with mother calf pairs, so it is crucial to know where they are and how close you can get to them. Our research is also helpful to note if the patterns we found are unique to this population and location or, if it is universal for all southern right whales. Finally, it can help tourists understand which lookout points gave a better view of the bay based on where the whales are distributed.

Studying abroad taught me so much about myself, my strengths, and passions so since returning home, I have been able to apply myself more and continue to grow and develop as a person.



“My learning abroad experience in Montana, Salt Lake City and Buenos Aires, Argentina taught me more about myself and the world around me than any other experience in my life to this point. Worth every penny.”