

6 weeks into my time in Paraguay I feel like I have gotten to know a little bit about the culture both from the people I am working with and from my time out in the community. While this first tip might seem a little redundant I think it is probably the most important; **approach everything with an open mind**. Whether that's the food, a cultural event, trying something new in your life in this new country, anything it might be, approach it with an open mind. For me this came into play with Chipa, a traditional Paraguayan food made from mandioca flour. Chipa stands are on just about every corner and everyone who lives here absolutely loves it. When I saw it was on a list of foods to try in Paraguay, I became interested but once I actually tried it I found I didn't really enjoy it and it mostly tasted like stale bread to me. I then spent my next couple weeks not eating or trying any new Chipa until we went to a town festival where they had Chipa stuffed with a sausage, it wasn't until that moment that I actually understood what everyone was talking about. For me, I wasn't able to appreciate this traditional Paraguayan food until I found a way that I liked to eat it. My next tip would probably be to **engage with the community you are living in outside of your workplace as much as possible**. This could just be a friendly hello while you walk past someone, engaging in a conversation in a shop, or taking the time to have a meaningful conversation with someone you meet. I definitely wouldn't say that this is something I have been actively practicing as much as I would like but I have observed it in a couple of my friends. One of my friends Ryan, fully embraced the Paraguayan culture; anywhere we went he was talking to people on the street, he had built relationships with people in the community and I think it made his time here a lot brighter. I think in the US we are often primed to live a faster lifestyle, going from one place to the next and not stopping to talk to people on the street or slow down as often. This brings me to my next tip, **slow down and enjoy as much of your internship as you can**. Internships can be really hard both in the US and Internationally but they are often also incredibly impactful experiences. I know for me when it comes to school or work experiences I tend to push through all of the hard parts and everything staying in a "work work work" mindset and rarely stopping to slow down. I think the Paraguayan lifestyle as well as the nature of field research have taught me to slow down a little bit and take the time to enjoy what I'm doing. When I'm in the field all day, especially if I am with other people who are collecting different kinds of data, I can't necessarily be in a "go go go" mindset all day. I may be done at 1 but we aren't leaving the field site until 4:30 so I have to find ways to slow down throughout my day. This could mean I walk slower, take some time to enjoy nature, try to find other wildlife in the area, and even sometimes just pausing what I'm doing to learn from the other researchers and observe their data collection methods. Which brings me into workplace norms and dynamics in Paraguay. My tip for navigating a different workspace especially in a field research context would be to **make yourself the most knowledgeable about your own project**. I have found that while staff are incredibly knowledgeable and helpful, they may not be as equipped to answer questions within your project niche. When you do the research to show that you are equipped to take on the project you want, you give them the opportunity to support you and have confidence in your abilities. Having done significant research into your project niche also allows you to direct more general questions that you may need answered that you can then adapt to your project in areas where you need support. My international internship in Paraguay has been one of the most impactful experiences I have had and I hope these tips can help make your experience a little bit easier.