

Dear friends,

I hope you are doing great.

I'm writing this because I want to keep in touch with you and update you with my life news here in Chile 🇨🇱.

I applied to and was accepted by the Chilean ministry of education into a program of theirs, called *English Opens Doors Program (EODP)*, where they recruit English speaking volunteers to teach in Chilean **public** schools.

I arrived in Santiago, Chile on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>, spent the first week with other volunteers in orientation in Santiago. There is a total of 76 of us, with around half from the US and some from English speaking countries (UK, Canada, Ireland, South Africa, New Zealand, Nigeria, Cameron) and some non-natives from other countries (China, Hungary, Russia, Bulgaria etc). Most of us know some Spanish, although with greatly varied level of mastery. We are assigned to public schools in different regions of Chile by EODP (e.g. Metropolitano, Coquimbo, Los Lagos, Los Ríos, Ñuble, Aysén etc)

During orientation, we received lectures on Chilean culture and participated in workshops focused on teaching skill, classroom management skill etc. It was a week of wonderful experience and I loved our group. The vibe felt awesome to me---everyone was very kind, helpful, seem to have come to Chile for a good cause. After orientation, on the day when we had to leave Santiago and go to our assigned regions, some of us woke up early in dawn (including me of course) and hugged and said goodbye to other volunteers departing earlier than us. Though we spent only 1 week together in Santiago, it was an unforgettable and beautiful memory for me. I was low-key moved.

I am assigned to this school called *Liceo Bicentenario de Excelencia Polivalente San Nicolás* in this little town called San Nicolás in the newly established Ñuble region in central Chile. It's a huge school with 2500 kids from Grade 6 to Grade 12. I work with Chilean English teachers and teach classes in 45 min sessions to 24 different classes a week (aka 24 pedagogical hours per week). The focus of my program, therefore also my classes, is to improve English speaking and listening skills of the students. I design interactive activities for the students to get them to speak and to engage the language as

much as possible. However, since it's a lot of speaking (for me and them), and thanks to the super high energy level of the students, my throat is usually burnt and mentally tired after a whole day of teaching. But I guess that's teachers do isn't it?

My school is exceptionally big and well-equipped comparing to other public schools where other volunteers work. My school offers German, French and Chinese language besides English; It also has dedicated buildings and offices for visual arts, music, technical education and has a gym and a full-size soccer field with tracks and bleachers. I borrowed a viola from the music department, in exchange, I play for the orchestra too hahaha.

I live with a host family in the countryside about 10 minutes from my school by car. It's a nice little house with 2 dogs, 2 cats and 6 chickens as far as animal goes. My host mom, Daniela, works in the state troops, does projects for the prison and sometimes applies her workplace expertise to our dogs when they break into the chicken ring and try to eat the chicken (which happens pretty frequently). She works as a freelancer too, and she pretty often has to travel to work on the weekend. Her ex-husband lives and works in Santiago with his parents and comes back every other weekend to spend some time with the family. They have 3 kids, a 9 yro, a 12 yro and a 14 yro.

My life at the host family hasn't been very smooth, but nonetheless okay. I'm not writing to complain about anything because I greatly appreciate the fact that they choose to host me in the first place. Instead, I just want to share my life with you, my friend.

1. The water boiler for shower has been broken since late August and I'd have to heat the water with the wood stove 1-2 hrs beforehand if I want to take a hot shower. For this reason, I have now adapted to take quick cold shower more frequently and learned how to light fire in a clean, efficient way with paper/cardboard and firewood in the stove.
2. The house is so remote in the countryside, the Wi-Fi is capped at 100G per month and it usually runs out within the first 2 weeks of each month. To cope with this, I got a postpaid phone plan with a lot of data to ensure that I can work from home.

There's a 60 yro nanny at the house who the kids call "Mamita" (like a diminutive way for Mamá, Mom). She's been living and helping with the housework since the birth of the first child, aka for 14 years by now. Angélica (her name, also how I call her), works in the house Monday-Friday, cooks, does dishes, laundry, makes bed, cleans the house, basically all the housework when Daniela is working.

From what I've observed in the limited time I've lived here, While I have nothing against having a nanny at home helping manage the house, I found myself not accustomed to certain things I see in the house, and sometimes getting a little uncomfortable because of those. The first thing is that the kids rarely (almost never) helps with house chores. I'm not talking about doing the dishes but rather things like cleaning up after themselves or putting things back after use. The kids don't do that. The nanny has to knock the door really hard and yell multiple times "Time for lunch/dinner!" to get the kids to the table. Once finished eating, the kids just leave everything on the table and go straight to play video games in the living room or go back to their own rooms. Also, on the weekend when the nanny is not here and Daniela works away, the kids would just eat things like bread, butter, jelly and milk and never putting them back to the shelves, leaving the jars open, knives unwashed with butter on it, milk open and dirty plates on the table. When mom returns, it is **her** who does all the dishes, cleans up all the mess after the kids, although she's probably been busy for the entire day doing something productive while the kids are just slack at home having had all the time in the world to help clean up their own mess if they wanted. Not wanting to make Daniela's life harder while not wanting to intervene with their lives either, I just clean up after myself as I would in my own house. I found this phenomenon strange and uncomfortable when I first arrived in my family. Strange because they are not kindergarten kids anymore. Uncomfortable because it looks to me that Daniela is way too busy while the kids are way too chilled. Then I talked to Daniela and other Chilean friends about my observation and they told me it's common here in Chile that the nanny or the parents serve the kids food and clean up afterwards. Therefore, I've just come to accept this as how it is in this family or maybe how families are in Chile.

On the weekend when I don't work, I hang out with some of my colleagues and with other volunteers too (there are 4 who are geographically also personally close to me). I've also been getting to know the Chilean culture and society every day and learning the off-the-track Chilean Spanish with all kinds of their original words and phrases.

Overall, I like living here because I feel like I'm becoming a more complete person: learning to be more independent, more self-conscious, more aware of different cultures and customs. I'm learning to find a work-life balance, to cope with family situations that I'm not accustomed to; I've learned to light fire, to make Chilean food, to find a way to engage the students in class so that they speak and enjoy class. Every time I find life difficult, or encounter something frustrating, I tell myself that this is exactly the reason why I came to Chile---I chose to challenge myself in the uncertainty in an unfamiliar country; I wanted to use those challenges as ways to reflect on myself and grow as a person.

#### **Future plan:**

I will finish the *English Opens Doors* program that I'm currently in on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019. I will then travel a bit in Chile and work in an English summer camp for 2 weeks in the beginning of January should my application be accepted. Then, before Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 2020, I will return to China to spend some time with families for the **Chinese New Year** which I haven't been able to celebrate with them for 7 years. Then I will return to the Boston area in late February before heading back to Chile for next year. Why back to Chile? Because I've accepted the offer to teach Chinese in my school for the next school year from March to December 2020 as an official teacher (the complete teacher experience).

#### **Protest**

As you may have been seeing on TV or in news, there have been days of protest on a national scale against what was initially raised metro fare in Santiago, but then rapidly escalated into protest against social inequality with particular discontent on the pension

system, government corruption, healthcare system, expensive cost of living, and ridiculously unfair income distribution.

From my perspective, based on some research I did online about the Chilean economy, based on my conversation with Angélica and my Daniela about various issues about the protest, I deeply sympathize and therefore support the causes for which they are protesting. I also joined the marching with my Chilean friends on the streets, peacefully and with great caution for our safety of course. Below I've attached some informative photos about the protest.

Thanks for reading. My apology for the excessive length. I'll try to make future updates short and sweet. I have various topics and content already drafted.

Un abrazo!

Best wishes,

Jingyun (Roderick) Huang

From San Nicolás, Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### Photo Gallery:

A cueca class with other volunteers. Cueca is the national dance of Chile.



One of my favorite class: 7<sup>th</sup> graders



**Looking out from my house:**



**Protesters in Chillan, Ñuble.**





Finally, my best friend in the house 😊



