

IAESTE Internship in Nicaragua

I started my internship in Nicaragua at the end of September and it lasted for 12 weeks. During my first week at the university I met other exchange students, from IAESTE and other organizations. I was shown many projects the university is currently working on and got to talk to a lot of professors and employees.

One project I started working on was to build machines for recycling plastic. I joined a group of students and in the workshop of the university we made the parts for the machine. The machine we were making is an injection machine, made to melt shredded plastic pieces and press the molten plastic into a new shape. Furthermore, I designed moulds for the injection machine to make new useful parts out of the recycled plastic.

The other project I was working on was about recycling e-waste. There are a lot of hazardous substances in some plastic parts which makes it difficult to recycle plastic. These hazardous materials are especially present in electronic waste as they are needed to prevent the inflammation of the electronic devices. However, if these plastic parts are recycled one must be aware of the presence of the substances and handle them correctly. During my internship I learned so much about the different types of plastic and all kinds of additives. In some countries there are strict rules on how much of certain hazardous substances can be in the plastic. In Nicaragua itself there are not many restrictions. One future goal of the university is to analyze plastic parts and raise awareness of these substances in the country.

During my stay in Nicaragua I also got to see a lot of fantastic places in the country during my free days. Around León there are multiple volcanos which I would highly recommend to hike because the experience and the view are worth walking for. For a relaxed day one could go to the beach which is only 20 km away from León or also just stay in the city, get to know more about the history of the country and enjoy the beautiful colonial city. Even longer trips were possible on weekends, like a trip to Granada, the other big colonial city or to Masaya volcano to see the lava still flowing. In the north of Nicaragua, I managed to go swimming inside a canyon. South from León there is the biggest lake of Central America with many beautiful islands. The biggest island, Ometepe, has two majestic volcanos and a wonderful nature full of butterflies, monkeys and reptiles. It was an amazing experience to hike the second highest volcano, Concepción, on this island with an altitude of 1610m.

During an internship abroad you get working experience and you see a lot of the country, but the best part is you get to know a lot of new people and talk a lot with local people. It is very good for learning some Spanish and also it is the best way to experience a new culture. At some point during my internship I got together with other exchange students and we started our own little project to help a children's home. We collected money from friends and family to give the children there a Christmas present and enhance their infrastructure a bit. I also got to know much about the history of Nicaragua, the special words which are only used in Nicaragua, the landscape with all the volcanos, the local foods and much more. Even if I saw so much of this country and now know so much about it, there is even more to see. I really hope more people will visit Nicaragua and fall in love with this country.