

A year in Paraguay

Fiona Cooper, *December 2006*



This first year has been one of great highs interspersed with some lows. Getting used to a new culture is never easy; there are too many things you take for granted in your own country and adapting to new ways of doing things always takes time. Yet it's a wonderful thing to know that you're doing what God's called you to do and, of course, there have been many blessings along the way.

My first challenge was getting used to the heat. It was new for me to have my glasses steam up when I stepped outside! The summer heat made my skin all clammy and my hair all frizzy. I learned to thank God for air conditioning. I've appreciated not having to think about taking a coat with me, and the happiness of blue skies almost all the time.

I've loved getting to know the Paraguayan culture. It is vastly different to the UK. Because of the heat, things take a lot longer and move a lot slower. People are much more important than tasks, which can be a challenge for me, coming from a task-orientated background. Paraguayans don't like to disappoint you face to face, so they will agree to anything you suggest, but won't necessarily do it. They will give you an answer to your question, whether they know it or not. They are a very gentle people; you very rarely hear a raised voice or a grumble. They are very welcoming to strangers. They work very hard in order to put bread on the table; there is no such thing as disposable income for the majority of the population.

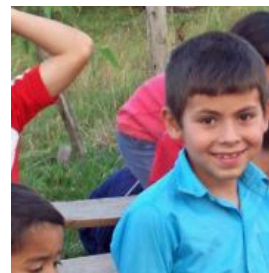
There are many more things I've yet to learn. I really enjoy the challenge of adapting to a new culture; it gives you a different perspective on things and it teaches you so much about your own culture.

I was very warmly welcomed by the SIM team in Paraguay. It has been a real blessing for me to be looked after by such caring people. Most of the team come from North America and I had a few experiences of culture clash while spending time with them. (I'm still struggling to cope with the concept of eating sweet and salty things together!)

My work at FEISA (St Andrew's Early Years Teacher Training College) has been a great pleasure. I've had the opportunity to develop new skills and use old ones. The biggest joys have come from putting together a teacher's guide for teaching English to young children and do workshops with the students on the same topic. I've taught English to a great bunch of students and helped with the publicity and communications work. I've loved getting to know the college teachers, who have a deep faith and have been an inspiration to me this year.

The hardest thing about this year has been feeling very alone at times. It has taught me a lot about relying on God (mostly how much more I've got to learn!) and I've had great experiences of God along the way. I am so grateful for everything that has happened this year because I've learned more about myself and more about God.

Now I'm looking forward to the coming year. I hope to run a workshop for pre-school teachers on teaching English to young children and to publish my teacher's guide on the internet. I hope to develop the friendships I've started this year and to begin to get a feel for what my future may hold.



0 comments

- [Add a comment to this page](#)

Urgent Prayer Need

Pray for the country of Nigeria - for peace to be restored, and for the Lord's comfort for all those affected by the recent violence.