

Chillin' Wit Da Chileans

By Mari ve MacGREGOR

Last February 6, five students from the Atlantic Tourism and Hospitality Institute headed for Chile. They are the first students to be part of a new program called the International Tourism and Hospitality Management program. Alex Feldman, who himself is a native of Chile, is the organizer and instructor of this new project.

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The idea for this project started years ago when someone had the idea for a trade mission. Since then, ATHI has played host to 6 Chilean students on a Canadian Tourist and Hospitality Experience in late 2002. They received work experience at the Delta and the Culinary Institute, and got to explore the culture and lifestyle of the Island. Now it's our turn to thrust some locals deep into a far away culture. For eight blissful weeks, the students will be immersed in a world of grape-stomping,

Cueca dancing, and class-five white water rafting.

ATHI students Amanda Flight, Julie Mann, Kristy Hoddinott, Lecia Furber, and Alana Houle have been preparing for this adventure since October 2002. They've studied Spanish, Chilean history, geography, and culture, as well as international business and marketing, food and wine, and world culture. They've also prepared a presentation on Canadian culture which will be presented to students at the university they will be attending. The presentation will be entirely in Spanish, of course.

Once they arrive in Chile, the first stops will include historic and artistic museums, the wine country, and Satiago, where Chile was founded in 1541 by a fellow named Pedro De Valdivia. After this immediate immersion into the culture, the girls will be taken to Pucon where they will attend the University of La Frontera/ITUR. They will also begin work in several tourism industries, such as casinos, restaurants, hotels, golf courses,

and country clubs. (Country clubs differ from golf courses in that they have recreational activities for the whole family, not just golf.)

During the second month, the girls will be transported to Vina Del Mar, the Garden City. They will attend the university there for the remainder of their visit, while living with host families.

So why send them to Chile? Well, surprisingly, Chile has a lot of similarities to PEI when it comes to tourism. As the PEI population increases by ten times its norm in the summer due to tourism, so does the population of Chile. Some of the most prosperous industries in Chile come from fishing, agriculture, and tourism, which incidentally are the same on PEI.

This venture to another country will be beneficial to the girls in several ways. First off, they've learned a

new language. That can never hurt ya. Second, they are getting experience they wouldn't otherwise receive in Canada, and their prospects of getting work in tourism businesses around the world is increasing with this experience. Third, knowledge is valuable. These girls have been studying Chile and are experiencing Chile firsthand. They will have a great sense of the field into which they wish to progress.

While they won't be visiting the infamous Easter Island, nor will they be venturing to the northern Chile, they will have the pleasure of taking in some rodeos, a soccer game, and social dances. "If you're in Chile, you need to know how to Salsa!" says Feldman.

In the future, Feldman hopes to expand the program so students may travel to other parts of the world. But for now, they'll stick with Chile.



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