

Emotional but Perfect Goodbye

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Wilderness Retreat:

We started the week in the very paradisiac place which was Lily's farm. We woke up at 6am to breathtaking views of the Ecuadorean rain-forest and some of us headed with Milton (who owns the farm) to go see cows being milked. Despite some overnight illnesses, those affected woke up feeling a lot better so, after breakfast, we headed down the river and spent a good chunk of time swimming, laughing, soaking up the sun, and a little bit of screaming (there were some huge spiders). We all found that this trip to Lily's was a much needed retreat from the lovely but sometimes overwhelming chaos of Santo Domingo and we are very grateful to her, Milton, and Nellie for welcoming us. Here we continued our own devotional on Ecclesiastes, a book which we have found has far greater value to the ways we live our lives than at face value, as well as going through 2 devotionals as on Numbers. Tuesday morning, a few of us helped milk the cows (some of us more successfully than others) before we headed back to Santo Domingo.



Back to Work:

Our project started that Tuesday afternoon as we headed down to the church and got stuck in with the painting of the walls and fences. Some of us enjoyed it more than others and Issy managed to throw paint all over Phoebe and herself as she broke a chair and threw a pot of paint at Phoebe (quite literally Phoebe's feet still haven't fully recovered). This project carried on throughout the week and ended a day early with the church looking rather pretty, if I do say so myself.



Also throughout the week we did a lot of practice for the Sunday service as we were leading worship. Learning five songs off by heart in a language you don't know is as hard as it sounds!

Thursday we had a very important mission...three words: WEDDING. OUTFIT. SHOPPING. We had been invited to a wedding and were all (maybe minus the boys) very excited to pick out some nice dresses. After trying out most of the fitting rooms in Santo Domingo, we all came home with lovely outfits.

Thursday afternoon, of course, we headed to our beloved San Pedro for our final service and were very much treated with food and freshly squeezed orange juice (if hands could have 6 packs - Liesel Anoushka and Issy's hands would have them after squeezing oranges for 2 hours). It has been amazing to see God work in San Pedro; such a small town yet with such a passion for God.

Preparing to Part:

Friday, we made an effort to clean the entire house in the morning. Phoebe had slightly unorthodox cleaning methods in causing a minor flood when she knocked over the water station - this gave us a greater understanding for the animals that weren't selected as one of the two in Noah's ark.



Saturday morning we headed back into town to do some more shopping (not sure when we're going to realise that our suitcases are not Mary Poppins's bag) and Noah had a slightly traumatic barber experience

where it just felt like he was never going to stop cutting more off - we hear he is now the leading candidate for the new Sonic the Hedgehog movie. After lunch was the wedding! In true step team 2025 style, we were rushed getting ready and we found out how many people you can squeeze into one bathroom to use one mirror. The wedding was a great event with a lovely service from Pastor and lots of fun games and good food. Ben was selected to be on the brides team for the wedding games which resulted in hilarious photos of his sticking out like a sore thumb as the only guy. We ended the night with a final worship practice before falling very fast asleep after a long day.



Sunday we woke up, and despite knowing the business of the day ahead, we took time to celebrate the birthday of MADDIE with cake, presents and of course, the classical birthday song in English and Spanish. The service was beyond special. Leading the worship was amazing; we got to dance, teach them the actions to My Lighthouse, but overall praise and glorify the Lord. After the inspiring talk we were invited on stage for a goodbye send off and we got to express how grateful we were to the church and every single person in it for their generosity, kind heartedness and welcoming us as part of their family. This church has blessed us in way we couldn't imagine and

we just want to thank God for working so strongly and visibly through them. After church we played more football and basketball in the rain and then we were invited to the pastor's house where the entire church showed up to cook for us and play games with us which was so special. This night ended in quite a few emotional goodbyes as well as the whole room dancing together to worship music which was the most joyous scene ever. We will forever be grateful to this church, their dedication, but mostly to God, because of this opportunity He has presented us with, how He been with us every step of the way out here and has filled our hearts with love and a passion for serving Jesus Christ.



Prayer Points

- Thank God for our amazing time out here and the wonderful examples of Christ which we have been able to be witness to. We will, and hope you continue to, pray for the wonderful works of God to continuing moving in this wonderful place which we have had the incredible pleasure to call home for the past two months.
- Pray for a restful holiday week
- Health has overall improved but please pray that continues

