

# First Person Perspective – Holly Mantos

**Major:** Spanish w/Teacher's Licensure

**Location:** La Paz, Bolivia

**Dates and Length of Internship:** May 15-August 14, 2003

**Did you receive academic credit (i.e. internship credit, practicum credit, independent study credit etc.) for your international internship (or volunteer/teaching experience) abroad?**

Practicum credit

**Was your international internship (or volunteering/teaching) experience what you had anticipated? If not, how was it different from what you expected?**

It was more than I hoped it could be. I learned more from my students than they did from me. It was challenging, yet insightful as well. My vision became focused that yes, I do indeed want to teach as for my profession.

**How would you rate your overall experience?**

Excellent. How can one really rate the experience of being in another culture, learning another language, and making new friends? It was really indescribable. My perspective has broadened. I've become more thankful for the many riches I have here in America. My language skills have skyrocketed. However, better than even all of these were the invaluable friendships I made in La Paz (Bolivia).

**What were your responsibilities as an international intern/teacher/volunteer?**

I was an English teacher's assistant. I helped some of the kids one on one, and taught some classes by myself. During activities and assignments, I would individually check up on the kids.

**What were the highlights of your experience abroad?**

Highlights? So many. Some would have to be the cultural experiences. I loved going to Lake Titicaca twice, climbing to La Muela del Diablo, visiting the Tiwanaku ruins. My teaching experiences were definitely a highlight as well. Perhaps one of my favorite times was showing a group of Americans who had come to Bolivia for a week all that I had learned and come to appreciate about my new adopted country. J

**What were the main cultural differences you noticed between your host country and the United States?**

The close relationships of the people there (\*main culture difference). They were like a big community, with friendships not only spanning lifetimes, but generations before them. Also, the food was incredibly cheap and delicious.

**Did you think the international experience was beneficial to you academically and personally? (Please explain)**

It was invaluable to me academically and personally. I learned more Spanish in 3 months in Bolivia than I could have learned in 8 years of study at the University. Personally, these were some of the best months of my life, and I'm longing to go back. I came to understand more about myself, expanded my awareness of others, and grew in appreciation for all that God has given me here at home.

**Would you recommend an international internship/volunteer abroad opportunity to other students?**

I would absolutely recommend an internship/volunteer abroad opportunity to other students. The experience of going abroad alone is an education in itself. Seize this chance! It may never present itself to you again!