



7 THINGS I LEARNT IN MEXICO

How To Present (almost) like a TED Talker

At the start of my trip to Mexico, I knew (and was told!) that I spoke too fast when presenting - I think it's my nerves! So it's something I tried very consciously to work on. At the end, I had to give one final presentation summing up my project. This was especially nerve-wracking as everyone else presented in a pair, but my project partner had to fly back earlier that day. So it was me on my own in front of lots of strangers! But I spoke slowly and clearly, and was able to express the things that were most important to me. It actually ended up being one of the things I'm most proud of!



How To Have a Meeting that Actually Gets Stuff Done...

This was another really important skill I learnt during the project. Our first set of meetings with our organisation, Huerto Roma Verde, involved a lot of discussion about environmental concerns and the arts. However, I slowly began to realise that though we talked a lot, we never ended up being particularly productive! So I spoke to the other scholars and they suggested setting a clearer agenda for our meetings. This, I began to do. We wouldn't leave a meeting until we had covered the most important points. This meant that we had a clearer idea of what to do next, and we wasted much less time.



How To Recruit Volunteers

The image here is of our welcome event in the first week. We had to network with potential volunteers and persuade them to join our project. I had never done anything like this, and at first was very nervous. But by the end of the night, I had spoken to multiple people, and it ended up being one of my favourite experiences!



How To Deal with the Unexpected



(Me smiling after another unexpected event - falling out of a kayak!)

I was working with kids, which meant one thing: nothing ever went to plan. Usually, it was okay. But one of our activities did become a bit chaotic. We set the kids the task of melting a bowl of ice, and had no idea that they'd end up smashing the bowls! I'm not the most peaceful person in a crisis, so definitely found it hard. But I found it helpful to focus on the positives and remember everything that had gone well that day, instead of getting down about it.

How To Be Hopeful

This is the biggest thing that I'm taking away from my experience. It's so easy to be pessimistic about the climate crisis, especially when you hear the news. However, working at Huerto Roma Verde gave me a different perspective. The community at Huerto are genuinely seeking positive change, and are taking actions to achieve it. If there are people like this all over the globe, then I think there is actually hope (I know it's cheesy!). I feel so much more empowered to take serious action now.



How To Adapt Every Plan I Ever Came Up With

The image on the left is our workshop poster. I like this because it makes our activities look so simple - and on appearance, they were. The kids and the adults taking part really enjoyed them, and on the whole, everything ran smoothly. But behind the scenes, we had to constantly be overseeing and altering



small details. From scrapping an activity that wasn't age-appropriate, to changing timings, to expanding one activity so it involved a tour of the garden - we pretty much altered it all! Through all of this, I learnt not to hold onto everything so tightly, and not to overplan. You can't predict what will happen on the day, so it's best to have alternative options.

How To Coordinate a Group of Volunteers

As part of our project, we had to lead a team of 3 active volunteers, and communicate with multiple others. These volunteers were in fact more experienced than us - 2 of them literally ran kids art workshops as a career! So this was certainly daunting - yet we managed to make it work. We held group and one-on-one meetings to explain the activities, and used WhatsApp and Notion to share information. In our first meeting, we used visual aids like the one you see on the top right. This made it easier to explain the more complicated aspects of our plan. We also laid out the Notion page in a very intuitive manner (see bottom right). Evidently, all of this worked, as the volunteers fed back that they'd had a great experience.

