

Metro People—Jill Lucas

Jill Lucas, a 42-year-old Afton resident, quit her job as an environmental analyst in November and went to Chile for seven months to teach English at a school for adventure guides. She returned from South America this month.

Her favorite part of the visit: Lucas organized a five-day trip for her friends with a Chilean family that has a horseback-guiding business. Their guides – Fabian, Eduardo and Morsis – became her adopted family. “We crossed amazing rivers and traveled through different ecological zones, including alpine peaks and temperate rainforest,” said Lucas, seen at right in the country. “We stayed with local families along the route, sharing their lives and enjoying their culture and customs.”

How the trip changed her: Lucas learned to appreciate things others may take for granted – such as heat. “I didn’t expect to pass the winter in Patagonia and there is no central heating system in this area. While I taught at the school, I slept in a galpon, or barn. I had to chop wood daily for fuel and set my alarm for every three hours at night to stoke the wood stove.”

Similar trips she’s taken: Lucas had been to Bolivia and Chile before her latest trip and went to Nicaragua to help build homes for families devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

Her favorite country to visit: Chile – particularly the village of Futraluefu. “My heart is in Chile, in this small village surrounded by the Andes Mountains and stunning lakes and rivers. I was adopted by a lovely, local family who I’ll return to, bringing more of my friends and family.”

Tips she has for people traveling to foreign countries: Lucas supports sustainable tourism by paying local families for lodging – even for renting horses. In South America, it also gives her a better opportunity to practice Spanish. “They’re so warm, so hospitable... Why not put money into the locals’ hands instead of the Americans or Europeans there?”

Things she likes to do in her spare time: Ride horses, play tennis and downhill ski.

If you’re interested in traveling to Chile and want advice: Contact Lucas at www.windowintopatagonia.com or 651-436-2409.

-Megan Boldt

PROFILES OF PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF JILL LUCAS



Have a suggestion for Metro People? E-mail Nick Ferraro at ferraro@pioneerpress.com.