

## Student Scientist Studies Cultural Environmentalism in Mexico



**Above:** Danielle Young standing in Sistem Sac Actun

Travel is vital to better understand the world and the connections between the life forces in it. Student scientist, Danielle Young, a junior at Choate Rosemary Hall, recently traveled to Mexico to study Mayan anthropology, develop her Spanish language skills, and to learn about the connections between culture, politics, and environmentalism.

Traveling across four different biomes and battling various temperature extremes Danielle hiked through the jungles of Palenque Mexico, atop a buried ancient Mayan city; took a class on the evolution and importance (political and social) of corn in Mexican culture at EcoSur, a research center based in Mexico to study environmental issues and create sustainable. She even found time to go swimming in Sistema Sac Actun, one of the deepest underwater cave systems in the world.

This is Danielle's second trip out of the country. She is very passionate about environmental justice and its impact on indigenous people. While in Mexico, Danielle had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Bruce Ferguson, a researcher at EcoSur, studying urban agroecology and the intersection of food, politics, and people.

When prompted about what she took away from the experience, Danielle responds, "I gained strategies for action, appreciation, and an understanding for a people who desire the same things that myself and so many others do, sovereignty and autonomy for all people and for nature's right to existence without suffering." She will never forget the hospitality and kindness of the Mexican people, who taught her about what it truly means to learn and to love.

Danielle has traveled to many places in her time and is eager to start using those experiences to help develop solutions to the world's growing environmental and social crises. Danielle's next venture is create a non-profit that seeks to educate people about the process and benefits of food security and seed conservation.



Lake in Sistem Sac Actun



Jungle entrance in Palenque Mexico



Mayan ruins near Palenque Mexico

### About the Ecotek Science Program

Ecotek is a science research lab program for young inventors and researchers. Student scientists work on projects aligned with the issues being addressed by world leaders at the United Nations. To learn more about Ecotek Lab go to <http://www.ecotek-us.com>