



## Challenges Teachers Have Faced Living in Bogotá

Here are a variety of teacher comments:

1. Being away from **family** and **friends** back home
2. Going from a small town to a **huge city**
3. **Less independence**: You can't just pop into your car and go whenever you feel the urge. It's often safer to go with others, so that may mean depending on them, not just yourself.
4. Having to **depend** on others for help. Before coming here I could do everything on my own, knew where to go, and how to get around. Now I have to depend on others so much more, which is hard because I like to be independent.
5. Unless you look Latino, **standing out** and being stared at all the time
6. Feeling like an **outsider**: If you are blonde, or tall, or very overweight, you will stand out among Colombians, get stares, and draw attention to yourself.
7. **Cultural differences** in terms of timeliness, social expectations, and language miscommunication
8. When moving to a new place, it's always challenging to figure out the **local systems**, such as transportation and health care.
9. Traveling around the city is wonderful, but can oftentimes get confusing because most of us are not used to using **public transportation**.
10. More **complicated driving** & parking for those who want to drive themselves everywhere, as well as transportation in general just taking more time
11. **Traffic**: Everyone is out for himself! You must be very defensive when you drive, alert to expect the unexpected. During rush hour, you can choose between bumper-to-bumper vehicles on the road, or wall-to-wall people in public transportation.
12. **Language!**
13. It can be difficult to **communicate** with people such as realtors and service providers, even if you know Spanish. Note: since most housing is rented by ECA and subleased to our foreign staff, most contacts are handled by our Colombian staff.

14. **Communication:** Colombians do not always take the most direct route to make their point in conversation or meetings. Sometimes it seems they tell you what they think you want to hear, so later, appear to contradict themselves in what they do or say.
15. **Church** is wonderful but very challenging. You must push yourself to get involved, otherwise you will never learn Spanish or have friends outside of ECA. Also, if you decide to stay long term, you need to be learning and growing at a church here in Colombia, not on the internet from your home church – although that is also very beneficial.
16. The **rainy** weather can be depressing.
17. **Pollution** and **rainy** weather make it harder to stay healthy.
18. During rainy season there is daily **rain** and all the inconveniences that accompany it such as constant chilliness, puddles, muddy streets, slow traffic, wet clothes and the need for umbrellas and other waterproof gear/clothing. It's not uncommon for the weather to change abruptly in 10 minutes, so you always have to carry an umbrella.
19. **No heat** in buildings
20. Extra **paperwork** for foreigners such as visa, ID card, Colombian insurance, etc.
21. As with any big city, there's a heightened need for **security** as far as petty crime. Also, there's the possibility of terrorism outside the city.
22. The **value** of people over time. It feels good to have someone ask you lots of questions about how you and your family are, unless you're the person waiting at the other end.
23. Adjusting to the Latino **sense of time:** Starting and ending times here often seem to be irrelevant. If one actually attends the event, that counts, no matter how long or short (including church). Time often seems wasted, because efficiency is NOT a high priority here.
24. **ECA culture:** We are NOT a North American school set in a Colombian landscape. Weaving North American teachers, curriculum and holidays with Colombian families, customs and history has created a unique 3<sup>rd</sup> culture on campus.
25. It's hard to keep up with **housework**, as dishwashers and dryers are rare, and convenience foods are not cheap. Note: Many take advantage of inexpensive maid service, which can be seen as helping low-income households.
26. It can be hard to set aside time for **rest** and reflection.

27. It can be difficult to work with upper-middle-class students, depending on how they have been taught to **view authority**.

Testimony: My family imported from Pennsylvania in 1995, and all our 4 children graduated from ECA. My husband and I have served 21 years at the school, even after our children left, married, and birthed granddaughters in the States. If God calls you to join us at ECA, HE is the one who enables His children to adapt, learn and grow. We are audiovisual proof of His work!