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The academics at Swarthmore Buenos Aires are admittedly difficult, but if you don't overextend yourself and do take courses you are actually interested in, they are completely manageable and extremely rewarding. Just as you need to take an active role in choosing both the size of your course load and its content, you have to take initiative with your social life. Buenos Aires is a huge city, and it can be very isolating if you allow it to be. The program is small, and as much as you may enjoy your fellow Swatties, you will eventually get sick of seeing the same faces on a daily basis. Besides, if you wanted to surround yourself only with Swatties, you would have stayed at Swarthmore. One of the best parts of studying abroad is the people you meet, specifically the *local* people you meet, and to go out and make friends you are going to need an interest or a hobby to help you out.

Sports are an easy example. Here at Swarthmore I'm on the fencing team, so to keep in shape for the competitive spring season, I sought out a fencing club in Buenos Aires. With more popular sports I'm sure the staff would've been a great help, but fencing is a pretty obscure, but tight-knit sport. I asked around through my coach and his colleagues until I found a former Argentine Olympic fencer coaching at Brown. He set me up with a coach in Buenos Aires. It ended up making a huge difference. Before I started fencing in Buenos Aires, my world was pretty isolated; I went to class with Swatties and then came home to my host family. The only Argentines I knew were my hosts and my professors, and while both were amazing, that wasn't the sort of experience I was looking for. I was dragging my feet about meeting the fencing club, nervous about getting introduced into a completely new situation, yet again. My host mom encouraged me, though, and it was probably the best decision I made in Buenos

Aires. At fencing practice, I met all sorts of locals, many of whom I still keep in touch with today. A group of them invited me to their normal Friday night dinners, and it was at such a dinner where I understood my first joke in Argentina. My friends were so shocked when I laughed at their joke that we all couldn't stop laughing for the rest of the night. Those dinners combined with the scattered birthday parties and the end of the year banquet are some of my greatest memories from the entire semester.

While sports are probably the easiest example, there are certainly other hobbies you can pursue, or classes you can take at the cultural center. Don't wait until you're miserable; ask around here at Swarthmore or ask the staff as soon as you get there. Have some ideas in mind so you're not just groping blindly. It may take a little extra work at the beginning of the semester, but it will make your entire experience a thousand times better.