

Colombia Family Testimony

The Buchanan Family

Through nothing short of divine intervention, Brent and I realized that the Lord was calling us to adopt internationally. After significant research and prayer, we began the process of adopting a child from Colombia—a country known for its high murder rates, drug cartels, and cocaine trafficking. However, we knew the Lord had a plan and we discovered Colombia's stereotypes are, for the most part, not what we experienced. We began the adoption process in late fall of 2012. Over a year later, on Samuel's (our new son) 4th birthday, we received a call saying we were finally matched, and the official paperwork would come in a couple weeks. That is when we learned that "a couple weeks" in Colombian terms was far different than it is in American terms. Two months later we received our official matching papers. Everything finally began falling perfectly in place for us to travel to Colombia in March or April to meet and bring home our adorably cute and handsome son.

We were prepared to start booking flights and packing when we were given devastating news. A glitch in Sam's paperwork was going to prolong our travel by months or potentially prevent us from adopting him. We were heart broken. Fortunately, after several long months, the ball started rolling quickly and we were told to book flights and head to Medellin, Colombia! We landed late on the night of August 19, and drove into the gorgeous city of Medellin. We quickly learned that the people of Medellin are easily the nicest folks in the world. The city is clean; there are high rises and huge buildings all across the city; and gorgeous, lush vegetation is everywhere you look. The weather is fabulous and almost always comfortable.

August 21st was Sam's Gotcha Day! We had no idea how it would go, but it went beautifully. He was shy and timid but full of hugs and smiles. He enjoyed the toys we brought him and devoured the cupcakes we brought to celebrate. He immediately was in our custody, and we rode back to our apartment as a family of five. That is when our adventure in Colombia truly began. Although most days were good, we realized that seven weeks is a long time to be away, and we became much more homesick than we anticipated. Our days were spent with a little bit of homeschooling, playing, going to museums and parks, walking up the hill to get ice cream, and going to the local malls. The malls were huge hits for the three kids because there were so many child-friendly areas. The top floor of the mall closest to our apartment had racecars; an area called Africa, similar to Chuck-e-Cheese; several soccer fields; and tons of restaurants.

About four weeks in, we felt like time was standing still. The days were monotonous, and we really missed the amenities of home. Our in-country attorney called us to say that changing jurisdictions was in our best interest. We fully trusted our attorney and in-country team and knew this was a wise decision. The head of the agency was excellent at explaining answers to questions and helping us understand cultural differences. Our attorney was incredibly organized and went to the courts daily to check on progress. Our translator/ driver and her husband quickly began to feel like family. Once we changed jurisdictions, we were given an incredibly kind, adoption-friendly judge. The day Sam's adoption was finalized, we went to the court house in a city adjacent to Medellin. The judge and his staff celebrated with us, and it was a glorious day. It was phenomenal knowing that Sam was officially our son and part of our family.

Next, we journeyed to Bogota. Whereas Medellin was vibrant, happy, and colorful, Bogota was cold, cloudy, full of pollution, and the people weren't as friendly. There was a lot to do, though, to occupy our time. Our favorite was journeying to Monserrate—the top of a mountain with an old monastery that overlooks the entire city. The in-country team here was also fantastic and made sure every step was done as quickly as possible. The week flew by and, before we knew it, we were planning our journey back to Alabama with our new son!

Throughout the entire adoption journey, there were two things that took us by surprise. First was how much we would miss home. Second was how excited we would be to head home as a family of five! Several of our family members and friends welcomed us home with posters, balloons, and huge smiles when we landed in Montgomery. It was a feeling beyond words to be home as a family of five! The journey was emotional, trying, and difficult, but so worth it to have Samuel as our son.