

## **A day in the life of a Step team...**

It's half past eight in the morning. The traffic outside has been going for about two hours already, with roaring buses and buzzing mopeds wafting their noxious fumes up to our windows. The noise of the road is accompanied by dog barking, which started at about three o'clock, having finished last night at two.

The domestic team, or at least the one or two of them who are awake, are making our morning gruel (its actually porridge, and its actually really good, but gruel sounds better), and the four people who'll be on the building site this morning are prising themselves (or in some cases being prised) out of bed.

At about nine we see the pastor in the church across the road measuring pieces of wire and wood, so the morning four start to head over. Down the stairs at the back of the house they are met by Lorenzo, who we're renting from. ¡Hola! he shouts, kissing them all on the cheek and then forgetting all their names. Out onto the street, the four pick their way over the dogs and the bones they're endlessly chewing, and then try to negotiate the main road.

The traffic consists of huge diesel-spewing buses; cars that last saw a service in 1970, most of which are missing entire sections of bodywork, and lights, and some of which have completely blacked out windows (including windscreens) and stereos so loud they break things; and daredevil kamikaze moped and motorbike riders.

Once in the church they see pastor, already hard at work in his Coca-Cola hat and sandals. He uses English names arbitrarily to direct the four as they bend wire, lay bricks or carry out some other random building procedure. The phrase "health and WHAT!?" is often appropriate in these situations.

After a couple of hours one of the many highly culinary skilled women from the church turns up with an excessive quantity of biscuits and bread, and then makes mate. This isn't just a drink to sip in a spare moment; mate is of course best taken when hanging off a ladder with a bucket of cement in the other hand, or when straddling a concrete beam eight feet above the ground. (slight exaggeration!!) And you're not going to get away with having it just once - that mate will be passed up/down/across to you in excess of 10 times.

Meanwhile, two members of the domestics team have been shopping. This involves walking five blocks to the supermarket, trying to find the least expensive essentials, then going to the cheese counter, where you spend five to ten minutes in intense discussion about how many grams of which cheese should be bought, then speaking to the attendant and in panic, with all Spanish failing, asking for half a kilo of the nearest one.

The bread shop is a little easier, as the lady knows how many of which rolls we buy every single day.

Back at the house, the other domestics member for the day is cleaning, All goes well until they open the toilet. What is inside cannot be described in tongues of men, but it's safe to say it's not Of The Lord. Let me just say that the loo won't flush, and its almost certainly due to the whole chicken, four steaks, six sausages and eight spare ribs eaten by one of the guys at that traditional Argentine asado (barbeque) last night.

There's only one thing for it: for the second time this week, out comes the makeshift drainage rod (known affectionately as simply "Rod") to clear the blockage.

After a sandwich- and fruit-based lunch, the four building site workers swap with the four lucky ones who have been at home all morning but not on domestics.

While they're off enjoying another few hours of health and WHAT!?, a bag arrives full of clothes for us to wear at the building site. This is all well and good, and a great testimony to the generosity we find ourselves surrounded by, but these clothes were designed for young girls to wear in 1985. The only sensible response is to put them on anyway and do a fashion shoot on the roof.

By about seven thirty it's time for one of the many church services. This starts with about half an hour of music, full of exciting key changes and tempo increases, with lots of clapping.

We're all pretty sure Pastora's sermon is profound, but Jon's otherwise impeccable translation is somewhat hindered by certain team members' facial expressions at the most serious moments of the talk.

Pastor also jumps up and does his bit. When I say jump I mean it. He's got so much energy; he's like some kind of charismatic aerobics instructor. At times we're worried he'll knock his water over onto the multitude of amplifiers. He does. Then we get worried he'll get so excited he'll have a heart attack (this man is 65). Thankfully this doesn't happen.

Once we've extracted ourselves from the puckered lips of the congregation at the end of the service, we head home for dinner, which domestics have done an amazing job on, in spite of the limitations imposed by a gas cooker with only two settings - Off, and Blowtorch.

By about 11, we have devotions, which invariably overruns, but is always a time for making real connections with God as a team, no matter how tired we are. Then, rather than going straight to bed, while some actually do do this, others engage in such activities as intense cleaning and tidying, midnight raves using tiny ipod speakers, wrestling, or just long conversations on our biblical flat roof, overlooking this broken yet beautiful Buenos Aires neighbourhood.