



Olivia

from Woodstock
to
Peru

"Live for Moments You Can't Put Into Words"

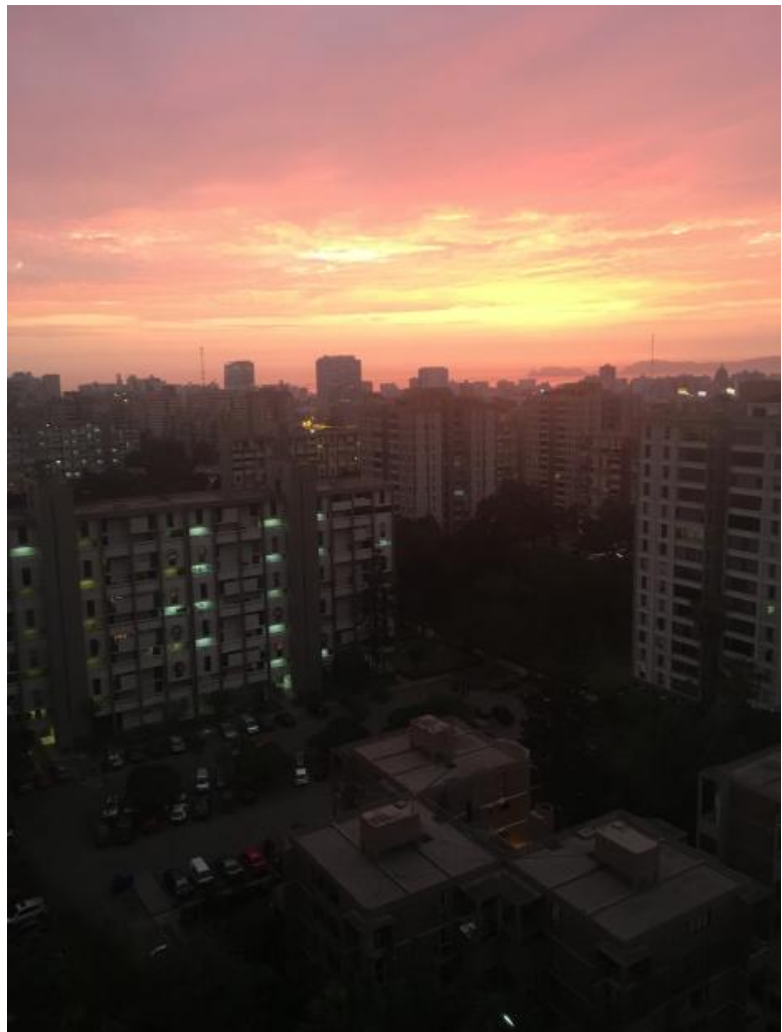


As of now, I've been in Peru for six and a half months. The number of things I've done and the number of people I've met is hard to believe. What's even harder to believe is the fact I only have four and a half months left of my adventure. I've experienced some of the hardest and some of the best moments of my life while I've been here in Peru. Though there are so many challenges of being an exchange student, I think any of us could say we wouldn't want our year any other way.

One of the hardest parts of the year for an exchange student is Christmas. Personally, I had a really great experience. My entire family came to my house Christmas Eve for dinner which I did not know happened at midnight as a tradition. I'd like to say that the word "exhausted" is nonexistent when Peruvian families are together. We stayed up nearly the whole night celebrating with food and gifts followed by fireworks in the city. It was an experience to remember, but sadly I had to switch host families the very next day. It was a hard goodbye knowing I had such a good relationship with my first host mom, but we promised to visit in the future.

The host family I'm with now are great people. They are always together and that's something I really love. My host mom is a teacher and my host dad is a lawyer. I have one younger host sister who's ten years old, though she's really mature. They've helped me so much with my Spanish which has come so far since my last beaver tale. I can have conversations now! I find that watching movies in Spanish with Spanish subtitles is helpful. I've only had two weeks with my second host family because I have a month of travelling and a month to live in another city.

The last two weeks of January was the second trip for the exchange students. The first few days of the trip were very busy and physically exhausting (but amazing). The highlight was visiting the tallest waterfall in Peru. Between the waterfall and I was a two-hour hike through a jungle. The climate and vegetation was something out of a movie, it was so beautiful. The next day we went into the Quiocta Cave, a cave six-hundred metres long. There was a lot of water so we used stepping stones to get to the end and back. While we went through we saw human bones and massive stalagmites.



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The next parts of the trip were more relaxed but of course just as fun. For most of the trip, we were in Ecuador in the cities of Guayaquil and Salinas. I loved my experience in Ecuador, especially because I was with my best friends for the first time in four months! Every day we went to the beach or pool and when evening came around, we'd play beach volleyball or soccer. One night a group of Ecuadorians challenged us to a match of soccer. Let's just say for now that we lost by just a little. Overall the trip was really fun and as sad as it was to say goodbye, it won't be long until I see them all again. After that trip, I came to Lima where I currently am right now for the month of February.

Living in Lima has been great. My family for the month have been so nice to live with. I live with their two younger children who are extremely busy. I got asked to join a girls soccer team in Lima who I'll be playing with for the month, I'm really happy I was able to do that. The highlight of this month so far was being able to meet up with a person who came to Canada about two years ago as an exchange student. He actually lived in my town and went to the same school, and now I'm living in his country. What are the odds of that happening?



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In March I'm really looking forward to our trip to Iquitos, a city in the jungle! After that I begin university and I've decided to take cooking classes. My cooking wasn't exactly delicious before coming here so hopefully I return with a bit more talent.

Right now time is flying, and the only thing I can do is try to enjoy every moment. The fact that this is my second BeaverTale is sad to say. I look back and my first week here in Peru. I came here surrounded by strangers and didn't speak a word of Spanish. Now those strangers are who I call family and Spanish is now something I understand.

To any future exchange students reading this, I was in your position once. I remember feeling so nervous and so excited all at once. Keep an open mind wherever you do end up going, it's such a precious opportunity. You'll have good days and bad days but the challenges you face will define you as a person.

Thank you to everyone who has made my journey possible and who continue to support me while I'm here. I am unbelievably lucky to have had this opportunity and I owe it all to family, friends and Rotary.

Gracias por todo!

Olivia