



Rebecca

from Tillsonburg

to

Peru

“It is really hard to get flour and eggs out of your hair”

As a wise Rotarian once told me: “Go. Grow. Thrive. Come home and tell me all about it. Go ahead make me even more jealous than I already am.” Hola, it’s me, again. It’s been three months since I last wrote home and now I am back to tell you all about my new experiences and growth in the six months that I have been in the beautiful country of Peru. Hopefully I don’t make you too jealous. Let’s jump in to where we left off: Not much happened in November, but I got to celebrate my birthday with my amazing family and friends in lovey 25 degree weather, which is the first and probably the last time. The most exciting part about having my birthday here in Peru is that they have some different traditions for birthdays that I am sure to bring home for future birthdays, so watch out. These traditions include cake getting smashed in your face, and my new favourite; smashing eggs on your head and sprinkling flour in your hair. It really made my day, even though it did hurt, and as I found out; it is really hard to get flour and eggs out of your hair.

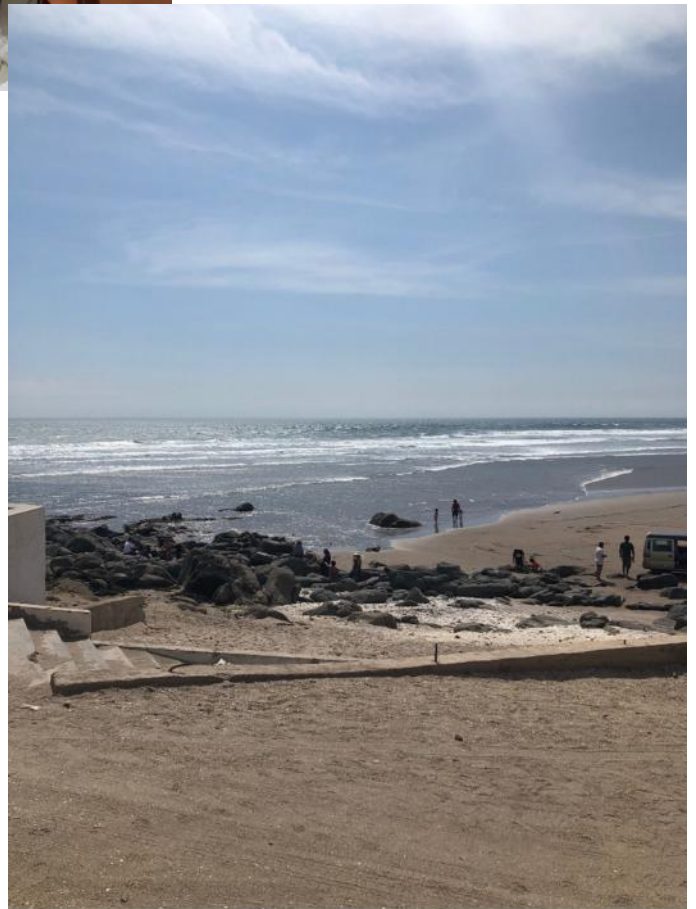


The last big Rotary event of 2018 took place on the sixth of December when had our first noche de talento. This was a Rotary event put on by the exchange students in Lima to help raise money to buy toys and other items for children in the jungle that don’t have the opportunity to celebrate Christmas. First there was a presentation about Christmas festivities all around the world and after the Lima, Ica and Nasca students presented three different dances. I participated in two dances the first one with the Ica student which I mentioned in my last beaver tail as well as one with the two other students from Nasca. We danced Anaconda, which is a dance for the Selva (jungle) part of Peru. I wish I could put in videos because it was quite an interesting dance and out of all the dances, we got the best reactions.



Shortly after the noche de talento I had my second last day of school in 2018. Classes went on as normal but at the end of the day my class got to enjoy some snacks and cake. My classmates, being the crazy people they are, I ended up with cake on my clothes and my face. It was a great end to the school year and a great start to an amazing three months of summer vacations!!! That wasn't the last time I got to be together with my class. A couple days later I got to go to the pool with almost all of my classmate and enjoy lunch and pool games.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS!!!
I was really excited to celebrate the holidays without the snow and cold it was definitely a different experience waking up to 27 degrees and no snow, compared to -10 degrees and a thick layer of snow on the ground. I had an amazing time celebrating Christmas with my family getting to experience how my family celebrates in Venezuela and Columbia. Although I couldn't help but feel a little down missing the familiar surroundings and the feel of Christmas back home. Besides having warm weather the other difference here is that families have all the festivities dinner and opening presents on the night of the twenty-fourth apposed to the morning of the twenty-fifth. Another first for me was that for Christmas I got to go spend the day at the beach enjoying the sun and having a nice lunch with my family.

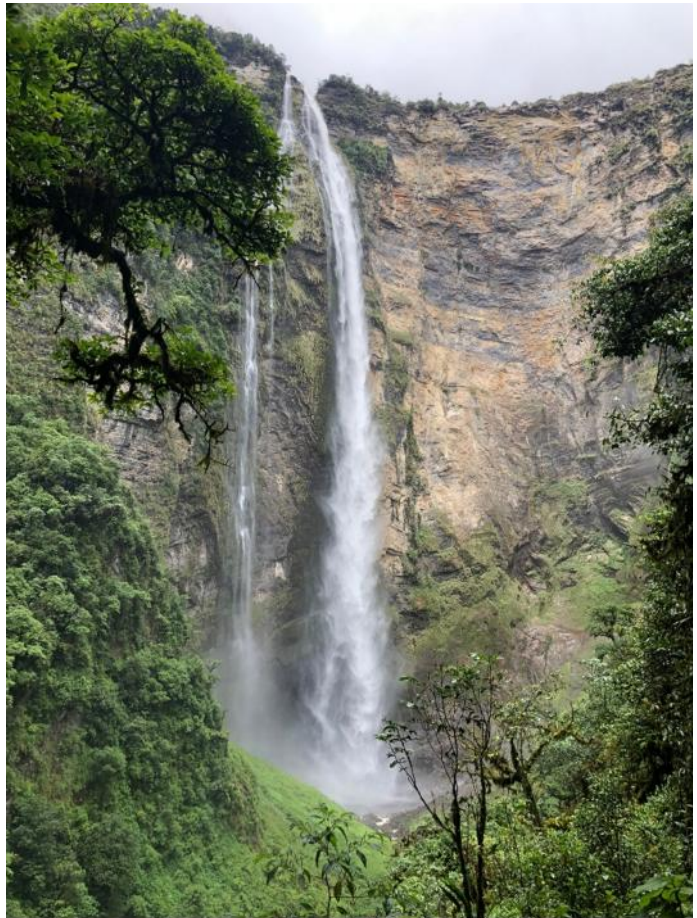


For New Years my family and I stayed at home and we had a barbecue which is something I wouldn't think of doing on the thirty-first of December but, none the less, it's a experience that I won't forget. Another tradition in my family for New Years is you have twelve grapes and at midnight you eat the grapes and with each one you have to wish for something different. It's very interesting and I think it is a tradition I will bring home. My sister really got into it. She wants to travel so she walked around the house and in the street waving around her passport.



Fast forward to January thirteenth. I had my bags packed for yet another excited trip with 54 other exchange to the north of Peru. We departed from Lima at eleven at night on a 10 hour bus ride to the beautiful beach side city of Huanchaco. We stayed here for three days and got free time to walk around the city, visit the beach, as well as other interesting activities. I spent some time the first day walking around the city with some friends but the second day was when the really fun began. At 8:30 in the morning on the second day of the trip a bunch of us exchange student decided to try surfing and oh my! I was eager to try surfing but being a person that is afraid of large bodies of water I was also terrified. By no means am I good at surfing but it was fun to try and I guess I need a little more practice because I only stood up once.

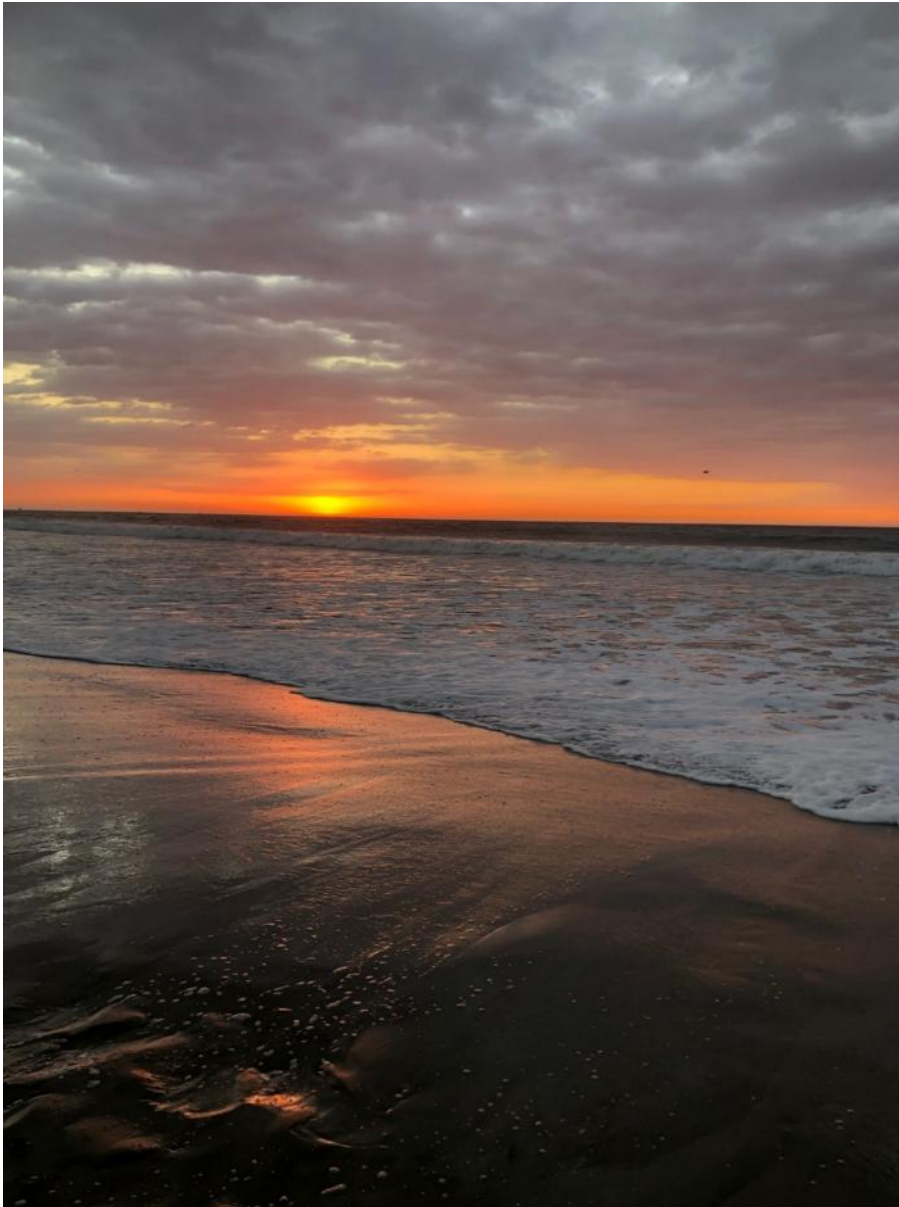
The next destination on our trip was Chachapoyas, a small city located in the jungle. This part of the trip was by far the hardest because in the three days we were there we did a lot of walking. The first day we left early in the morning with our ponchos to protect us from the ever-changing weather in the jungle. After putting on some protection from the rain we were off for a six kilometre walk to La Cataratas de Gocta a waterfall located in the middle of the jungle. I am not a huge fan of hikes up mountains in the pouring rain but I will say that the view at the end of the walk was well worth it. The next day was another early morning this time we were off for a walk in a cave so we suited up in our big rubber boots and took an interesting walk through a dark cave with deep muddy puddles and little rivers. In the cave were rocks that reached from the floor to the ceiling of the cave they have formed over millions of years do to water dripping through little wholes in the ceiling of the cave.



This is the roof of the cave I think it's kind of cool. It looks like a galaxy.

February 2019

After the cave we went for another short walk to see mummies that we placed in the side of a mountain many many years ago. The last day we spent in Chachapoyas we visited Arqueológico de Kuelap mountaintop citadel built in the sixth century by the Chachapoyas culture. To reach this mountain top fortress we had to take a thirty-minute ride in a cable car which went up and down the mountain followed by a short walk the rest of the way up. Once we reach the summit, we had the amazing view of the mountains around us along with a slight layer of fog because of all the rain which made the view even more worth it.



The last destination of the trip was Punta Sal but before we headed to Punta Sal we had our last stop at Ñuros where we got the amazing experience of swimming with sea turtles. It's was really cool to be able to see these animals up close. Unfortunately we couldn't touch the turtles because they were sick but it was still fun as they got to swim around us while they were being fed. In the last few days we stayed in Punta Sal we for a couple days of relaxing in the pool and on the beach as well as some of the most beautiful sunsets I have ever seen. Sadly, this trip came to a quick end and before I knew it I was on a plane back to Lima.

After the trip was finished I had a little bit of time in Nasca before a city exchange where I would be living in Arequipa for a month. That brings us to now when I am writing this. I have been in Arequipa for about a week now. Currently there is twenty-two other exchange students from seven different countries. I haven't been here long but I have been able to explore a little bit of the city some of my friends including La plaza de Yanahuara. As my time here in Arequipa isn't very long, I hope to experience all the different things that this city has to offer like the best Queso Helado I can possibly find.



I have found that since I arrived in Arequipa and throughout the trip my Spanish has improved dramatically; it has become much easier for me to communicate with people. Although I still struggle with the grammar, the positive feedback I am getting from people is really a boost for my confidence and lets me know that my Spanish has improved. I wouldn't give myself a ten out of ten just yet, but I definitely have improved, and I am proud of the progress I have made. I feel that a big contributor to that is my family I am with now. They are very patient with me and help me improve everyday. In my family I have my host mom and dad as well as my host siblings Miriam, Rodrigo and Nayeli.



I have been with my family for about two weeks now and my family is amazing. We are currently in Puño for La Fiesta de la Virgen de la Candelaria. It is the biggest celebration in the whole of Peru. The celebration is three days long and people get dressed up in beautiful bejewelled costumes and dance in groups through the street to celebrate the Virgen de la Candelaria. These group are upwards of three hundred people with a minimum of two hundred people dancing and one hundred in the band. Watching it, it seemed like there were thousands of people in just one group. The first of three days, Concurso en el Estadios, is like a competition to see what group has the most people and the best clothes and dances. The second two days, Parada, are more just for watching.

China-diabla

February 2019

There are 80 different groups and in those groups are China de Morenada, Chinas, Caporales, Machitas, Diablos, Diablasas, China-diabla, Llamerada, Zamponistas and Gorilas.

Caporales



China de Morenada

There are several different dances but the one I remember the most is Saya. In Saya they are Separated in to males and females. The girls are called Chinas and the boy are called Caporales but sometimes the girls dance with the boys and they are called Machitas. Their costumes are elaborate with the women wearing shorts dresses with hundreds of rhinestones as well as six inch heels, which is really amazing to watch because I can't walk in heels let alone dance in them. The men wear big puffy jackets and pants that are also bedazzled in thousands or jewels as well as boots with big bell which make lots of noise when they are jumping around.

Diablos



Zampoñistas

Diablasas

I hope you enjoyed reading about all my experiences I can't believe that my exchange has gone by so fast. I hope to keep growing and experiencing new things to bring home and share. I also want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the people that have made this dream become a reality. My parents, family, friends and Rotarians for standing by me through out this whole amazing adventure.



Rebecca

Since I am only writing till the fifteenth of February which is only half way through my city exchange as well as having a service project in the jungle in the beginning of March and, as I really want to share these stories with you, I will be updating my BeaverTale after my next trip. Stay tuned for the changes.