



Jada

**from
Mississauga West
to
Peru**

“I’m Ready To See Some Llamas!”

On My Way To Peru

On Sunday July 24, 2016 was the day I left my friends and family. I went on a plane and sat next to a nice Peruvian lady in which we spoke Spanglish. The experience could have been really scary, especially since I was fifteen and travelling alone to a different continent, but the entire flight, I was surrounded by very nice flight attendants. The flight lasted around eight hours, but was definitely worth it. I felt like a celebrity as I was constantly accompanied by flight attendants who were told to come assist me. The airport was big a mess as there were problems with traveling papers, and I was secretly freaking out as I thought that I wouldn’t be able to make it out of the airport. Thankfully, with the assistance of all the flight attendants, I had all my papers in check and the only thing I had to worry about was actually finding my host family. It was around two in the morning, so they were all pretty tired, but I was full of energy as I was starting my amazing new journey as an exchange student. I was welcomed by my host dad, host mom and my eleven year old host brother. My host sister was nowhere to be found as she was on a religious retreat for a few days. I can remember getting in the car and looking outside in awe at everything being in Spanish and the really different scenery. I was overjoyed when I got to the apartment and saw that I had a TV in my room. I was so completely amazed with everything that I ended up going to bed at three.

Starting My Life Here

The next day, I woke up from a decent sleep and went to go eat lunch which was absolutely delicious (mashed sweet potato, chicken and rice), even though the portion was huge and I couldn't finish it all. I disliked sweet potato in Canada but here I loved it which became the reality for a lot of foods here. The rest of the day I was getting to know my family, especially my host brother. We both enjoyed watching YouTube videos and we were watching them until late at night. I also brought along some Beanboozled jelly beans which made my host brother and I constantly feel sick but we would still have a good time while eating them. The next week or so, my host family took me to see the really nice places in Lima like Larcomar (a beautiful open mall on the coast of the Pacific Ocean), Parque Kennedy (a popular tourist attraction park with a bunch of cats) and Jockey Plaza (a big mall that has already become my favourite mall of all time). Before I officially started going to school, there was a Spanish language camp which was the first opportunity to meet the other inbound exchange students -all ninety of them. There was only one other Canadian amongst all of the students, but I really enjoyed the diversity. The next time we all met was at a training camp at CEANDE- Chosica. That's where I learned the nationality of a lot of the students who I can now call my friends.

Going To School

The next big experience for me here was the first day of school. I was sick the first day when all the exchange students were officially welcomed, but the day I came, was really interesting. I was put in grade nine, so I was with students a year or two younger than me. In my first class, all the girls came and said hi and introduced themselves while the boys went in a circle and started talking quietly while trying to sneak and look at me. It was a pretty different experience than in Canada, as new students would be welcomed by everyone in the class and nothing more. I was then told later on by my host family that it may take a few weeks for the boys to warm up to me but I wasn't really worried as I understand that things like that probably happen a lot to exchange students, especially since I was the only black student with braids in the school. Classes start at half-past seven in the morning until around four in the afternoon, and there's ten classes which are each around forty minutes. The school is a private school, with tons of open space outside and regular sized classrooms. From a distance, the school could seem like a prison because of the heavy duty security fences and the amount of security guards there are. I could understand the strictness of security as there are kids who are in kindergarten and primary. Most of the classes are in Spanish with exception to three classes in English and one class in French. In the English and French classes, I try to help the students, as I speak both languages. The school also surprised me because almost every two weeks there would be an event in which they put up beams and construct pretty elaborate structures and then take it all down after one day. My host dad told me that although it is nice to look at, the parents are the ones who have to pay for it which made me laugh.

My Spanish Skills

I would have to say that I learned a lot the language and most of the Peruvian slang or “jerga” at school, and my Spanish has definitely improved a lot. At first, I was using Duolingo but then I downloaded an app called Spanishdict suggested to me by the previous student who went on exchange to Peru from Canada, which has worked wonders. The first week here, I could only speak a few words and verb conjugations and understand Spanish only when speaking slowly, but I can not say that I’m close to being fluent. I would say that I have more facility learning than other beginners because I have French to fall back on. Whenever I don’t know a word in Spanish, I usually think of the word in French and maybe say it how I would say it if I was speaking Spanish and fifty percent of the time, I’m right. I still have some trouble with the verbs, as there are a bunch of tenses that I could use, while English basically just has past, present and future. Plus, there’s two ways of using the verb “to be”, which makes it especially difficult. It’s always been my passion to learn Spanish (and any language at all), and I would like to thank Rotary again for making the wish come true.

One Of The Best Trips Ever

One of the advantages of learning Spanish is of course, learning a new language and being able to integrate in to the culture but also for me, going on trips. Our rotary club in Peru often chooses students who have adapted to their family, are involved with their club and who’ve learned the language to go on special trips. I recently came back from a one of the big trips to Arequipa, Puno and Cusco, and I have to say that it was one of the best trips of my life. It was the day after my birthday (which was spent with one of my friends and later on my host family) and it was two weeks. I really learned a lot on the trip, not only about the culture, but also valuable life lessons. I also enjoyed the fact that in each city, we



would change hotels and we would sleep in rooms with three people each. It was really special as it felt like we were independent young adults rooming in a room together and we didn’t have to worry about constantly being under supervision. I made a lot of friends that I never would have thought I would be friends with, and enjoyed doing it too. I got to see one of the world’s seven wonders and take in the scenery of all the beautiful cities. I really look forward to the next trip in January to the jungle and Ecuador.

In Conclusion

Overall, I would say that my exchange experience has been really great, especially since the beginning. Right now, things are starting to calm down and I'm starting to get used to my life in Peru. I haven't necessarily felt home sick yet, but I'm sure it'll



come soon since Christmas is approaching and this will be the first time being away from my family during that time. Although I'll be away from my family, I think it'll be a great Christmas because our club might take us to the jungle!

Muchisimas Gracias Rotary

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