



**Tristen**  
**from**  
**Burlington Central**  
**to**  
**Peru**

*"I have been having all of my dreams now in Spanish!"*

About six months have passed now and it really doesn't feel like I have been here for that long. It's crazy how fast time flies while on exchange!

I definitely think that I have changed within these months here, for example, I'm pretty sure I have actually grown taller. I know that might sound like a weird thing to say, but I really think it's true! Also, of course Spanish has become so much easier. I still have a lot to learn, but I can communicate with ease to anyone I talk to. I guess it's just the Canadian in me to talk to random people on the street, in stores, airports, etc., but I always like to practice my Spanish wherever I can, and usually shock many people when I say that I have been here for this amount of time and can speak almost 100% fluently with them. Even during trips with the other exchange students, I am speaking in Spanish, which isn't something normal considering almost everyone can speak English, but my thinking is that I have my exchange year in Peru to learn the language, so why would I bother speaking the language that I already know?

I'm pretty sure that Spanish has almost taken over my life. Maybe that is a bit dramatic, but since I'm always talking and listening to things in Spanish, I have been having all of my dreams now in Spanish! Even sometimes when I am talking to my parents or friends from Canada I speak/ text in Spanish because I either don't want to think in English, or it's just easier not to. It's also really nice too when you can go to the movies and see a movie in another language without needing subtitles. Of course I don't understand ever single word that is said, but more often than not I don't have a hard time following what is happening.

During the time around Christmas definitely didn't feel the same for me in Peru. Normally I'm used to everywhere being covered in snow since October, but here there wasn't a lot; I was missing that crazy hustle-and-bustle of the season. It was all feeling a little out of place especially without the snow...I never thought that I would miss snow, but I do!

In Peru Christmas is spent with the family on Christmas Eve eating dinner and FIREWORKS! You would probably think it was New Years with the amount of fireworks that are set-off. At exactly 12:00am everyone is outside to watch and light them off in the streets, which isn't the safest thing to do, but somehow nothing goes wrong (nothing for me anyways). It's funny, if you are doing anything, and the time changes to 12:00am, you drop everything and run outside. Later in the day we handed out all of the presents, and all relaxed watching Christmas movies; the movies helped add that little bit of Christmas norm. Even though the house was full of decorations and we had a tree, the movies are always a necessary part.

New Years came by very fast but was given a lot more attention than Christmas! Every store had hats, glasses, and underwear in yellow- it signifies good luck and riches in the New Year. Once the count-down to the New Year begins, everyone is given 12 grapes and in the last 12 seconds of the count-down you start eating them. Eating grapes or beans also means that you have luck during the year. Then the fireworks start. You could look at every angle and there would be fireworks going off. Afterwards it was really strange to hear silence in the streets.

During the month of January I busied myself with time with my friends and family, but coming to the end of the month, and a little bit into the next, we had our next trip to the North of Peru and Ecuador. I was really looking forward to this trip because everyday we were able to go to the beach! I even learnt how to surf with some of my friends! The sun and beach were so amazing; I took in as much as I could, while remembering that my friends in Canada were still in school, but then also remembering that that would be me later in the year.

When the trip ended, and we were back in our homes, but I only had about 6 hours in my house until leaving again to the Amazon. I spent one week in Tarapoto with my friend from Denmark to take the opportunity to visit the city and learn about the culture, and do things that I couldn't normally, like white water rafting! That was insanely cool and would love to do it again.

After my time there I returned back to Lima to then fly out to Iquitos, which is another part of the Amazon, the same day. Today was my first day here and it was really great. I don't really know my family all that well yet, but I have a month here until I am

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back in Lima, so I have time, but I have already tried many new types of fruits that are from this area that you can't find in the coast! I'm looking forward to trying and experiencing as much as I can during this month outside of the city of Lima, and maybe in the process get over my fear of bugs (or make it worse).

I know that these few months will go by just as fast as the these have, but I hope they pass just as great as the last. Thanks to Rotary I am experiencing everything I am and have learned so much more, not only about the things of Peru, but myself as well.

Until the next time,

*Tristen*