

Bridges of Friendship: A transformative Rotary Friendship Exchange between Peru and the United States

Article posted on [January 22, 2026](#) in [RotaryServiceBlog.org](#)

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Rotarians from the United States pose together in the stunning natural landscape of Ica, Peru, showcasing the spirit of camaraderie during their Rotary Friendship Exchange.

In May 2025, I joined eight Rotarians from Wisconsin, USA, on a nine-day Rotary Friendship Exchange to Peru, seeking adventure, cultural understanding, and meaningful connections. The Rotary Friendship Exchange is an international program that allows participants to experience different cultures by taking turns hosting one another in their homes and clubs. From the moment we arrived in Lima and were greeted warmly by local Rotarians, we knew we were beginning a journey defined by camaraderie and shared purpose.

Discovering southern Peru through Rotary hospitality

Our first destination was Ica, where members of a local Rotary club welcomed us with open arms. My male teammate and I stayed at a lodge owned by a Rotarian, while our female teammates were graciously hosted by other club members. Their generosity set the tone for our time in the region.

We explored the oasis of Huacachina, observed sea lions and penguins at Ballestas Islands near Paracas, and stood in awe at the Canyon of the Lost. Each site revealed the natural beauty of southern Peru, but it was the shared meals—often featuring Peru’s famous rotisserie chicken and fries—that deepened our friendships. Every gathering was filled with laughter, conversation, and cultural exchange. The traditional dances immersed us further in Peru’s vibrant culture, turning acquaintances into lifelong friends.



Peruvian classics: pollo a la brasa, pisco sours, and Inca Kola

Our introduction to Peru’s iconic beverage, pisco, began with an engaging tasting at a local vineyard, where we learned about its history and production. Pisco sours became a staple at dinners hosted by our Peruvian friends, enriching our experience and appreciation for this cherished tradition.

Exploring Lima

Back in Lima, our team was hosted by several Rotarian families who opened their homes and hearts to us. Over four days, we explored the city’s rich heritage—walking through historic neighborhoods like Pueblo Libre, visiting landmarks such as the Plaza de Armas and the Presidential Palace, and discovering the artistic district of Barranco.



A vibrant traditional Peruvian plate, reflecting the rich culinary culture experienced during our Rotary Friendship Exchange

Cusco, the Sacred Valley, and moments of reflection

Our journey continued to Cusco, where we admired the city’s blend of Incan and colonial architecture. We explored archaeological wonders, including Sacsayhuamán, Ollantaytambo, Moray, and Machu Picchu, where sunrise over the ruins provided a moment of profound reflection, making us grateful for the gift of global fellowship.



Several team members also hiked Rainbow Mountain (Vinicunca), rising over 17,000 feet. The challenging trek rewarded them with breathtaking views of the mountain's colorful stripes and the surrounding snow-capped peaks.

Rotarians celebrate at Machu Picchu during their Rotary Friendship Exchange trip, showcasing the beauty of community and friendship.

Welcoming our Peruvian friends to the USA

The exchange continued in September, when we had the joy of welcoming eight Peruvian Rotarians to southeast Wisconsin. We introduced them to Midwestern



Rotary Friendship Exchange participants pose with the statue of Paul Harris at the Rotary International Headquarters in the United States, symbolizing global fellowship and cultural connections.

traditions through local cuisine—cheese curds, bratwurst, casseroles, and homemade cream puffs—and shared our own style of hospitality.

Together, we enjoyed a scenic boat excursion along the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan harbor, toured a local brewery, and visited charming towns known for their historic character. We also visited inspiring service projects organized by our Rotary clubs, further strengthening the bonds of fellowship and service.

Visits to the Milwaukee Art Museum and SC Johnson Headquarters sparked conversations about art and architecture. A trip to Rotary International Headquarters in Evanston, Illinois inspired our guests, connecting them to Rotary's global legacy. Each shared moment strengthened the bridges built between cultures, fostering understanding and lasting friendship.

A bridge built to last

As our Peruvian friends departed, goodbyes felt more like hopeful beginnings. The Rotary Friendship Exchange experience was so much more than just travel—it built a bridge across continents, woven with empathy, understanding, and shared joy.

Through Rotary, we discovered that true friendship transcends borders, reminding us that the world is full of kindred spirits waiting to be found.

District 6270's Rotary Friendship Exchange (RFE)

For more information, read about upcoming opportunities or contact our Rotary Friendship Exchange Chair by visiting [District 6270's RFE web page](#).