

2016 Long-Term Program (Peru)

Kei Nishioka

I have been studying abroad at La Molina National Agricultural University in Lima, Peru's capital, since August last year. I also went for two weeks in the short term last February, and wanted to study abroad to know more about this country. In addition, recently the product of “super food” has become popular around the world and most are exported from Peru. Therefore, in the future I have high expectations for Peru. I also wanted to see the differences in nature and culture seen in the unique topography so I have decided to dedicate a year of university life to this study abroad.

On the day of departure, I was sent off by my family and friends and I remember that I could not hold back my tears. It was my first time to live apart from my family. I arrived at Jorge Chavez Airport at midnight and my study abroad advisor who is also my good friend was supposed to pick me up but he was late. I couldn't connect to the internet so I patiently searched my friends who are also coming to Peru but for a short term. The next day I moved to the new house and bought what I needed for living. This was kindly supported by another friend and his family that came to our university for a short term in February.

My house was placed in the rooftop attached to the owner's house. It was more like a hut than a house. I heard that the owner has prepared a bed for me to sleep but unfortunately there wasn't and I had to buy one. So for the furniture I've bought a sofa bed, a shelf, a desk chair, a refrigerator. The weather in Peru was colder than I had expected and I wasn't feeling well for a few weeks. Although it was a new construction, the doors and the windows were not fitted to the frame, so the cold air entered from the space between the walls. I didn't have a hair dryer at that time, so I went to sleep with my scarf and the warmest clothes I could wear. Thanks to Ms. Ono, I was saved a lot. She had sent me a pile of blankets when she heard my situation. In the summer, direct sunlight struck the rooftop so I had to leave the hut and search for a cool place. I was surprised when the construction workers and the

owner frequently came to the storage place and tank which is next to my bedroom. Many times I woke up seeing them first thing in site. It was even worse when I left the window open for some fresh air and I noticed that they saw me sleeping. I use to lock the gate from the inside but I was told to not to by the owner otherwise they can't enter when they want.

Back to my life style, cleaning, hand washing the clothes and preparing everyday food were difficult but I managed to get used to it little by little. There was a supermarket 15 minutes away by walk, bread and vegetables / fruits were very cheap. There was a time when I only took one meal per a day. I deeply appreciated the time I lived with my family. After I got used to the life there, I started to eat good thanks to Peruvian food. I heard that Peruvian foods are delicious and it truly was. Basically the dish starts with an appetizer salad and soup and then the main meal. I especially liked the soup. Many herbs and spices are used so after, you can feel your body warm. The staple food is rice or potatoes, especially fried ones. The rice is broiled with salt and garlic before cooking. Fish is used for soup and grilled fish, also the famous Ceviche which is raw fish tightened with lemon. For meat plates, guinea pigs and sometimes alpacas are eaten in the mountain range. Pollo a la Brassa is a roasted chicken. It is widely loved by the citizens of Peru, eaten in many occasion from celebration to usual takeout. What I like the most is the Peruvian homemade food which you cannot find in the restaurants. It is rich in vegetables and is very delicious. The foods that are sold in the streets are also cheap and good.

With all the concerns I have earlier about my hut, I decided to move out in April. The rent was double the price before. It was comfortable but the concrete liquids and bricks fell everyday and once the roof fell due to a construction error. Well, I suppose I had bad luck in choosing a house. From this experience I would be more careful.

Buses are the main transportation. The traffic jams of Lima are so terrible that there are no timetables. I was watching the buses pass by for an hour and a half to see how often and which bus stops near. As a

result, I learned patience. If you wait it will come but if you can't, use a taxi. When I tried going far away for the first time, I got lost. It was getting dark so I gave up and asked for help. An unknown man helped me and negotiated the price. For riding taxis, first you need to tell the destination and negotiate the price. If you don't agree, catch the next one. It was a pleasure when I first established my negotiation. When the driver notices that you are a foreigner, they will add the price.

The classes begun and I experienced new things. I had my own field for the first time and started plowing the land. I got sweaty but tried hard using the heavy scoop under the scorching sun. It was my first time to experience from sowing to harvest and learned the difficulties of agriculture although it was a small land. The harvested vegetables were bought by the university or given to friends to make Peruvian cuisine. I went to take out weeds everyday and it was awful when I left for a while. In other lessons I learned new things about fruits, especially those in Peru that I do not know. I've also learned about tropical crops and the tribes in the jungle. I wasn't desperate for my credits because I still had time when I go back so I just wanted to enjoy the student life there. When my friend invited me to join her class outside the campus, we visited fields of pineapple, coffee and pitaya. I will never forget walking through the Jungle Mountains for two hours at midnight to reach the university accommodation.

The greatest difficulty while studying abroad was keeping company with friends. In class, I could not ask for help and I didn't have friends that I can depend on with confidence. Also, because that I am not good at dancing and drinking, I stopped participating in parties which I think it was a great opportunity to deepen friendships. Meanwhile, the most comfortable place was in the basketball court. Regardless of neither ability nor department, people who wanted to play basketball gathered up to play games. I've also joined the selection of the university and I've made good friends there. Even outside the campus I went to a court in a residential area and had many friends.

I liked to go for a trip as much as playing basketball. The first trip I went to Huacachina and Islas de Ballesta. Huacachina is an oasis in a dessert and enjoyed sand boards and riding exciting cars. Although I

am afraid of high places, I climbed hard to see the beautiful sun setting in the sandy mountains. The night view was really beautiful too. One of the things I like about Peru is that you are able to experience three kinds of landscapes, coast, mountains, tropical zone in the same country. The mountains were thousands of meters which were far beyond my imagination. I suffered high sickness many times, but still my record went up to 5500 m. It was beautiful but I don't want to go there for a while. My favorite was the jungle. I enjoyed finding beautiful insects and animals. I loved the blue butterflies of about the size of both hands. I remember when many ants bit all over my body and had a severe pain, I still have some marks left. The stars at night were beautiful too.

Through the year I moved the house once, now I know how to ride a combi, how to negotiate and how to ask questions. It's not something so amazing, just some minimum things you got to know when living. But compared to the days I was afraid to go out, I think that I grew up. I didn't have good image with Peru, but now I know the dishes are delicious and the way people are so direct with their feelings were something I ought to learn. I also learned how lucky I am to be able to graduate from university at this age. I felt the happiness that I can do my favorite things at my own pace. I want to be honest with my feelings and live my own life without the fear of the Japanese society.

Lastly, the year seemed so long but so short. Every day was full of trouble with ups and downs with my feelings, but I've made memories I could never forget and met great people that I would like to thank.

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