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Peru Adventure 2014

By Colleen Moore

From August 6th to 25th I participated in a nationally sponsored Girl Guide trip to Peru. In Toronto I met up with 15 other girls and 4 guiders from across Canada. The main purpose of the trip was to partner with Canada World Youth in the town of Mato, Peru. There we stayed in groups of two at host families, which was an excellent way to be immersed in the Peruvian culture. While in Mato, we engaged in several community service projects. We then spent our final days in Peru touring historic sites and museums, including Machu Picchu. The trip to Peru was an amazing experience, and I have come home with many friendships and memories made.

I first applied for this trip to Peru because I was interested in the community service element of the trip. The trip appealed to me because not only did I want to see an interesting country and have an adventure, I also wanted to help others. Through my time in Mato, I was able to benefit the lives of those I met. The trip went beyond seeing beautiful places; it also had the purpose of improving the community.

When I first arrived in Toronto, it at first seemed overwhelming to meet so many new people and remember all their names. There were girls and guiders from all across Canada on this trip, from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland. However, not much time had passed before us girls became close friends. We were easily able to find things we had in common, Guiding being one of them. I plan to keep in contact with all the girls I met.

It wasn't until I stepped out of the airport in Lima for the first time that being in Peru felt real to me. It was such an incredible feeling to know that I was finally in Peru after months of anticipation. I was excited to be in a distant country and experience a new culture. A couple of days later, we arrived in Mato.

Mato is a small community, but the people there were full of kindness. We were greeted in the town square by our host families. I stayed with a family with three boys, ages three, five and twelve. Even though we did not speak the same language, the host family was very welcoming. The boys played basketball, soccer and card games with me and my homestay partner, Bridget.



This is a picture of me with the host family I stayed with while in Mato.
I am at the house where I stayed.
The mother's name is Cira, the father's name is Hiban,
and the boys are Jhampier, Juan and Ivan.

As a group we were able to serve the community of Mato in several ways. We made adobe bricks out of mud and straw. Later, we used bricks to make an ecological stove for a very grateful single mom. The stove was made of mud bricks and had a metal stovetop and a vent for the smoke. It helped to significantly improve her quality of life. We also painted murals at the local kindergarten and served breakfast at the school.



Here I am in the town of Mato, digging in the backyard of one of the locals. We are mixing mud and straw to make bricks. I am in the center surrounded by a few of the other Girl Guides.

Due to the language barrier, communication with the locals was sometimes challenging, and not without mistakes. One girl accidentally said that her name was Caraz (a town near Mato), instead of that she liked Caraz. Still, the locals were very patient in understanding our gestures and speech.

This trip to Peru was a great opportunity to try new things. We were taught a traditional Peruvian dance and we learned a few phrases in the native language, Quechua. I learned how to wash my own clothes and to make mud bricks. I even got to try some new foods that are not typically eaten in North America, like guinea pig and alpaca.

In addition to living with the host families, at the end of the trip we got to experience the more touristy side of Peru. I enjoyed shopping at the markets and visiting Incan ruins and Spanish churches. The most memorable place we visited had to be Machu Picchu. It was incredible to see one of the wonders of the world in person.



This is a group picture of all 20 of us at Machu Picchu.

Before we left Lima, we were able to meet up with a group of Peruvian guides. I had the honour of speaking to several leaders in training about the beneficial impact of guiding on girls. I was able to share my experience as a Junior Leader for Brownies with them. It was a lot of fun to participate in a relay race that some of the younger girls had put together. I am thrilled that Canada is twinning with Peru in this coming year.

When I returned from the trip, I came back with many learning experiences and new friendships. I hope to be able to share stories of my travels to inspire other Girl Guides to apply for such trips. To have been selected was such an honour. It was only possible for me to have experienced all that I have shared because of the support Girl Guides has provided. This trip was a wonderful opportunity for me to experience a new country and help others in a whole new way.