

## Generation Peace Academy Peru Update: A taste of Peru - People, Places, Food

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¡Hola Amigos!

Wednesday night, we started our journey into Huaraz on an overnight bus. It was a real treat for GPA, reclining chairs with a tv screen and some curtains to separate yourself and get some much-needed sleep. We greeted Thursday morning bleary-eyed and a little breathless- although that was more from the altitude than anything else. The air was cool, a nice change from the 80-degree weather we had been experiencing. The hotel breakfast had everyone cheerfully shouting, "Cafe! Mucha cafe por favor!" (Coffee! More coffee, please!) and getting our caffeine fix from a coffee leaf tea.

A two-and-a-half-hour bus ride ended at the beautiful Laguna Chinancocha (Lake Chinancocha). Its crystal clear turquoise waters had everyone scrambling for the perfect picture. The surrounding mountains had many of us questioning whether this was reality or just a computer-generated screen. "It was amazing seeing the lake surrounded by mountains. Being there, it felt like I was held in God's hands. I felt so much of God's love there." Daniel B., first-year Participant. Floating on a boat, the scene was of idyllic calm. Everyone was enjoying the sunshine.

Lunch was an exciting mix of pollo milanesa (chicken milanesa), chicharron (pork), and Cuy (Guinea pig). Surprisingly, the Guinea pig tasted a lot like chicken. Then we traveled to Yungay, a city destroyed by an avalanche in the 1970s, where only about 350 people survived, mainly children. The trip ended with a unity prayer on top of the cemetery with a statue of Jesus looking down on us. It was a powerful moment, genuinely praying for the people of the country we were in and learning to see the tragedy from God's perspective. The wind whipped through our hair and seeing the view from the top of the 100 steps felt like we were on top of the world.

Thursday morning had started again with a long bus ride, this time passing on the side of the black mountain range, named for the lack of snow-capped peaks. We visited the Chavez ruins, a group of people that had preceded the Incas more than 3000 years before the birth of Jesus. Everyone was amazed seeing just how principled these people really were. So much of the architecture was based around the number seven and having white stone and black to represent the duality in nature. The Chavez were truly people that deserve our respect, creating buildings that served many other cultures that came later and just built upon their foundations. Visiting the Museo Nacional Chavín (Chavin National Museum), we could get a closer look at many of the left behind artifacts. Despite not understanding much of the Spanish explanations posted everywhere, there was awe at seeing how much attention to detail and effort was put into each thing created. That evening we had a treat of true Peruvian ice cream with flavors such as Tuna

(prickly pear), Lucuma, and Kiwi, along with favorites like Oreo, chocolate, and Fresa (strawberry). A nine-hour drive later, we returned to Lima bright and early, just in time to receive a morning service before breakfast.



In true traditional GPA fashion, we went fundraising- fruit fundraising. The wholesale food market was enormous; fruits of every size, color, and type were everywhere, piled high. The vendors would call out prices, anything to entice customers. With our colorful checkered bags began our fruit raising in teams of about five with a Peruvian member and CIG (Cheon Il Guk) missionary. It brought everyone so much joy to even get to know our brothers and sisters from overseas a little bit more. The generosity that people shared was terrific, donating one or two fruits or even entire crates. Dragon fruit, mango, apples, pomegranate, Tuna (prickly pear), banana, coconut, and so many more exotic fruits were gathered. As soon as we arrived back at the center, the next few hours were spent sorting, cleaning, and, of course, tasting all the fruits. Flies buzzed everywhere as sticky juices ran all over floors and hands. Unsurprisingly, nobody was all that hungry for dinner after all of the samplings that had been done.

After washing up, GPA visited the (name of home), a nursing home. This nursing home housed people that otherwise would have been homeless. They

had been either abandoned by family, had disabilities, or had numerous other situations that would have left them destitute if not for the creation of this home. We could offer them a dance that was prepared weeks in advance, a few songs, and sometimes just dancing around and talking with them. The bus ride back was filled with the chatter of how fun it was and how happy everyone was to see our older grandmas and grandpas smile and dance. Nobody wanted to leave, and all expressed the desire to come back again and spend more time with them. Before leaving, the staff of the home and a few residents expressed their thanks for our decision to come. "It was a great experience to practice having a filial heart to an older generation." Isabel G., second-year Participant.

Our night ended with a visit to a water show park. The many different fountains made beautiful patterns, all different colors, which danced around as the water moved. One even projected a short video of Incan history on a particularly large fountain spray. After a long, hot day, getting soaked with water had everyone feeling relaxed and happy. The park had an area of fountains that, for ten minutes, allowed guests to walk through them all and be thoroughly soaked with water. Luckily, most of us needed a shower, so nobody minded all that much! Throughout the water fights, so much joy and laughter were shared.

Sunday brought new experiences as well. The Sunday service was really inspirational from Odilon, a polio survivor, talking about how order, tidiness, and discipline were essential in our lives. As well as never giving up, especially when all the odds seem to be stacked against you. The service ended with GPA introducing themselves, singing Country Roads, and performing the thief dance again. Finally, we could give the Peruvians the offering we had been preparing for weeks! Luckily everyone loved it, clapping along and cheering for us throughout both. After service, we went down to the beach to see the beautiful Pacific Ocean. There we played soccer and unity ball with the members and a few guests that joined as well.

Today, we finally gave back to the community by doing service projects! We helped continue building a stage in the backyard of the CARP (Collegiate Association Research Principles) house. Many heavy bags of cement mix were brought, and rocks were collected to help thicken and stabilize the mixed cement. A back wall was also scraped of paint, as within the next few days, a mural will be painted, a celebration of Peruvian culture, Christianity, and Unificationism, all merging together. The night ended by playing many get-to-know-you games and bonding with Peruvians and Americans. Just dance, the blanket name game, and many more. We plan to have some sort of bonding every night!

The next few days will be spent doing various other service projects around Lima, and doing some witnessing with our CIG and CARP members!