



## **Markham College – Lima, Peru**

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When I returned from my six weeks in Lima last year, many people asked me “ How was your trip? Did you like the experience?” I can never find the right words to describe how incredible my exchange was. The time I spent in Peru was a highlight of my life so far. There was not a moment that I regretted the decision to take part in the exchange programme.

I'm not going to lie and say that I wasn't nervous before leaving. As I sat on the airplane leaving Montreal, I had no idea what to expect. I knew little about Peru; it was completely unknown to me. Although, I was a little stressed, I was ready to embrace the six-week adventure that stood before me. My worries were quickly put to an end, the minute I arrived; I was greeted by the friendliest people. Everyone was warm, kind and very welcoming.

It did not take me long to adjust to the Peruvian lifestyle. I went to Markham College, a beautiful school in the centre of Lima. Markham College is similar to LCC in the way that they have a driven and out-going community. I absolutely loved the school, they were always looking out for me; whether it was finding me an after-school activity or making sure I knew where to go. After about a week at Markham, I made the decision to join the rugby team. I had never played rugby but based on my brother's experience, I was eager to try. Rugby was so much fun, I quickly learned the rules and techniques and by the end of my stay in Peru, I was able to say it's one of my favourite sports.

I have many highlights from my exchange to Peru; going to the beach with friends, having picnics on the school field, hiking the famous Machu Pichu, however, my favourite and most memorable experience from Peru was my trip to Lunahuana. Over a beautiful four-day period, I made memories that I will treasure forever. As I rafted the rapids, zip-lined across the lands and climbed the Incan ruins, I was amazed with the beautiful country. Lunahuana is a very poor area that was hugely affected by the earthquake that hit Peru in 2007. We packed into a small van and drove to a nearby school. Along with 15 other students, I was given the task of building a simple playground area for the children. I will never forget the faces of the children as I walked into the small rundown building. As I worked, I felt small warm hands on the back of my legs. I turned around to find three little girls looking at me. For the rest of my days in Lunahuana, these little girls were attached to me. I was amazed by how friendly and caring they were. I miss these girls very much.

I can honestly say that my exchange was the best experience of my life so far. Not only did I learn about a new culture and country but I also learned about myself. I made friends and memories that I will never ever forget, along with an incredible bond between my exchange student, Alicia and me. I could not recommend this opportunity any more. If you decide to take part in this journey, I promise you will not regret it. It's incredible.