

tell me
about it

jon underdahl-peirce

Lima, Peru

JON'S MAJOR: International Studies

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: Academic Year 2005-06

REASON YOU CHOSE THIS PROGRAM: The Lima program was the most affordable Spanish-speaking program that IU offers. I wanted a program that would fully immerse me and allow me to take classes with local students and professors.

FAVORITE CLASSES: I really enjoyed a human rights class I took that looked at Peru's period of internal violence that ravaged the country back in the 1980s and early 1990s.



Jon Underdahl-Peirce stands on a peak overlooking the ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu on a cloudy day.

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: I lived in a six-bedroom house with 5 other international students from Europe and Mexico. Since we all spoke different languages, we used Spanish as our common language inside the house. It was really cool eating all kinds of different international foods with my housemates.

GREATEST CHALLENGE: The first few weeks were pretty intense since everything was in Spanish. Also, I had always lived in small towns, so it was a dramatic change to be living in a city of 8 million people!

WHAT I WISH I KNEW BEFORE I LEFT: Nothing really. Part of the studying abroad experience is to learn new things that you didn't expect. For example, my first day of class the professor and all of the Peruvian students arrived at least 15 minutes late to class. In Peru nothing starts on time!

EXPERIENCES WITH CULTURE SHOCK OR REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK: The hardest part was when I returned and had to get used to a more rigid schedule of work and classes, since I had just gotten back from traveling all over South America during the summer break. The Hispanic world is traditionally a much more slow-paced environment than life in the States.

“Don't be afraid of the costs. There are plenty of programs that cost about the same as what you would pay if you stayed at IU.”

ADVICE TO FUTURE STUDY ABROAD PARTICIPANTS: Just do it and go abroad! Don't spend your entire college career in Bloomington. There are so many programs that everyone should be able to find a destination that fits their needs and desires. And don't be afraid of the costs. There are plenty of programs that cost about the same price as what you would pay if you stayed in Bloomington. I was even able to get scholarship money to help pay for what was the greatest experience of my life.