## Whitney Jorgenson's True Blue Experience Part II

## Senior recaps the second leg of her journey to Peru

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## Photo Gallery

Middle Tennessee soccer's Whitney Jorgenson completed her four-year career in the fall. Now, the Overland Park, Kan., product is touring the world as part of her Global Studies major. Jorgenson is participating in a study abroad program in Peru this spring.

This is the second entry of her True Blue Experience blog:

My time here is going fast. I have now been living in Peru for over two months and although I will never be mistaken for Peruvian I do feel



a sense of belonging in a country I should still feel foreign in. Since leaving the U.S. I have been extremely busy with school, cultural activities with my program, and my host family but I have had the opportunity to embark on immeasurable adventures that I may never get to experience again, but will never forget. One of my favorite adventures came just recently when I hiked the Inca trail.

The Inca trail is a famous hike that lies in the Andean mountain range and was used by the Incan Empire from the 1400s to the mid 1500s. It is most known for one of the trail's destination, which is Machu Picchu. A lost city of the Incas that was never conquered by the Spanish and was not revealed to the modern world until the year 1911. In 2007 Machu Picchu was made one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. Today, there are several different ways you can get to the famous ruins.

You can travel by bus or train, or the old fashion way, walking. Since I had the time, and can never get enough of the outdoors in my life, my classmate Hannah (who also happens to be from Kansas) and I booked the trek by foot. We decided on the classic cuatro dias tres noches (4 day, 3 nights) hike so our journey began on a Thursday and we returned home mid-evening Sunday. Unlike a normal backpacking trip in Tennessee, I was required to do no planning for this trip. All I had to do was pack my backpack with all the clothes, snacks and water I needed. I had heard how hard the

trek was going to be so I managed to keep my backpack at a whopping 8kg (17lb). I learned later that several people in my group would hire a private porter for 90 soles (\$35) a day to carry their bag and leave it at the next campsite. I am proud to say I saved myself the money. This was like no other camping trip I had ever been on. Not only could you hire someone to carry your bag, but the agency that we booked through, did almost everything for us. Everyday we had breakfast, lunch, and dinner cooked for us, camp was set up and taken down for us, and none of us were required to carry anything other than our own packs. I ate better than I had on any other camping trip with pancakes for breakfast or rice, meat, potatoes and even fresh vegetables for each meal.

## \*Interesting Fact Alert!\*

There are over 3,800 different types of potatoes in Peru all of which have a specific dish they are served with. There are 55 varieties of corn, 300 varieties of chili peppers and a number of fruits and veggies that originally came from Peru, including the avocado. Wow who knew? Anyway, we were also provided guides and porters for the group. The porters split between themselves to carry four days worth of food, 12 sleeping tents, 12 tarps, 2 big tents for eating in, cooking supplies, 4 tables and 24 places settings (forks, spoons, coffee cups and glasses). These porters were super humans carrying the maximum weight of 50lbs. Despite carrying all this they would then do the days hike in less than half the time it took the group. Unbelievable.

My group might have been one of the best parts of my trip. There were 20 of us total consisting of people from all over the world; a woman from Brazil, man from South Africa, a student from Mexico, a couple from England and the rest of the group was from Argentina. Hannah and I were the only Americans and also the youngest trekkers. The first day I spoke almost nothing but Spanish and it wasn't until the next day that I realized almost everyone in the group was bilingual. From then on we usually communicated through Spanglish. Each day the group hiked around six to seven miles and within the first two days we climbed from 8,330ft above sea level to 13,770ft. Hannah and I did surprisingly well and the group started referring to us as the "American goats." Turned out the six mile walk we make to school and back everyday was great training. On the last day we woke up at 3:30am to complete the last few miles of the trek and spend time at the ruins. By the time we made it to Machu Picchu we had hiked 43km (27mi) and were exhausted. After spending around three hours at the ruins, we walked an hour down to the nearest town and were thankful we caught the train back to the city. At the end of the day, although fatigued, I loved the challenge and spending time with people from places I have never been. I wish I could do it all over again tomorrow.

Thanks to ISA (my study abroad program), I was able to go back to the Machu Picchu ruins and experience Machu Picchu yet again in a different way with all my classmates. The program provided the transportation and took us on a two hour bus ride from Cusco (where I live) to the city of Ollyantaytambo, then on an 75 minute train ride to Aqua's Calientes (named for its fresh hot water springs), and finally a 30min bus ride to the ruins. Much faster than the 4 day hike.

I am so blessed to be in this astonishing place, with a great host family, well organized program that cares about its students and remarkable classmates that have turned into friends who I feel I have known for years. With only one more month left in Peru I fear it will come to an end all too soon. For now, the learning is endless and the adventures are boundless.

Until next time,

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