Mara's Peruvian experience during the Summer 2022 Faculty-led Program Abroad

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Mara is a Fashion Arts student who took part in a Faculty-led Program Abroad (FLPA) in Summer 2022 at Chio Lecca Fashion School in Cusco, Peru.

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Mara had one simple desire: to travel to Peru.

"What I encountered was so much more: not only were the landscapes incredibly beautiful, but the people were also very welcoming and warm towards us. The culture and food was also unique".

It was the first study abroad program at Seneca to take place in Peru. Students traveled through the Andean Mountains where they spent time with local communities. From shearing the Alpacas to dyeing and weaving the wool, they gained first-hand experience in the production of textiles and local sustainable practices.

"It's a lengthy process that takes a lot of care and dedication from the community. I was impressed by how much they enjoy what they do and how in tune they are with the world around them."

In addition to academic-related activities, students on these programs had the opportunity to immerse themselves in local cultures and customs. Through this immersion, Mara noticed similarities between the Peruvian culture and that of her own.

"I did some research on the traditional wear in Peru prior to our departure and noticed it was very similar to the one worn in northern Romania, where I'm originally from. Not only that, but even some of the patterns on their woven textiles are similar and it makes me wonder if the two cultures ever collided over the past few centuries. Being in Peru gave me a sense of belonging."

Samples of woven textiles and dyeing ingredients.

Mara's openness and appreciation for intercultural learning led to a new level of understanding and personal growth.

"I realized that I want to further study sustainability and incorporate it into my own work as I want to help create a better world for future generations. I also want to pursue the study of textiles from my own culture, and I hope I can help revive some of the practices lost over time."

After learning about new methods of design and production, and inspired by Peru's communities, Mara set new sights on reshaping the fashion world into a more sustainable one.

"If you ever have the opportunity to travel to new places and learn, I definitely recommend you do it. It will open your world up to a whole new host of experiences that will enrich your life in many ways. I returned from Peru with a refreshed desire to create and an appreciation for textiles, language, and culture."

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