

Dear AMAUTA Students,

As you very well know, on Sunday, March 15 we received the unexpected news about a mandatory, but necessary, quarantine of 15 days as well as a cancellation of all international flights in and out of the country that left us scrambling Monday morning to control the situation for our students at AMAUTA as well as for our clients with our partner travel agency, Dos Manos.

All of our staff have worked hard to do what we can remotely, from home, to make sure all of our students are safe, have a reliable place to stay, food to eat, classes via Skype and to answer your questions to the very best of our ability. I know this situation has not been perfect due to the many limitations we are facing.

We also want to apologize for these unexpected circumstances because many of you had to partially or completely cancel your plans to explore the country. We do hope you have the chance in the future to make up for this interruption, but we hope you have some interesting and thrilling stories to tell to your family and friends in the meantime.

On behalf of the AMAUTA administration and family we want to say how proud and impressed we are of the maturity, kindness, patience, flexibility and open-mindedness you have shown throughout the past two weeks. You have not only come together during this difficult time, but went into everyday with a supportive and positive attitude. We hope you have made some wonderful moments to bond as a group and to grow as individuals.

That being said, we want to strongly urge all of you to leave Peru and return to your home countries as soon as you are given the opportunity.

I know that most of you do not need convincing and are eagerly awaiting this opportunity to leave. Just in case you are considering staying in Peru, we have a few reasons why you should go when given the chance.

To start, you all have a social responsibility to protect yourself as well as the vulnerable people within the population. Young people may not be as strongly impacted by the virus but you can easily pass this virus on to the elderly, those with asthma, lower immunity, cardiac problems or those with diabetes to name a few. You never know whom you will pass the virus onto and the lives you could be hurting.

The healthcare system in Peru will be struggling to stay afloat in the next weeks and months and needs to support the local population as best it can. There is virtually no space for the Peruvian population let alone foreigners. Xenophobic attitudes have

already begun here in Peru due to the coronavirus. Peruvians may treat you with disrespect and fear based off of your foreign status.

Travel and tourism is *not* going to go back to normal for at least a few months, perhaps longer, depending on the progression of the virus. Hostels, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and all non-essential businesses that make your trip to Peru fun and worthwhile, will be closed. There is very little for you to do here.

There are also many problems at local hostels including the fast transmission of the virus between people, arrests and very strict limits to freedom, including only 1 hour per day maximum to leave your room.

For now, the quarantine is extended through April 12, 2020 and we do not know what will happen after that date, nor do we know when commercial flights will run again. You could end up being stuck here for perhaps months and no one knows what the prices for flights will be. Moving restrictions are likely to become stricter in the next few days.

Here at AMAUTA, we also do not know how long our host families and the student residence can sustain having students. Our staff may not be allowed to continue working, and families cannot support students for much longer. The greatest issue of all is we do not know what will happen. We go day-by-day, listening to news and hoping for the best.

For your own safety, for your families who love you and for the Peruvian people, we hope you put your maximum effort into getting the fastest flight home. Please stay in touch with your embassies and we hope the flights to your various countries will be organized soon. With any questions or concerns you can always contact us, we are here to help.

Thank you for reading and have a great day.

On behalf of The AMAUTA Team,

Jose Berendse
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