Team Surf Peru

and 'The Best Summer Internship Ever'

By Lance Hammer

Planning a trip for our senior-year spring break, my buddy Joey and I decided to venture beyond the usual student destinations like Panama City Beach or Cancun. Because we were both studying Spanish, we narrowed our options down to South and Central America.

Ultimately, we chose Peru for a variety of reasons. For me, the biggest reason was Peru’s world-class surfing. Growing up in Michigan hadn’t presented many opportunities to surf, but I was captivated by the sport and had always wanted to give it a try.

The trip was, in a word, amazing. But, because of poor planning and some bad information from travelers, Joey and I didn’t find any waves until our second-to-last day in Peru (ironically, where we had first arrived). Eventually, we found Playa Makaha, a beach with great waves in the heart of Lima, Peru’s capital city. The beach had many different surf schools where we could rent boards and take lessons, so we opted for the surf school with the best-looking equipment: Team Surf Peru (or TSP).

Our hour-long lesson with TSP was a great success. We both stood up on waves, and eventually came out of the water with huge smiles on our faces. After tipping our surf instructor and drying ourselves off, a man named Alberto introduced himself to us as the owner of Team Surf Peru. We chatted with him for a few minutes about his experiences surfing all around the world and about his surf company. Before saying goodbye and thanking him for the awesome time, we exchanged contact info.

A GLOBAL PROBLEM SOLVER

Lance Hammer rides “The Swing at the End of the World” at seismic monitoring station Casa del Arbol or “The Treehouse,” deep in the Ecuadorian wilderness.
Back home in East Lansing a month later, after the excitement from our Peruvian adventure had nearly worn off, I was sitting in my house on Collingwood Drive in East Lansing thinking about my fast-approaching graduation and wondering what I was going to do next. I knew that I wanted to work in the outdoor/action sport industry, but I also knew that the industry's job market was ultra-competitive. It became obvious to me that I needed work experiences that would make me stand out as unique from the hundreds of other potential job candidates. I'd held internships at a variety of organizations, including as a graphic designer with the MSU College of Arts and Letters. And I had a solid electronic portfolio filled with work from my studio art degree. But little stood out that would help me break into the outdoor/action sport industry. Right then, it dawned on me: I had an excellent contact in Peru who owned a major surf company! After spending some time debating whether or not to contact Alberto about the possibility of a job/internship with Team Surf Peru, and being encouraged by several people to do so, I concluded that I had nothing to lose. I sent Alberto an email reminding him of when we'd met, and sharing some ideas on how he could grow his business and capitalize on the exploding surf tourist industry in Peru. Alberto responded that he was impressed by my email and suggestions, and asked if I could Skype with him. I agreed. In our Skype conversation, I pitched the services I could provide him and his company. After a few conversations, Alberto offered to hire me for summer 2014, or, as was the case in Peru and the rest of the Southern Hemisphere, the winter. Two weeks later, I was back in Lima.

The internship begins. Our work agreement included my work for Team Surf Peru in exchange for accommodations, a small amount of cash, surfing sessions every day, and the opportunity to travel up and down the extensive and beautiful Peruvian coastline with Team Surf Peru and its clients who were paying for guided surf trips. Because my job with Team Surf Peru did not exist until I created the position, it was up to me to find and propose new projects that would be beneficial to the company. As a result, what I did (in between surf sessions) was revamp TSP's marketing efforts and further develop the company's brand identity. First, I created a new website, TeamSurfPeru.com, that customers could easily find when searching for information on surfing in Peru. To draw traffic to the site, I created and managed Google AdWords campaigns. I also conducted a competitive pricing analysis to optimize pricing for TSP's surf trip packages.

A typical day in Lima started out with a hot cup of coffee and breakfast at my hostel. Then, I would grab my wetsuit, still wet from the day before, and head to the ocean. At the beach, I would help coworkers line up equipment for the daily surf lessons and board rentals. I'd then hop in the water and paddle out to the line-up with the Lima locals who were catching a few waves before work. After my morning surf session, I would catch up with Alberto and discuss plans for the day. Sometimes, this meant sitting on the bench of his Volkswagen Vanagon and typing/translating content to go up on the new website. For lunch, I would eat ceviche (an incredibly delicious mix of raw seafood, cured in lime juice with ají) at a nearby restaurant, and work on my daily tasks.

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than the day before. myself as every day I had a better ride into my stay, I really started to enjoy harder than it looks.) About a month days of fighting the currents and ocean swells.

who prefer learning on smaller it caters to less-experienced surfers all-inclusive camp is easier to sell camp called "Surf Camp Peru." The To combat this, I developed a 5-day trip packages decreases.

months, so the demand for TSP surf frequent over the Peruvian summer season issues. You see, learning about Team Surf Peru's internship with TSP resulted from marketing opportunity during my But my largest work project and work, falling asleep even in a noisy daily surf sessions and a full day of plans for Team Surf Peru. After two my hostel or a coffee shop to go over evening, I'd meet up with Alberto at 4 in the midafternoon, I'd head back hostel became effortless.

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