

MUSUQ CHASKI - El Mensajero Nuevo



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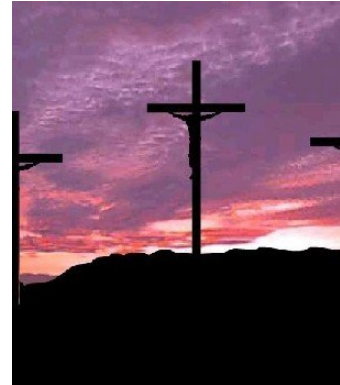


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Semana Santa in Cusco

Semana Santa (Holy Week) is one of the most important religious celebrations of the year in Peru and this year it falls between 28th March and 4th April. Catholicism has been the main religion of Peru since the Spanish conquest and therefore Peruvians have adopted the many festivities and religious holidays associated with the Catholic Church.



Semana Santa, which commemorates the last days of Jesus Christ before his death, starts on the Sunday (Domingo de Ramos) when Jesus was said to have arrived into Jerusalem riding a donkey. On this day, Cusqueños receive a cross made of herbs and pine leaves as a symbolic way of receiving God into their lives. These crosses are taken to the Church in order to be blessed by the priest.



Easter Monday (Lunes Santo) sees a unique ceremony which takes place in Cusco when the statue of a black Jesus on the cross, called Taytacha de los Temblores (Lord of the Earthquakes), is paraded through the streets until it reaches the Plaza de Armas, where crowds of people gather to receive his blessing. Legend has it that this statue was brought from Spain and turned black from the smoke from incense and candles which worshippers burnt whilst praying to him. It is said that this statue of Jesus with Andean skin colour is particularly respected by Peruvians for this reason. He is named Lord of the Earthquakes as he was reportedly brought out from the cathedral to be paraded around during a strong earthquake in the 1650s, at which point the earthquake stopped.

On Tuesday of Semana Santa the celebration continues with ceremonies, masses and processions including one where a figure representing Jesus in a glass coffin is paraded until it meets a statue of the Virgin Mary. On Thursday (Jueves Santo) families traditionally eat a meal to commemorate the Last Supper which consists of twelve courses to represent the twelve apostles. Like many festivals in Cusco, Semana Santa also has dishes specifically prepared for this celebration including empanadas (filled savoury pastries), meringues, corn or coconut biscuits, preserved peaches, various types of beans, rice pudding, seafood (as it is not usual to eat red meat during this period), pear soup and corn soup.



Focus on – Sacred Valley emergency

Focus on – State of Emergency in Sacred Valley Update

With the support of Projects Abroad and its past volunteers, we have been able to successfully set up a range of projects to help those communities affected by the disaster in the Sacred Valley.

For 4 weeks following the disaster we distributed fresh food as immediate relief for the communities affected along the Vilcanota river. Communal kitchens in Paucarbamba, Yucay, Huicho, Urco Mebrillar and San José de Urco, Pisonaynioq, Qoricancha and Lamay received fresh produce. Following this initial aid, we put in place separate psychological support workshops for the children and adults of the communities of Pisonayniyoc and Coricancha in Calca. These workshops involved up to 50 children and volunteers assisted psychologists with art, theatre, dance/movement sessions, sports and co-operation games amongst other activities to get the children to vocalise and deal with the issues affecting them following the destruction of their homes.



Community Work this month also included a dental health campaign which was carried out by volunteers. Volunteers treated 180 children (aged 4 – 14) with fluoride to strengthen their teeth and the children were given toothbrushes and instruction on their proper use by local doctors.



Work has also started on clearing rubble from our partner organization school, Agropecuario in Calca, where we have previously had many volunteers working. The school was very badly damaged by the floods and small groups of volunteers have worked very hard clearing the way in order for rebuilding to be able to start. We donated some materials for the reconstruction of the bathrooms and will be involved in the building of the prefabricated classrooms which are due to arrive soon.



We have also been in the process of handing out school stationery, Wellington boots and warm socks for children affected by the disaster here in the Sacred Valley.

Please keep yourself updated with news through the newsletter and 'Projects Abroad Peru – The Official Group' Facebook group.



Teacher Training 2010



Following a very successful Teacher Training course in Cusco, a couple of volunteers wanted to write about their experiences volunteering on this project. We want to say a huge thank you to the 6 volunteers who did such an excellent job on this project (from left to right) – Christine Casely, Ashley Petry, Henry Renninson, Sara Schartau Andersen, Irene Bucelli and Laerke Blom Madsen and a special thanks to Irene and Sara for writing about their time on this unique project...

Teacher Training - An unforgettable 6 weeks **Irene Bucelli, Teaching volunteer, Italy**

Taking part in the Teacher Training programme has been incredible. Volunteering abroad is meant to be an unforgettable experience but I dare to say that this particular project can be placed as one of the most gratifying, challenging and significant experiences to have in life.

For six weeks we have been teaching both English and teaching strategies to Peruvian teachers. This particular project involves not only our organization but the Ministry of Education itself. Teachers are attending the course aiming to get a certificate that they might need to get more hours to fill up their schedules, but they might as well just want to improve their English. The certificate they obtain at the end is therefore really important to them.

These six weeks challenged us but at the same time they have offered us the opportunity to make friends we could never forget and that could never forget us. Knowing that through our work we were doing something important for our students, but also, indirectly, for *their* students, encouraged us to work to the best of our possibilities and limited skills.

Personally, as I aim to work in education, I want to emphasize how much I've learnt from this experience. It really was a full-time job and it helped me to understand what teaching is (and is meant to be) at a depth I never experienced before. I now wish I could have the chance to take part in this project again, and this is a feeling that I share with everyone in our teaching group. We are already thinking about how to make it possible to come back next year despite our many engagements!

Our group was a good mix of skills so that difficulties in Spanish, as well as lack of teaching experience, could be easily gotten over. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that more than anything you have to be ready for some really hard work. As long as you are committed, willing to learn and you are not afraid of putting yourself to the test, you don't have to worry: through good team work you will be able to give your best to the project.



The satisfaction and the pride I felt giving our students their certificates was a feeling that summed up all the effort and the work we have done together with our class. As a group we can sense how good the result was, how we really have been part of their lives and I know I couldn't ask more than this feeling of having given them the best I could. It is a new kind of happiness, a kind I never experienced before, and I am going back home happy in a completely new way.

Teacher Training Programme 2010

Sara Schartau Andersen, Teaching volunteer, Denmark

After learning that the Teacher Training Programme has experienced a decreasing number of volunteers in recent years, I thought I should write about my time on this project, since it was one of the most awesome experiences I have had in my life. So, where do I start...?!



I am the child of two teachers so I never ever wanted to be a teacher myself. Not because my parents come home and cry themselves to sleep at night or anything, but simply because I felt like I'd already had that job. I was there when my parents prepared their classes and corrected tests, laughing and swearing over their students' mistakes and I was most definitely there when they spent hours (literally, *hours!*) discussing different teaching strategies! I saw how the students came to my parents for personal advice, too, and how they all became friends and shared their ups and downs. So really, what could possibly surprise me?

Well, Projects Abroad's Teacher Training Programme could! Admittedly, even though I thought I knew everything about teaching, I was concerned about teaching *adults*. I'm 19 years old, and only about 7 years old at heart; English is not even my first language; and I had no experience whatsoever. Could I even teach them anything? Would they ever respect me as a teacher?

I soon found out that all my worries were completely unnecessary; my students called me "Miss", asked me loads of questions and copied my every word from the blackboard. In that classroom, I was the expert, master of English, and English was all that mattered – not age, not life-experience, but English in all its majesty. But as we all know, with great power comes great responsibility. Luckily, I was never alone. We were an awesome team of 6 very different volunteers from various countries and backgrounds, all with one mission: to teach English. And boy, did we teach! We conjugated verbs as verbs have never been conjugated before; we revised comparatives and superlatives until we simply could no more; we practiced vocabulary so intensely that if you wake one of our students up at 3am, she'll be able to tell you at least 10 professions and where they work! Every night I dropped dead on my bed at 9 o'clock (at the latest). After all this hard work, after all our blood, sweat, tears and well-earned daily Oreos in break-time, we still have students who say "She has 19 years old" or "He are a doctor"! But it was worth it, because we also have a bunch of wonderful teachers whose English has really improved, and we've made friends with each and every one of them. I'd do it all again without a second's thought....



I could go on for ages about how our students invited us out for lunch several times, how they made me drink Anisado (don't go there!), and how we shared a really emotional goodbye at the graduation ceremony, but I really think you should go and experience all this for yourself. If you ever have the chance, join Projects Abroad's Teacher Training Programme!

Project Updates

What's New?

PROJECT UPDATES

Our **Inca** volunteers celebrated La Yunza festival in Establo where presents were tied to a tree and each volunteer took it in turns to try and cut the tree down to release the presents!

Work has continued with clearing the ruins at Cochapata, Incatambo, Huamanmarka, the Inca trail in Triunfo and the Capillayok site.

Lessons with archaeologist Jhon have focused on Vitcos and Yurak Rumi and volunteers also had the chance to visit both these places which included a pretty memorable journey to Huancacalle.

We have been co-ordinating with the INC (National Institute of Culture) to set up English lessons for their staff again and also to decide when and where to concentrate our efforts working on the ruins in the valley.

Volunteers have continued with educational materials and carrying out some basic repairs in and around Establo. A few football matches with locals from Huyro have been organised in Establo and volunteers continue their weekly quiz nights.



Care and Teaching volunteers spent the first week of March volunteering on Community Work projects including a dental health campaign, removing rubble from Agropecuario School in Calca and assisting with psychological support workshops.

The start of the school year was hesitant with many partner organisations not receiving many students for the first day of term. Little by little students began enrolling for school and classes were running as normal by the second week of March when Teaching and Care volunteers started their regular placements.



Volunteer Stories

Becoming Peruana...

Aisha Brown Colpani, Care volunteer, UK



To attempt to describe my experience of Peru is a pointless exercise: I don't particularly want to label it and I doubt that there is a word comprehensive enough to encompass everything that I have done and everything that I have yet to see. After being here for nearly two weeks, and feeling like I have been here at least twice as long, I have come to the point where I have basically settled in to the new lifestyle; the huge portions of tasty food that my host-mum serves up daily, the indecisive hot and rainy weather, the freshness of the huge green mountains which surround me. Although I haven't been here long, I know, judging by the impact of my time up until now, that this trip is going to have a lasting affect on my character and whole outlook.

Every thing and every person seems to be antithetical to anything which could be labelled as stereotypically English and while the majority of the people may not be accustomed to the material comforts which I take for granted, whereas a day in London can fly past in a haze, time in Peru seems to go by at a pace which is nearly weird in its tranquillity; the people taking time to visit family and stop out with friends, prioritising those things which in the grand scale of life show themselves to be of real value. It's true that this is just my perspective as an outsider looking in; a perspective which, admittedly, may be disposed to idealism - either way Peru is in no way similar to the lifestyle in London, a fact which, right now, can only be taken as a good thing. I have been thrown into a place where I stand out because I look different, I behave in a different manner and I know no-one but, strangely enough, these issues have been greatly overshadowed by the excitement of the challenges which I meet daily...I don't even know if my Spanish is improving but I still enjoy taking any opportunity to test it out, if not with my host-family then when looking for a bargain at PISAQ market (a floppy-eared hat and a soft grey alpaca hoodie).



I don't want to make any generalisations on Peru, I don't even think I could if I wanted to...I still have so many things to do and see...in reality, I'm still a fresh Gringa trying to dissect and observe an environment from the outside. Until I spend more time here and maybe become more of a Peruana, I cannot do the place and the people any kind of justice. What I do know is this; no matter how cheesy and clichéd it may sound, the simplicities of life, good company, peace of mind, even fresh air, trump superficial possessions every day of the week.

From Peru for the moment...

An experience of a lifetime – October - December 2009

Jane Moncrieff, Care volunteer, UK



Maybe it was a mid-life crisis or maybe it was just a desire to do something different, exciting and something I had never done before but when my friend said to me “your only regrets in life are the things you never do” I went ahead, albeit it with slight trepidation and booked my 6 week placement in Peru working in Care. Not being a spring chicken I have a lot of work experience both in the field of care, working with children, sport and also importantly a mother of two teenage daughters. What I didn’t have was the amazing confidence of the gap year students who seemed to do all sorts of daring and scary things and take so much in their stride! This made the decision about what to do quite difficult but, weighing it all up, I decided I would enjoy working with very young children again (hopefully not getting too broody!) which is how I ended up working in a day centre for under 2’s.

What a life changing and memorable experience it was. The children in the day centre were adorable, cute, naughty and hugely energetic, providing me with a new lease of life, making me glad I was fit as I raced about the playground chasing, catching and cuddling them and I realised that no matter where children come from and what their backgrounds are, having fun and learning new things is what they love most; well that and their food! Peruvian babies eat so much and there is no room for not liking things as everything gets hoovered up, vegetables and all! The teachers in the school were really appreciative of my help and I think being older and being used to looking after children was very valued by them. Even my bad Spanish improved a lot (not difficult as I could hardly say anything to start with) but the children didn’t mind when I spoke the odd word in English and in fact seemed to really like my rendition of Old Macdonald that I sang regularly in English, I suppose the animals in Peru make the same noises after all!!



My host family was wonderful, Elizabeth, Sydney and children Rodrigo (8) and Maricielo (3). I felt so at home, welcomed and cared for and really got to know them as friends as well as my family. Myself and Elizabeth got on really well and shared many stories about the trials and tribulations of bringing up children and husbands!! We regularly watched films together and I introduced Elizabeth to the joys of a glass of wine with the film! The children were wonderful and even put up with my bad Spanish, I will never forget the day I was chatting to Rodrigo in Spanish thinking I was doing really well when at the end of the question and discussion I was having he looked at me bemused and said “Que?!” Oh well I tried!!

I met so many lovely volunteers, some as young as my daughters and a few my age, which was great and allowed me to go off and do things that older people do! Having said that, the young volunteers never made me feel out of things and I always felt part of all the activities. I saw most of the wonderful attractions within the sacred valley and spent a few great weekends exploring Cusco and Lake Titicaca. After a few weeks of being without my family I really started to learn about a whole other side of myself that I didn't know existed and know now that I will travel alone again and I will do more volunteering again. I have developed a new found confidence.



Leaving the day centre and leaving my host family was one of the hardest things I have done in my life and for someone who is not overly tearful I shed enough tears on my last day to last for the next year! They were happy tears though and tears that are full of memories that will last a lifetime. For anyone who is just thinking about doing some volunteering work with Projects Abroad particularly, if you are of more mature years, then I would say think no more just do it, you will love it and will have so much fun – I did and now I'm a convert! I'm already wondering when my new employer will allow me to take time off to do some more!

Host Family Interview

The Ramirez Family from Urubamba

How long have you been working as a host family for Projects Abroad?

We received our first volunteer when Nicol was 2 months old and she's just about to turn 7, so nearly 7 years!

What is the best thing about having a volunteer in your home?

There are many – but I suppose it's the relationship the volunteers form with the children. For my daughters it's a great experience to have volunteers living in the house as they learn to live and co-operate alongside each other. It's also great for them to learn and practice their English!



When it's time for the volunteer to leave, it's like a family member leaving home. The volunteers change from a 'stranger' from another culture to someone who we cherish who becomes part of the family.

What is the most memorable experience of a volunteer in your family?

There are so many!! One of the most memorable things with each volunteer is when we cook cuy (guinea pig). Their reactions range from disgust – “there’s no way I can eat that”; sadness - “I used to have a pet guinea-pig...” to sheer enthusiasm - “it’s soooo delicious”!!

Also birthdays are very special occasions with the volunteers, whether it’s their birthday or a birthday of a member of the family. Christmas is also very interesting for them as they get to see the way we celebrate it here and we learn about how they celebrate in their country. This year was the second Christmas we’ve spent with a volunteer and we had a really wonderful time!

What are the most valuable things volunteers learn after staying with your family?

Well, one of the things that nearly all volunteers learn is Spanish! Many volunteers arrive not knowing any and leave being able to speak pretty well.

They also learn about the customs of Peru and all about our country – from the food, to the fiestas, customs, typical dress etc.

Another very important thing they learn is how to live and co-operate within someone else’s family. By the time the volunteers leave they know everything about the family and the majority of volunteers call the house to ask how the children are getting on etc.

What do you learn from the volunteers that live in your home?

As I said, the children learn English which is very useful for them. They also learn many games, songs and customs from other countries and cultures. Some volunteers have also brought musical instruments, like the guitar, and the girls have learnt how to play a little bit.

Some volunteers arrive with a very set view on the world and aren’t open to new experiences and with these volunteers it’s always difficult at the start, but with the majority we end up making a good connection – playing games, having interesting conversations and watching films together. We all learn from this kind of exchange.

What is the funniest experience you remember from a volunteer?

(Laughs) During Carnivales in February, it’s traditional to throw water at everyone and everything on the street. One particular time 4 years ago we went out to the street to play water fights – everyone was throwing water bombs at the passing cars. Well, one water bomb hit and broke the windscreen of a bus. At that moment everyone ran to hide from the driver as no-one knew who had broken the window. We were with a volunteer (who shall remain nameless!) and we ran and ran in case the bus driver thought it was us. We arrived home wet and scared of getting into trouble. Once we were dry and the adrenaline had worn off, we were able to laugh about it. We remember and laugh about this story often but particularly around this time of year!

Volunteer Social Activities

Tessa Okell



This month volunteers have enjoyed a 'Coffee and Cake afternoon' in Ulrike's in Pisac where a hardcore game of Taboo was battled out. Winning team B (winning by just a few extra right answers) deserved to win if only for the world's quickest answer following the clue "You can eat it and it's also an old singer." Answers on a postcard!

The Pub Quiz has been really successful this month, despite a week off due to absent quizmasters. Jasper and Yann made amends by preparing an intense quiz for the following week! Not to be outdone – Kimmy and Jaime prepared an action packed quiz and Aisha and Ashleigh win most original with a round of plasticine modelling in the form of Frankenstein! Good work guys.



The monthly Social was held on 12th March and involved volunteers taking a walk in and around beautiful Yucay. En route we saw some magnificent Incan terraces, rock paintings and learnt about the historical town itself. Volunteers then had a delicious meal of alpaca or vegetable stir-fry in Don Kike's restaurant.



Feliz Cumpleaños !!



Congratulations and many happy returns of the day to the following volunteers and staff members who celebrated their birthdays in March...

- ❖ Happy Birthday to Aisha Brown Colpani who celebrated her 19th birthday on Sunday 7th in Cusco with other volunteers.
- ❖ Many happy returns of the day to Ellen Church who celebrated her birthday on 24th March with a guinea-pig dinner with her family.
- ❖ Also, not forgetting our very own Desk Officer, Guillermina, who celebrated her 30th birthday on the 24th March.



Cocina Peruana

How to make ... Sweet Empanadas

Empanada de Semana Santa – A traditional Cusqueñan sweet pastry perfect for a dessert or snack during Semana Santa...

Ingredients:

500gr white corn flour
500gr wheat flour
500gr icing sugar
500gr margarine
4 egg yolks
1 small cup of pisco or vodka
1 cup of milk
Hundreds and thousands to decorate



Preparation:

Sieve both the corn and wheat flours into a deep, wide bowl. Add the margarine and sugar and knead until the dough is soft. Beat the egg yolks and add to the mixture. Add the milk and liquor and keep kneading. Put the mixture in greaseproof paper rectangular moulds (approx. 4 x 6 inches) on a baking tray. Bake in a preheated oven 350 ° f (180 ° c) for 15 to 20 minutes, until browned. Decorate with a sprinkle of hundreds and thousands on top. Serve the empanadas with delicious guiso de durazno (preserved peaches). Enjoy!!