

MUSUQ CHASKI

"THE NEW MESSENGER"

ProjectsAbroad

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A magical time

By Director: Tim de Winter

Volunteering is magical. Or at least it can be. Despite what you may believe, what you get out of volunteering doesn't depend that much on the context, but more on the attitude you bring to the experience.

Some of our research shows that staying with a host family that has a nicer house, a higher income or that is closer to a work placement has no impact on the volunteer's experience at all. Instead, our research suggests that the better the volunteer's relationship with the other volunteers, staff and partner organizations, the happier they are. From general happiness studies we know that *generosity trumps selfishness*. As a volunteer you give your time and energy and some of your wealth and this makes you feel happier. Broader research has proven that the largest "happiness effect" is seen when people do positive things together with other people.



After 10 years of experience, I have become convinced that the essence of a good volunteering experience is to be found in the relationships you build with others. I believe this to be the fundamental starting point for the development of your experience. However, for volunteering to be magical, we need to take things further. There is no time for excuses, for saying that "the circumstances weren't right", or "I wasn't here enough time" or even "I am a volunteer so I do not have to go to work today if I do not feel like it". I believe the real focus point is your sincere commitment. What Projects Abroad Peru counts on is your belief, belief that you, in your time with us, can really do something for the lives of less fortunate people.

Not everyone is lucky enough to be born in Paris, Dallas or Copenhagen. Some people were born in Ccotohuincho with illiterate parents, in a one room house without running water eating only two bowls of soup a day. We are the lucky ones and it is important that we realize this. Helping the not so fortunate is not task- or time- related, it is about attitude, commitment and simply getting things done in whatever circumstances may challenge us.

I hope that you believe that simply by being a good volunteer you can really do something for these people. We (my team and myself) will be supporting you along the way, and we will be there to assist in any way we can. We have been here for a long time and we will continue this fight long after you have gone, but you can trust that we are following and encouraging you every step of your experience in the Andes.

Presenting our new Desk Officer

My name is Jenny and I am the new Desk Officer here in the Sacred Valley, Peru. I am from England, but have spent the last couple years wandering, finding my way to Bolivia, New Zealand and now Peru! I graduated from Nottingham University a good few years ago now, and since then - other than a little blip last year, when I spent 10 months working as an adventure guide in New Zealand - I have worked in primary and early years education. I've been lucky enough to get experience in a variety of settings, including day care centres, primary schools, an orphanage and even a children's hospital.

So how did I get here? Well, alongside my obvious passion for education, I am a big advocate of voluntary work (I have completed over two and a half years of voluntary service myself). I really believe that volunteers can make a difference where it's most needed and can help to provide the "people power" often missing in poor and rural areas; plus voluntary work can have a whole host of benefits for the volunteer. I also have a bit of a thing for Latin America. I've never been able to quite describe what it is, but there's something about the culture and way of life, the colour and the music, that keeps drawing me back here. And then there's the call of the mountains!

I love to be outdoors, hiking, camping, cycling, running and climbing, amongst other things. Mountains have always fascinated me, and when I flew from Chile to Bolivia a couple of years ago, I was blown away by the majesty of the Andes. What better place for me then, than nestled in a lush valley, flanked by steep hillsides which obscure from view several snow-capped giants?

Having been in Peru for only a month, I am still discovering its wonders, traditions, and idiosyncrasies and am excited to see what life here holds for me. I also look forward to getting to know you all over the coming months and of course, if you have any questions, just drop me an email!





You Should Sit Down For This One

by Kristin Prunskis, 18, United States

I know, I know. It seems as though every post I write about is regarding my exciting weekends, new living mates, or travels across exotic ruins. Now, I know this may shock you all, so I am going to ask you to sit down before I reveal my next secret...

Are you sitting?

Ready...

I HAVE A JOB HERE.

Surprised you there, didn't I? And all this time you guys through that Peru was all play, a relaxing and fun break from school, an escape from the stresses of life. It's true, there are relaxing times....at 11:30pm when I finally manage to get to bed after a full day of work... and I do have a crazy amount of fun, but I could sit and watch paint dry for four hours and still have a grand time, so that's not saying much. And as far as "escape from life's worries" goes, HAH! My friends, you could be lounging in paradise, swimming with the fishes and treading the tide all day long and still face daily trials and challenges.

Just ask Nemo- he knows.

I digress.

But in all seriousness (as if that's possible), every day I wake up bright and early and rush on over to the local village of Urubamba on a "minibus." If you have never been to Peru and can't visualize what this "minibus" might look like, just basically imagine one of those vans that have a Free Candy sign to lure vulnerable children, then somehow squish about six benches worth of sitting room inside. Good! Now just stuff twenty six people in there and you have for yourself my daily method of transport that for some strange reason always makes me feel as if I'm being dragged away to a concentration camp.

Once at Urubamba, I take a motortaxi- which is basically a motorcycle with a carriage somehow attached to it- and head off to the Centro de Vigilancia where I will be focusing on Nutrition and Health for the rest of the day.

Every morning, dozens of mothers walk through the doors with their children in order to get breakfast and lunch, and to participate in daily workshops that stimulate healthy lifestyles. Mothers, who have virtually nothing, can't provide meals for their children, most of whom that have abusive husbands, anemic babies, and absolutely zero knowledge of basic nutritional health, including brushing teeth or even bathing.

Although at times it is frustrating and shadowing, every afternoon when I leave the Centre I cannot help but be thankful to be given the opportunity to serve and to be blessed with the ability to help the mothers and their children.

How refreshing...I just can't get over it.

*Roxanne L'Heureux-Boily, 20,
Canada, Care 1-5 Months*

My Project was made concrete solely following the rejection, one month prior to my departure, of my candidature for an intercultural exchange in Burkina Faso. Being 19-years-old at the time, I was in my last college year in a program called « *Human Sciences* » under the « *Open on the World* » profile. Always thinking about going somewhere else, I finally decided on a sudden impulse to join Projects Abroad, an organization that one of my friends told me about. The choice to go to Peru was fixed following several criteria; the language (Spanish, that I have been practicing for three years previously, but that I still wanted to improve), the culture (which is very different from mine), the history of the country and its people, the diverse landscapes, the missions that Projects Abroad proposed there, and so on. Having travelled to Jamaica just before I come to the Latin lands, my missions were then limited to just one month in a Care Project; working in a school with children, and one week in the Conservation Project in the jungle.



First of all, I was pleasantly impressed with the warm welcome that I received from my Peruvian family. From the first moment, they made me feel like one of them. Hence, I had so much fun sharing many hours carrying out many tasks and activities. Each Monday, my mother and I went to the gym together. Often, I helped to prepare dinner and also to clean everything at the end. Before I went to bed, I helped the children to do their English homework. Of course, those situations came with much laughter. After this adventure, I will definitely stay in contact with these tremendous people.

With regard to my project in a kindergarten, I had the pleasure of working in a particular place comparative to what the volunteers were expected to have. Indeed, the institution where I was volunteering was composed of only one room situated right in the middle of a rural area where the children came from the mountains to learn basic skills. There were approximately 13 boys and girls between 3 and 5 years old in the class. The task, by moment, was not as easy as it seemed to be because at their age the concentration, attention span and comprehension of the children are not really fully developed yet. Thus, it takes patience, dedication and love to guide them daily. Nevertheless, the most difficult task was not to become too attached to those young children. All one would like to do is adopt them.

The duration of my stay in the jungle was too short. One week was barely enough time to get accustomed to the Amazonian life. Unfortunately, I never knew I would have met so many formidable people and in the same way miss them so much. The experience of being so close to the wild animals was simply amazing. I would have needed at least one month to be sure to benefit from all the activities (the release of the turtles, the birth of a baby tapir, the transfer of the monkeys to other cages and so on) and more interaction with humans would have been greatly appreciated.

The biggest advantage with these missions is that I felt really useful to this country for the entire duration of my trip; much like if I were an important actress who helped the progression of that society. Therefore, I would like to continue to make a difference; a little bit everywhere in the world. Never could I have expected better.

Erika Moorcroft, 20, Australia

Inca Project 3 months

When I was asked to write summary of my experience on the Inca project with a few photos, I thought it would be easy. Then I realized that it couldn't be summarized.

I had the best time of my life!

I met people I would have never met, I did things I would have never done and I lived in a country that I had only dreamed of.

The past three months, I learnt more about myself than I probably ever would and by doing this project, I have walked away with new life lessons and people I now call my best friends that I will have for life!

I climbed mountains, saw ruins thousands of years old, found ceramics that were used, not only Inca but another culture before. This has been the most amazing and rewarding experience I will ever have!



Inca

ARCHAEOLOGY: Volunteers have now finished codifying the ceramics and artifacts excavated in 2012. Now the next step will be to try and piece together as many of the potsherds as possible.

We also continued with our weekly lessons where volunteers listened to talks on 'Capac Ñan & The Inca Road System' and also on the Inca chronicler 'Filipe Guaman Poma De Ayala'.

AGRICULTURE: The de-graining of corn is always a fixture at the project in March and the volunteers have continued with this...not far to go now until it's finished!

COMMUNITY WORK: As expected the number of children going to the local library for activities with the volunteers has increased with the school year starting later this month. We have also spoken to the local radio and local teachers to make the children aware of these activities.

Volunteers also helped with marking up educational boards. These boards are to help pre-school children with the concept of numbers between one and 10.

SOCIALS: 'La Yunza' is definitely the most anticipated fiesta at the Inca project and this year, I think it's fair to say that everyone had an absolutely fantastic time. A lot of hard work and planning goes into getting the festivities up and running and once they are, there is no stopping them. The volunteers and staff got the tree decorated and when our local friends arrived it was nonstop dancing with a huge water fight. Later there was food and a camp fire to warm everyone up. Needless to say, the dancing continued. The staff are looking forward to next year already!



Care and teaching

Summer school concluded on February 20th in Calca and the 21st in Yucay, volunteers prepared activities for the closing day. In Calca, kids from the fifth grade presented a game consisting of a set of synchronized movements with their hands, then Florence from the UK grabbed a guitar and sang for all the kids. The morning ended at the pool with lots of fun.

In Yucay, volunteers presented a song in French which they taught the children then everyone participated in a "yunsada" consisting of taking turns to hit a tree with an axe while dancing around it. This tree is adorned and filled with gifts that children take with them after it has been cut down. Finally we all shared a fabulous lunch.

It was sad for volunteers to say good-bye to the children they saw every day for more than a month.

During the first two weeks in March, volunteers did community work: fluoridation campaigns in Huayllabamba, Calca and Yanahuara, painting of the kindergarten in Huquqi, Calca, and making fleece slippers for 32 kids from a wawawasi in Chinchero. Finally volunteers worked supporting the Nutrition Program with a workshop in early stimulation.

Classes have started in most of our partner schools and we have already shared with them copies of our agreement with the regional authorities where they are told about the mechanisms of our collaboration. Volunteers are arriving and will be prepared to help the teachers through weekly workshops held at the main office in Urubamba. The help of the volunteers is important in the English area as we do not have qualified English teachers.



Sports

We keep collaborating with the "Apu Pitusiray" soccer school in Pisac, where the first week in March they were visited by a national TV channel which made a very nice documentary about the great work being done with the kids in the area. One of our volunteers from the UK spoke about giving some of these talented kids the chance to train with some important teams in Europe. We are looking at the possibility of helping these young people with English classes done by volunteers as an extracurricular activity.



Nutrition

This month has seen the Nutrition Project really take off. Building on the hard work from past volunteers in the tough transition stage, Iona and Kristen have been able to increase the impact of our work in the District of Urubamba. Kristen has been the first Projects Abroad volunteer to start working in the community of Palccaraqui, taking part in house to house visits in the area and building awareness of the crucial issues, whilst Iona has continued to support the municipality in the zone of Chichubamba.

As well as the usual work alongside our partner organizations in the Centro de Vigilancia in Ccotohuincho and extra house-to-house visits, volunteers have also been involved in training workshops for the nutritional technicians from the Municipality and members of the Peruvian public health service (MINSA). These included developing new early stimulation materials and working on methods of fighting anemia, which affects 100% of children aged three and younger in the communities most at risk in the District of Urubamba. These included a fun awareness raising game involving a four-foot plaster cast model of a bone, and cooking traditional Peruvian dishes with added iron-rich sangrecita de pollo (chicken blood).

The workshops have been a great success and have led to an increased demand for more to come... Iona and Kristen are busy developing new materials all the time, and we look forward to seeing what they have to offer for the next workshop!



Causa a la limeña

Causa is a typical dish in Peru which has pre-Columbian origin, traditionally prepared with yellow potatoes.

It is made with a variety of fillings including tuna, chicken, prawns and other varieties of white meats.

It is served with mayonnaise.

Ingredients:

- 1kg potatoes
- 500g cooked and shredded chicken or 2 cans of tuna fillet
- 1 medium onion
- 1 cup of mayonnaise
- 1 lemon
- 3 yellow chili peppers
- 1 avocado cut in slices
- 2 or 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- Salt and Pepper



Preparation:

Boil the potatoes and then mash them. Set it aside and allow the mashed potato to then cool.

Blend the chili peppers with a little water. Add this to the mashed potato with the oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper.

Mix well, knead and then divide into three parts.

In a separate bowl mix the shredded chicken or tuna with the mayonnaise and the onion, which should be finely chopped, season with salt and pepper. Take one of the potato doughs and press into a baking dish, it should be approximately one centimeter thick.

Place the avocado in a layer on top of the potato, again season with salt and pepper.

Add the second layer of potato and then spread the chicken or tuna mixture over the top before adding the final potato layer.

Serve in portions decorated with mayonnaise, a piece of boiled egg and a slice of red pepper.