



Service Learning and Language Immersion in *Cusco, Peru* Summer Study Abroad Program Handbook

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Before Going to Peru

Before you arrive in Peru you will have the opportunity to meet with other program participants and learn about the history and culture of Cusco. Use this opportunity! It is a time to voice concerns and ask questions. Additionally, read through all the issue briefs that students have written in the class. It is a good opportunity for you to familiarize yourself with Peru before arriving.

PERU FAST FACTS:



Full name: Republic of Peru

Capital: Lima

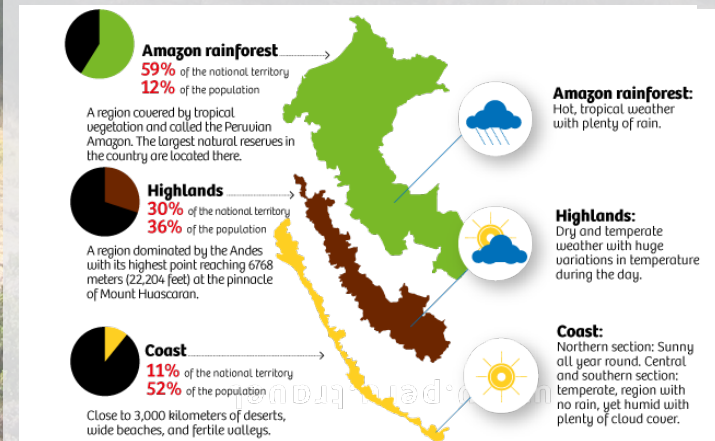
Bordering Countries: Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, & Chile

Population: 29.4 million (UN, 2011)

Major languages: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara

Monetary unit: 1 nuevo sol = 100 centimos

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1224656.stm#facts



source: <http://www.peru.travel/about-peru/location-geography-and-climate.aspx>

What to Pack:

Clothing

Cusco is high altitude and will be cold in the mornings and at night. Additionally, many of the host houses will not be heated. Therefore, it is important that students pack warm clothing. Packing different clothing types for dressing in layers because it can still get warmer during the day. Below are some suggested clothing items to bring.

- Light/medium weight cold weather **coat**- it is not as cold as New York in January, but Cusco can feel very cold after dark.
- Layering **sweaters** and **sweatshirts**
- **Long shirts**
- **Long pants**
- **Work clothing** to wear on sites. Service projects may include work involving digging in the dirt and painting, so bring clothes you don't mind getting dirty.
- **Work gloves**- services sites will involve working with your hands.
- **Good walking shoes** and/or **hiking boots** that have traction for site seeing and visiting ruins and archeological sites.
- One or two "**nicer**" **outfits**. You will have opportunities to visit bars, restaurants, and clubs and may prefer to have a few nice outfits.



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School Supplies

You will be spending most mornings at Maximo Nivel studying Spanish or Quechua, so bring appropriate school supplies.

- **Pen and paper** to take notes
- A **journal** to write down conversations and keep notes. It will be helpful when you start writing your final paper.
- A **Spanish-English Dictionary**
- Battery operated **alarm clock**- in case your cellphone does not work, you will still need to get up in the morning!

Travel Supplies

You will need to bring and keep track of important documentation and information for international travel.

- **Passport and State ID Card** – make copies before coming to Cusco. Professor Appe will collect copies prior to your departure, too. You can lock valuables in a safe at Maximo Nivel, which is highly recommended for your passport.
- Make sure you have copies of the **travel itinerary** and **emergency phone numbers** of Maximo Nivel and the faculty leaders.
- Bring copies of your **health insurance information**.

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Bank, ATMS, and Credit Cards

- Before leaving the country, notify your bank of your travel location and the dates you will be out of the country. Otherwise, your bank may cancel your access to your account when they see an action from a foreign country.
- Once you let your bank know about your travel plans, you should have access to your account in Peru and can withdraw money at most ATMs. Be aware that credit cards and some banks may charge you international fees. It is highly recommended that you use ATMs that are located inside of Banks, as opposed to "whole in the wall" ATMs on the street. You want to make smart choices to avoid bank card fraud.
- Keeping your accounts safe by storing, in a secure place, a copy of your credit card and ATM account numbers and the international phone numbers for reporting a lost or stolen card.

Local Currency and Money Practice- the local currency is the Nueva Sol. The approximate exchange rate is around 2.75 Sol for 1 U.S Dollar. However, these rates fluctuate daily. Always check the rate before exchanging money.

- One of the most important things to know about Cusco is that ripped, folded, or overly used bills will not be accepted by vendors. Because of the history with fake bills, stores, restaurants, and vendors will not accept any bill that is old, ripped, or even slightly torn. This is true for both American and Peruvian bills. So, while you are still in the U.S., go to your bank and get new bills which have few folds in them and absolutely no rips or tears. Or get money from an ATM in Peru or at the airport. You can exchange these bills when you arrive in Cusco.
- Likewise, never accept torn or ripped bills from vendors. Once you accept bills that are torn or ripped you will have a hard time finding vendors who actually will accept the money. If someone tries to give you bills that are torn or old, just shake your head and ask for different bills.
- Be careful when exchanging money. It's best not to exchange money on the street. Go to a reputable money exchange. Staff at Maximo Nivel and faculty leaders will direct you to these locations.
- You will need to budget for extra spending. Most likely you will have some meals outside of you host-family. Also, taxi fares, gifts and laundry will all be additional costs. Last year students recommended having \$200-300 extra for these expenses.

Electrical current and adapters: Peru is 220 volts and the plug will be either A, B, or C. In the United States, the plugs are A and B and the voltage is 110. Therefore, you should bring an adapter and converter with you. Most modern laptops and digital cameras can safely take both 110 and 220 volts; however, you should check your appliance before plugging them in. If your electronic devices cannot take both 110 and 220 volts, you will need to buy a voltage convertor. Many plug adapters also come with a voltage convert in the packet.

We recommend bringing a universal adapter and converter. You can buy these at most electronic stores such as Best Buy, or order one on Amazon.com. However, if you do not already have an adapter, you may have roommates at your homestay, so ask other participants in the group what they are bringing. If you do decide to buy the adapter, do so before arriving in Peru because most electronic devices will be cheaper in the United States. And since your days will be quite full, you may not have the opportunity to go to an electronics store while in Cusco.

Internet and Wi-Fi: At Maximo Nivel, you will have computer and Wi-Fi access. Additionally, many cafes and restaurants in Cusco have access to Wi-Fi. Most likely, you will not have access to internet at your home stay. Be aware that the internet speed may not work as fast as you are used to in the United States. Remember, this is a time to experience a different culture and way of life. You will have the opportunity to communicate with your family and friends, but don't obsess about staying in touch; this is a time to go out of your comfort zone.

Cellphone and Smartphones: Contact your service provider before going to Peru. Many smartphone plans have special monthly rates for international travel. However, you must pay separately for these plans, and if you did not set it up beforehand, you will be charged exuberant fees for usage of your cellphone or data outside of the United States. If you do have a smartphone and decide not to buy an international data plan, be sure to leave your phone on airplane mode, so you are not charged for international rates.

Electronic Supplies: Leave devices such as blow-dryer, hair curlers, heating pads, and electric blankets at home. You will need an adapter to use these items, and they require high usage of energy, and host families should not absorb these costs.

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Health

Altitude: Because Cusco is high altitude, many visitors experience altitude sickness which can include trouble breathing, dizziness, and vomiting. To avoid this, it is recommended that you drink plenty of water and eat a full meal before arriving in Cusco. Be sure to continue drinking water regularly during the trip. Staying very hydrated helps to deter altitude sickness. Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks, which can dehydrate you. For the first day or two, allow yourself time to get used to the altitude. Take it slow and do not over exert yourself. If you do start feeling sick, let your host families and faculty leaders know. Coca tea and leaves can both be taken to reduce the effects of altitude.

Food and Water: Do not drink the tap water unless it is boiled. Host families boil water before using it, and you should do so as well. Do not eat raw or under cooked food. Do not eat fruits or vegetables that have been washed in water that may not have been boiled. Pick a banana instead of an apple for a snack, for example. Avoid street food; while, it might not upset everyone's stomach, some people will be sensitive to the new environment.

Health: Travelling to Cusco does not typically require any out of the ordinary vaccination requirements in order to enter the country. However, you may want to check with your doctor before leaving the U.S. to make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines such as tetanus. If you plan on staying longer and traveling elsewhere in South America, you may need additional vaccines. Review the Center for Disease Control website regarding travel to Peru for important information:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/peru>

Other health tips:

- Bring and wear sunscreen. The sun is strong in South America, so make sure to wear sunscreen on your face.
- If you take medications, fill your prescription fill your prescriptions before coming to Peru. Keep the medication in the original marked containers and bring copies of the actual prescription from the doctors.
- You may also wish to pack over the counter medicines for upset stomach, sore throat, and minor pain killers such as Aspirin

Safety

Taxis: While in Cusco, at one time or another, you are likely to use a taxi. They are a relatively inexpensive and easy way to get around the city. These are some safety tips for using taxis in Cusco.

- Always use official licensed taxi drivers. There are many "fake" taxi drivers who may try to rip you off. Only use taxis marked as an official; there should be a taxi sign with documentation in the front window or on the dashboard. If you need, your host family can call a taxi for you which will ensure that it is a licensed driver. Maximo Nivel and faculty leaders will provide you more information about taxis.
- Peruvian taxis don't run on meters, so before getting into the taxi agree on the fare so there are no surprises at the end of the ride. It is also recommended that you have the exact change needed for taxis. Some drivers may not be able to or willing to make change.

Other Safety Tips

- Always be aware of your surroundings. There are pickpockets, and petty theft is common in Cusco, so never leave bags, laptops, and other valuables unattended.
- Be careful walking at night. It is recommended that after dark you use a taxi.
- We recommend you bring your map of Cusco with you when you are walking around. It's easy to get turned around in Cusco.
- Fake money is common in Cusco, so always check money and do not accept torn or ripped bills

Host Families & Courtesy

Be aware that the standard of living in Peru may not be what you are used to experiencing at home in the United States. Therefore, be considerate of your usage of food and energy at your host family. Do not overuse electricity or water, and try not to waste food. Make sure you turn off lights after you leave a room and do not use high energy devices, like heating pads or an electric blanket, for extended periods of time at your host family's house. If you have any questions about this, ask the faculty leaders, Maximo Nivel, or your host family. If there is something you cannot eat or you feel your host family is giving you more than you can eat, explain it to the best of your ability. Your host family wants you to have a positive experience, and most likely would prefer you let them know about any dietary restrictions. Similarly, if you are not going to be back with your host family for dinner or will be away for an overnight, make sure they are aware of this. If you are not comfortable speaking to them in Spanish, you can ask staff at Maximo Nivel to let your family know this information. Also be aware that your host families will not do your laundry for you. You can bring your laundry to a **lavanderia** in Cusco where it is done for you.



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Other Suggestions and Advice from Former Participants

- Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are other students on the trip going through the very same things as you.
- Be flexible. Things can move at a much slower pace in Latin America, so try to relax, keep an open-mind, and go with the punches.
- Participate in the discussions and think about the things that you are witnessing. Keeping a journal and take notes of the things that you are seeing can help with this.
- Be willing to do and try new things. You will have plenty of opportunities to try to new foods, make new friends, and visit unusual places. So don't be afraid to push yourself outside of your comfort zone.
- Speak Spanish! Or if you're learning Quechua, practice. You may not be perfect, but now is your chance to learn and improve your skills. Don't worry about your mistakes; we were all beginners once.

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