

Peru, home of the great Inca Empire, is a country of deep history and culture. It is a magical location that contains one of the richest biodiversities on Earth. Peru is the third largest country in South America and is located on the east coast of the continent bordering Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil and Chili. The country ranges from its beautiful coastline to the spectacular Andes mountains and down again to the dense Amazon River basin.

The culture of Peru is comprised of the multicultural layers of many great civilizations. The heritage of the Inca's has been passed down not only by their spectacular ruins but also with the Quechua language, which is still spoken in many areas of the country. Here you can choose to explore the lost city of Machu Picchu or take a trek through time on the Inca trail. Alongside these ancient Indian ruins, you will also find beautiful colonial cities that have preserved the legacy of the Spanish Empire.

This program is located in a very special orphanage in the town of Limatambo about two hours outside of the city of Cusco. This establishment can be described as a small self-contained village as the children, staff and volunteers all live directly on site. Participants can choose to live in the dorms allocated to volunteers. These are usually on a maximum double occupancy basis and the rooms usually have bunk beds. Or participants can choose to live with "substitute families". These substitute families are comprised of adults working/volunteering at the orphanage as well as some of the children. The orphanage also boasts a school, medical center, carpentry and small farm. The orphanage is operated by a Christian NGO but you do not need to be religious to volunteer here. The center is not out to convert people, just help them.

You will get to choose to work in any of the available areas contributing with whatever skills you may have. If you have any special interests, you may choose to focus on just one area like teaching in the school or working on the farm. There are usually small construction projects going on around the orphanage and you may choose to get involved in those as well. It is important to be self-motivated!

Volunteer work is usually five days a week about four to six hours a day. Work usually starts in the morning around 8 AM although you are welcome to start earlier. You will not work on the weekends unless the project has some special event going on. You are completely free on your days off. Many volunteers use this time to travel around the country or to spend quality time with their host families or in this case other staff and volunteers at the project. You will be given information on the many different travel options and important cultural sites during your orientation.

All participants will also have the option of staying with a host family in Cusco every Saturday night with a complementary dinner provided by the host family. This room and meal is included in the program fee and gives you a great chance to experience the historic city of Cusco. Transportation costs to and from Cusco will be your responsibility but are generally quite affordable.

In addition to the online application, you will need to complete a Spanish evaluation (essentially Spanish 101 level). You do not need Spanish to participate in this program but it is recommended. If you score low on the evaluation, it will be recommended that you take Spanish classes while you are in Peru or here in the States before your trip. We provide classes at an additional cost and they are usually taken each weekday either before or after your volunteer work. You will also need to submit a CV (resume) with a photo, a copy of the first two pages of your passport, one or two letters of recommendation and a "dear host family" letter. This is essentially a motivation letter stating why you want to participate in this program and also a little about yourself.

