

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# PERU



**A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS**

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# WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on being invited to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Peru! We look forward to your arrival and to working closely with you over the next two years.

We thank you in advance for responding to the call to serve and to help others while broadening your own horizons through the unique experience of Peace Corps. You are making a commitment of 27 months. With your good will, hard work, initiative, and persistence, you are destined to make a difference in communities of need in one of the world's most fascinating countries.

I believe we have a particularly strong program awaiting you in Peru. The Peace Corps returned to Peru in 2002 after an absence of 27 years. We have grown to over 230 Volunteers, have established good working relationships with a variety of counterpart agencies, and have built an excellent reputation.

We can promise you a beautiful country, hospitable people, a well thought-out assignment, and many development challenges. What we can't promise you is that it is going to be easy. There are numerous cultural and institutional obstacles to training and motivating people in a country like Peru. Some people in your community will be resistant to change, others suspicious of your motives. But with hard work and commitment on your part, you will be amazed at what you can accomplish. Numerous lives will be changed for the better because of your service as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

In addition, you will have a once-in-a-lifetime cross-cultural experience. Living with a Peruvian family, you will become an integral part of your community, which may be anything from an urban barrio to a rural hamlet. You will participate in community

activities and share special moments with newfound friends. Both you and the Peruvians you come in contact with will be enriched from the experience.

You will have 10 weeks of training before you are sworn in as a Volunteer. The training will strengthen your language proficiency, technical skills, safety and security awareness, and community integration. Take full advantage of this opportunity.

It is important to remember that we are here at the invitation of the Peruvian government. Communities throughout Peru are awaiting your arrival and we have been undertaking activities for months to prepare for your arrival. We hope that you also have been getting ready for this opportunity to invest 100 percent of your time and energy to learn, grow, and fulfill your commitment to serve for two years in the Peace Corps. Both during training and throughout your service, there is a highly committed staff to support you. All of us share your excitement about coming to Peru and making a contribution to the development of this country. We look forward to meeting you and working together soon.

Best regards,

Sanjay Mathur

Country Director

# CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	3
CORE EXPECTATIONS	
FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS.....	6
PEACE CORPS/PERU HISTORY AND PROGRAMS	7
History of the Peace Corps in Peru .....	7
History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in	
Peru .....	8
COUNTRY OVERVIEW: PERU AT A GLANCE.....	9
History .....	9
Government .....	13
Economy .....	13
People and Culture.....	15
Environment .....	16
RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.....	17
General Information About Peru .....	17
Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees	
.....	18
Online Articles/Current News Sites About Peru .....	19
International Development Sites About Peru .....	19
Recommended Books .....	20
LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER	
LIFESTYLE.....	22
Communications .....	22
Mail.....	22
Computer, Internet, and Email Access .....	23
Housing and Site Location.....	24
Living Allowance and Money Management .....	25
Food and Diet .....	26
Transportation.....	26
Geography and Climate .....	27
Social Activities.....	28

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior .....	29
Personal Safety .....	30
Rewards and Frustrations .....	31
PEACE CORPS TRAINING.....	32
Overview of Pre-Service Training.....	32
Qualifying for Service .....	33
YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN PERU.....	38
Health Issues in Peru .....	38
Helping You Stay Healthy.....	39
Maintaining Your Health.....	40
Women’s Health Information.....	40
Your Peace Corps Medical Kit.....	41
Medical Kit Contents.....	41
Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist.....	42
Safety and Security—Our Partnership.....	45
Staying Safe: Don’t Be a Target for Crime .....	47
Support from Staff.....	48
Crime Data for Peru.....	49
Volunteer Safety Support in Peru.....	49
DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES.....	51
Overview of Diversity in Peru.....	52
What Might a Volunteer Face?.....	52
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	57
WELCOME LETTERS	
FROM PERU VOLUNTEERS.....	61
PACKING LIST.....	65
General Clothing.....	65
Shoes.....	66
Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items .....	66
Miscellaneous .....	67
PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST.....	69
Family.....	69
Passport/Travel .....	69
Medical/Health .....	69
Insurance.....	70

Personal Papers ..... 70  
Voting ..... 70  
Personal Effects ..... 70  
Financial Management..... 70  
CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS...72

# CORE EXPECTATIONS

## FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps Mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work; and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others



9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

## **PEACE CORPS/PERU HISTORY AND PROGRAMS**

### **History of the Peace Corps in Peru**

The Peace Corps first opened a program in Peru in 1962. During the next 13 years, over 2,600 Volunteers worked in health and nutrition, city planning, social work, agricultural extension, agricultural cooperatives, savings and loan associations, elementary and secondary education, community development, and earthquake reconstruction (after the severe earthquake and landslide of 1970). The Peace Corps had a main office in Lima and regional offices in Puno, Cusco, Chimbote, and Arequipa. Peace Corps' departure from Peru in 1975 was due to political and economic instability.

In 2001, then-President Alejandro Toledo invited the Peace Corps to return to Peru. In addition to viewing Peace Corps as part of his development plan for the country, President Toledo had a personal relationship with the agency. When he was young, his family had hosted a Volunteer in their home in Chimbote. Volunteers taught him English and were instrumental in his decision to attend college and graduate school in the United States. President Toledo also worked at the Peace Corps training center in California, teaching Spanish while he was going to college.

Teams from Peace Corps headquarters made assessment visits to Peru in late 2001 and early 2002, and a country agreement was signed in Lima on March 23, 2002. The Peace Corps was represented by then-Director Gaddi Vasquez. Staff was deployed to Lima in May 2002. The first four Volunteers, third-year transferees from other Latin American countries, arrived in August 2002. They were followed by the first new group, arriving for training in November and swearing in as Volunteers in February 2003. A second group arrived in September 2003. Since then, two new groups of trainees have arrived each year. Over 770 Volunteers have served in the country since 2002.

### **Current Peace Corps/Peru Programs**

The Peace Corps directs its Volunteers to live and work in rural communities where the needs are greater and services are fewer. Over 85 percent of Peace Corps Volunteers live in rural areas, with more than half in the sierra, where needs are typically greatest. While other development agencies may be focused on only one need and may not have a regular presence in a community, Peace Corps Volunteers serve for two years in the communities where they reside. Volunteers adopt a holistic, grassroots community development approach in partnership with government agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as private businesses and institutions.

Currently, Peace Corps/Peru Volunteers serve in five programs:

**Youth Development** – Volunteers work with schools and health posts in activities to develop self-esteem, creativity, educational success, career planning, vocational skills, healthy lifestyles, leadership skills, and good citizenship. Some Volunteers also work with children with special needs or disabilities.

**Community Health** – Volunteers work with health posts, NGOs, schools, teen and adult health promoters, parents, and community members, with a focus on health education and disease prevention. Activities relate to improvements in hygiene, nutrition, cooking

stoves, latrines, maternal and infant care, parenting, and education to prevent teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS.

**Small Business Development** – Volunteers help artisan groups, agricultural associations, and other small businesses improve their incomes through better marketing, accounting, and management practices. Volunteers also teach youth entrepreneurship classes and facilitate the development of community banks to expand credit in rural areas.

**Environmental Management** – Volunteers work in rural communities with government authorities, schools, and community groups on environmental education, recycling, tree-planting and reforestation, solid waste management, and conservation of sensitive ecosystems and protected areas.

**Water and Sanitation** – Volunteers assist rural communities in the construction and maintenance of water systems and latrines, solid waste disposal, and the practices of hygiene and sanitation.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW: PERU AT A GLANCE

### History

When the Spanish landed in 1531, Peru's territory was the nucleus of the highly developed Inca civilization. Centered in Cuzco, the Inca empire extended over a vast region from northern Ecuador to central Chile. In search of Inca wealth, Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro, who arrived in the territory after the Incas had fought a debilitating civil war, conquered the weakened people. The Spanish captured the Inca capital at Cuzco in 1533 and consolidated their control by 1542. Gold and silver from the Andes enriched the conquerors, and Peru became the principal source of Spanish wealth and power in South America.

Pizarro founded Lima in 1535. The viceroyalty in Lima had jurisdiction over all of Spanish-controlled South America. Throughout the colonial period, right up to the wars of independence (1820-1824), Lima was the most distinguished colonial capital.

Peru's independence movement was led by José de San Martín of Argentina and Simón Bolívar of Venezuela. San Martín proclaimed Peru's independence from Spain on July 28, 1821. Emancipation was completed in December 1824, when General Antonio José de Sucre defeated the Spanish troops at Ayacucho, ending Spanish rule in South America. Spain made some futile attempts to regain its former colonies, but in 1879, finally recognized Peru's independence.

After independence, Peru and its neighbors engaged in intermittent territorial disputes. Chile's invasion of Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) resulted in a territorial settlement. Following a clash between Peru and Ecuador in 1941, the Rio Protocol sought to establish boundaries between the two countries. Continuing border disagreements led to brief armed conflicts in 1981 and 1995, but in 1998, Peru and Ecuador signed a historic peace treaty and drew up boundaries at the border. In 1999, Peru and Chile likewise implemented the last outstanding article of their 1929 border agreement.

The military has been prominent in Peruvian history. Coups have repeatedly interrupted civilian constitutional government. The most recent period of military rule (1968-1980) began when General Juan Velasco Alvarado overthrew elected President Fernando Belaúnde Terry of the Popular Action (Acción Popular or AP) Party. Velasco undertook an extensive agrarian reform program and nationalized the fish meal industry, some petroleum companies, and several banks and mining firms. Francisco Morales Bermúdez, a centrist Peruvian general who came to power in 1975, moved the revolution into a more pragmatic "second phase," tempering the authoritarian abuses of Velasco and

beginning the task of restoring the country's economy. Morales Bermúdez presided over the return to civilian government in accordance with a new constitution drawn up in 1979. In the May 1980 elections, Belaúnde was returned to office by an impressive plurality.

Nagging economic problems left over from the military government persisted, worsened by an occurrence of the El Niño weather phenomenon in 1982-1983, which caused widespread flooding on the coast and a severe drought in the highlands. The El Niño decimated schools of ocean fish, a major revenue source.

During the 1980s, terrorism by Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) began and rapidly increased, deriving significant financial support from alliances with those involved in the illicit cultivation and trafficking of coca. In 1985, the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) won the presidential election, bringing Alan García Pérez to office. The transfer of the presidency from Belaúnde to García on July 28, 1985, was Peru's first exchange of power from one democratically elected leader to another in 40 years.

García's management of the economy was deficient, and hyperinflation became rampant, particularly from 1988 to 1990. Concerned about the economy, the increasing terrorist threat, and allegations of corruption, voters chose relatively unknown mathematician-turned-politician Alberto Fujimori as president in 1990. Fujimori implemented drastic measures that caused inflation to drop from 7,650 percent in 1990 to 139 percent in 1991. One of his other accomplishments was the jailing of Sendero Luminoso's leadership and a significant reduction in terrorism. Faced with opposition to his reform efforts, Fujimori dissolved Congress in an "autocoup" on April 4, 1992. He then revised the constitution, called for new congressional elections, and implemented substantial economic reforms, including the privatization of

numerous state-owned companies and the creation of an investment-friendly climate.

Fujimori won a second term in 1995, after engineering a change in the constitution to allow a president to run for a second consecutive term. Fujimori's decision to seek a third term, even though not permitted by the constitution, and his subsequent victory in June 2000, brought political turmoil. A bribery scandal that broke just weeks later forced Fujimori to flee the country and resign from office in November 2000. A caretaker government presided over by Valentín Paniagua Corazao took on the responsibility of conducting new presidential and congressional elections in April 2001.

Alejandro Toledo won the presidency in the elections of April 8 and June 3, 2001, and he was sworn in on July 28, 2001. In his inaugural address, President Toledo pledged to continue the reconstruction of democratic institutions, fight poverty and unemployment through a reactivation of the economy, and combat corruption. In general, the Toledo administration was successful in promoting macroeconomic growth, with Peru leading South American countries from 2002 to 2005 in gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates. The public's perception that the fruits of this growth were not reaching the citizenry and that the Toledo government was unconcerned with social programs caused President Toledo's approval ratings to dip as low as 10 percent.

Elections were held in April 2006, with a run-off in June between the two leading candidates. The winner was former President Alan García of the APRA party, who pledged not to repeat the policies that led to hyperinflation and uncontrolled terrorism. President García named experienced technocrats to many important positions, and his government attempted reforms and strengthened many social programs.

The current president is Ollanta Humala, who was sworn in on July 28, 2011.

## **Government**

The president is popularly elected for a five-year term, and the 1993 constitution permits one consecutive re-election. The first and second vice presidents also are popularly elected but have no constitutional functions unless the president is unable to discharge his duties. The principal executive body is the Council of Ministers, headed by a prime minister and appointed by the president. All presidential decree laws and draft bills sent to the legislative branch must be approved by the Council of Ministers.

The legislative branch consists of a unicameral Congress of 120 members. In addition to passing laws, Congress ratifies treaties, authorizes government loans, and approves the national budget. The president has the power to block legislation with which the executive branch does not agree. The judicial branch is headed by a 16-member Supreme Court seated in Lima. In 1996, an ombudsman's office was created to address human rights issues.

Peru is divided into 24 departments, plus the constitutional province of Callao, the country's chief port, adjacent to Lima. Departments are subdivided into provinces, which are composed of districts (each with a municipal government). The national government is promoting decentralization and direct elections for local officials. In several parts of the country, adjoining departments are in the process of forming "mega-regions" which, under the decentralization laws, will receive allotments from the central government and be able to determine how expenditures are made.

## **Economy**

During the 1990s, Peru was transformed by market reforms and privatizations, setting the stage for long-term growth. Although some years have been better than others, real GDP has grown dramatically over the past decade. Growth rates have been above 5 percent each of the past six years, with growth being driven by construction, mining, foreign investment, domestic demand, and exports. Other macroeconomic indicators have also been

favorable. Inflation rates are low (under 4 percent), exports are robust, the public sector has a fiscal surplus, and external debt is considered healthy.

Peru is now a “middle-income” country with significant inequality and numerous development challenges. Peru is changing rapidly, with the average 7.6 percent growth rate for the years 2006-2010 surpassed only by Panama among Latin American countries.

In the period 2002-2010, poverty (about \$92 income per month) has decreased from 54 percent to 31 percent and extreme poverty (about \$51 per month) has declined from 24 percent to 10 percent. While this is impressive, the measure of poverty is equivalent to only \$3 per day, which is little income in a consumer society. More striking are the widespread inequalities that persist in Peru for 2010:

- 54 percent of rural Peruvians were poor compared to 19 percent in urban areas
- 23 percent of rural Peruvians lived in extreme poverty (< \$2/day) compared to 2.5 percent in urban areas
- 31 percent of children under age 5 were malnourished in rural areas compared to 10 percent in urban areas
- 40 percent of rural households have potable water compared to 90 percent of urban households
- 23 percent of rural households have sewage and sanitation compared to 83 percent of urban households
- 67 percent of children in rural areas attend secondary school compared to 84 percent in urban areas



- Poverty is highest in the sierra (49 percent of people) compared to the jungle (37 percent) and coast (18 percent)

## **People and Culture**

Peru has a population of about 29 million, more than 70 percent of whom live in urban or semi-urban areas. Some 8.7 million people live in and around the capital of Lima, and there are 18 other cities with a population of 100,000 or more. Approximately 85 percent of the population is split roughly equally between indigenous and mestizo (mixed indigenous and European descent). The lines, however, are not clearly drawn, since socioeconomic and cultural factors are as important as actual blood lines. For example, Peruvians of pure Amerindian descent who have adopted aspects of Hispanic culture typically consider themselves mestizos. About 10 percent of the population is white, and roughly 5 percent is made up of black, Chinese, Japanese, and other groups. In the past decade, Peruvians of Asian heritage have made significant advancements in business and politics; a past president, several past cabinet members, and several current members of the Peruvian Congress are of Japanese or Chinese descent.

Peru has two official languages—Spanish and Quechua, the latter being the most widely spoken indigenous language. Spanish is the dominant language of government, culture, and commerce. Quechua is spoken by many indigenous people who live in the Andean highlands, although there are other indigenous languages spoken in the highlands as well. Some indigenous communities speak only Spanish. Indigenous groups who live on the eastern side of the Andes and in the tropical lowlands adjacent to the Amazon basin speak a variety of native languages.

There are significant socioeconomic divides between the mestizo culture of the coast and the traditional Andean cultures of the mountains and highland valleys. In the tropical areas east of the Andes, there are a variety of groups; some still adhere to traditional customs, while others have been almost completely assimilated into the mestizo-Hispanic culture.

## **Environment**

Sharing borders with Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile, Peru is a large and diverse country. Its unique environmental variations include the arid coastal desert, the Andean mountains and valleys, and the Amazonian tropical forests. With so many ecosystems and climatic zones, it should come as no surprise that Peru is a country rich in biodiversity, with many rare species of flora and fauna.

With such extreme geographical variations, Peru's climate differs significantly among regions. While the valleys tend to maintain a moderate temperature, the highlands are dry and cool during much of the year, and the tropical lowlands are hot and humid. The country has suffered through historical cycles of flooding and drought. Like many other areas in the Americas, Peru is subject to occasional tremors and earthquakes, particularly in the northern coastal area.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Peru and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experience, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

### **General Information About Peru**

[www.livinginperu.com](http://www.livinginperu.com)

This is an excellent website that is frequently accessed by expats, as well as PC Volunteers in Peru. News, lifestyle, travel, food, cultural info, etc.

[www.countrywatch.com/peru](http://www.countrywatch.com/peru)

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the capital of Peru to how to convert from the dollar to the Peru currency. Just click on Peru and go from there.

[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

**[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)**

The State Department’s website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Peru and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site’s international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

**[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)**

This includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)**

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

**[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

**Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

**[www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org)**

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “Friends of” groups for most countries of service, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities. Or go

straight to the Friends of Peru site:  
[www.amigosdeboliviayperu.org](http://www.amigosdeboliviayperu.org)

### **[www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org](http://www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org)**

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

### **Online Articles/Current News Sites About Peru**

[www.peruviantimes.com](http://www.peruviantimes.com)

News and feature articles in English.

[www.elcomercio.com.pe](http://www.elcomercio.com.pe) and [www.larepublica.com.pe](http://www.larepublica.com.pe)

Websites of two Lima-based daily news publications.

[fullcoverage.yahoo.com/full\\_coverage/world/peru](http://fullcoverage.yahoo.com/full_coverage/world/peru)

Yahoo's news service links to recent articles from a variety of sources.

[www.escapeartist.com/peru/peru.htm](http://www.escapeartist.com/peru/peru.htm)

Useful tips for those moving to Peru.

[www.unicef.org/infobycountry/peru\\_statistics.html#2](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/peru_statistics.html#2)

Health statistics on Peru from UNICEF.

### **International Development Sites About Peru**

The following agencies have programs in Peru. The Peace Corps works or has worked directly with the Ministry of Health, PRISMA, CARE, and PIDECAFE, and has a close relationship with USAID.

[www.usaid.gov/country/lac](http://www.usaid.gov/country/lac)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

**www.paho.org**

Pan American Health Organization

**www.iadb.org**

The Inter-American Development Bank

**www.minsa.gob.pe**

Peru's Ministry of Health (in Spanish)

**www.care.org.pe**

CARE/Peru (in Spanish)

**www.pidecafe.com.pe**

PIDECAFE, a Peruvian nongovernmental organization promoting the production of organic coffee and cane sugar (in Spanish)

## **Recommended Books**

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Meisler, Stanley. *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2011.
2. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
3. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
4. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.

2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

#### Books About Peru

1. Start, Orin. *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Duke University Press, 2005.
2. Wilson, Jason. *The Andes, A Cultural History*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

## Communications

We strongly recommend that you establish a regular and realistic communication pattern with your family and friends so they do not become concerned if they do not hear from you for an extended period of time.

## Mail

Most Volunteers find the Peruvian postal service (Serpost) to be safe and reliable, though it is slower than service in the United States. In general, airmail takes about two weeks to and from Peru. During training, you can receive mail at the Peace Corps:

Cuerpo de Paz - Peru  
"Your Name," PCT  
Via Lactea 132  
Surco,  
Lima, Peru

Once you are sworn in as a Volunteer, you will be assigned a regional post office box in a city convenient to your site, or will be asked to use your host family's address as your mailing address. You are responsible for notifying family members and friends about your new address.

We do not recommend that people mail you packages. All packages over half a kilo (1.1 pounds) or with a declared value of \$100 or more will be assessed customs duty fees based on the value of the items enclosed. This not only is costly, but is a time-consuming process. We recommend that friends and family only send small items (e.g., one book or one cassette or compact disk) and use padded envelopes.



Having items sent to you via a shipping company (e.g., FedEx, UPS) does not eliminate the requirement to pay customs fees. You may also be assessed a delivery charge. Shipping companies, however, may be a good way to receive important documents with no commercial value.

It is not advisable for your family or friends to send you money by cash or check. ATM machines are common in Peru, and many accept U.S. ATM cards. Your family can deposit money for you in your U.S. account, and then you can access the money via an ATM.

We request that your family not send money for your community or for projects in which you are involved. Once you are at your site, you and Peace Corps staff members can determine the most appropriate way to access outside resources, should they be needed.

Should you and Peace Corps staff determine that it is advisable to seek outside funding for a project in your community, one alternative is the Peace Corps Partnership Program, through which family members and other private individuals and firms may donate funds through Peace Corps and receive a tax deduction. More information may be found on the Peace Corps website, [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov), or at 1.800.424.8580, ext. 2170

### **Computer, Internet, and Email Access**

All major cities and many smaller communities in Peru have Internet centers. You may or may not have access to the Internet at your site, but if not, you will be able to access the Internet and send and receive emails in your regional capital for a reasonable hourly rate. In addition, the Peace Corps office in Lima has Internet-accessible computers available for Volunteer use, as well as WIFI for those Volunteers who use their own laptop.

## **Telephones**

International phone service to and from Peru is relatively good. Some Volunteers have telephone access in their homes and/or work facilities. When that is not the case, there is access to a community telephone. There are inexpensive local and international calling cards available in Peru that provide affordable rates. International long-distance calls without a calling card can be expensive.

The cellular telephone network in Peru is expanding rapidly. Most Volunteers live in communities with cellular service, or have cellular service nearby. The Peace Corps does not provide cellphones or cellphone service to Volunteers, but does arrange for Volunteers to participate in a low-cost group plan. Almost all Volunteers participate in the plan.

## **Housing and Site Location**

During training, you will live with a Peruvian family near one of the training facilities. Sharing meals, conversation, and other experiences with your host family is an important step in developing the skills and attitudes that will help you integrate into your Peruvian community.

For months prior to your arrival, the associate Peace Corps director (APCD) for your sector will be exploring potential assignments with counterpart agencies, local municipal authorities, and community leaders. Peace Corps strategic goals, counterpart agency goals, local interest, and the perception that a Volunteer can be successful at the site are all factors that are considered. Assignments may be in a city, a mid-sized town, a small town, or a rural village. You will be matched to one of these assignments based on your specific background and experience. While you will have an opportunity to discuss geographic preferences with your APCD during training, the final decision will be based on the best match between your skills and community needs.

All Volunteers in Peru are required to live with a family during their entire service. Living with a family may require adjustments that some North Americans find difficult, given our cultural values concerning privacy and personal space. The benefits of this policy, however, far outweigh any negatives. Living with a Peruvian family allows you to quickly integrate into the community and greatly enhances your safety and security. In addition, your language and cross-cultural skills will be reinforced daily.

Housing is usually made of cement or adobe blocks, sometimes covered with stucco. Roofs are made of tile, corrugated tin, or thatch. You will have your own room, which may be within the larger house or a separate room within a family compound. You will likely have electricity and occasional running water, although not all Volunteers do. You will have access to either indoor plumbing or a latrine.

### **Living Allowance and Money Management**

All Volunteers receive a monthly living allowance, paid in Peruvian currency, enabling them to maintain a modest but safe, healthy, and adequate lifestyle. The living allowance is reviewed once a year to ensure that it is sufficient to meet basic needs, and is adjusted by the Peace Corps if necessary. Living allowances in Peru vary by site, but tend to be around \$350 (U.S.).

Three additional allowances are provided to Volunteers. First, Volunteers receive the equivalent of \$24 in Peruvian currency each month to help with vacation expenses. Volunteers accrue two days of vacation leave for each month of service. Second, after taking the oath of service, each Volunteer receives a one-time settling-in allowance to cover the initial expenses of furnishing a room and purchasing basic supplies. Finally, the Peace Corps sets aside \$275 for each month of service, which is available after completion of service. This readjustment allowance permits returning Volunteers to resettle in the United States without undue burden. The living allowance, vacation allowance, and settling-in

allowance are deposited in Volunteers' local bank accounts, which can be accessed via ATMs.

As a Volunteer, your effectiveness depends in large measure upon living at the level of the people in your community. We encourage you not to rely on gifts or savings from home to supplement your monthly living allowance. That said, you may wish to tap savings for extraordinary expenses or for travel during vacations. ATM cards from most U.S. financial institutions are readily accepted at ATM machines in larger communities. U.S. credit cards are also widely accepted.

### **Food and Diet**

Your diet will vary according to your site location. While each region has its traditional foods and specialties, potatoes, rice, and pasta are part of the diet everywhere. Many Volunteers have most of their meals with their host family. Others make arrangements with another family, rotate among families in their community, or prepare their own meals.

It can be challenging to maintain a strictly vegetarian diet during Peace Corps service because of community customs. Nonetheless, many Volunteers have been able to maintain a vegetarian diet successfully, and one Volunteer has even prepared a vegetarian cookbook using locally available Peruvian ingredients.

### **Transportation**

Public transportation varies widely, depending on the site. Volunteers living in or visiting cities use taxis, minivans, and three-wheeled "mototaxis." Communities where Volunteers live have regular public transportation to and from the community, at least once a day. Roads are often unpaved, and the buses may be slow and unreliable. Most Volunteers are within an hour (by foot or regular ground transportation) from another Volunteer's site, and all Volunteers are within three hours by bus from another Volunteer site.

As a Volunteer, you will be responsible for arranging your personal and work-related travel and for transporting personal belongings, supplies, and project-related equipment to and from your site. For Volunteer safety, the Peace Corps requires Volunteers use certain carriers that have good safety records on long-distance bus routes. Your living allowance is calculated to cover your transportation needs.

Bus travel in Peru is often long and arduous. It is not uncommon for Volunteers to be 14 to 18 hours from Lima. Roads are often dusty, and significant elevation changes and temperature fluctuations are common. Volunteers must be willing and able to adjust to such conditions.

Volunteers in Peru may not operate motor vehicles during their service, including motorcycles. Volunteers in Peru may not be passengers on motorcycles. Riding on a motorcycle is grounds for administrative separation.

In some areas, both urban and rural, conditions are difficult for bicycle riders. Streets and roads are bumpy and narrow, and unexpected hazards (e.g., potholes and uncovered manholes) are commonplace. Motor vehicle operators show little respect for bicycle riders. In some sites, however, Volunteers find that bicycles are an excellent means of transportation, especially when their jobs require them to be at multiple locations. The Peace Corps provides bicycles to Volunteers, who need them for transportation to their worksites. Volunteers must wear Peace Corps-issued helmets when riding bicycles and are responsible for bicycle maintenance and repair.

## **Geography and Climate**

Three times the size of California, Peru boasts unique biological and geographic diversity, ranging from stark desert bordering the Pacific, to productive highland valleys, to treeless plains surrounding snow-covered peaks, to tropical jungle lowlands.

The arid coastal desert is interspersed with irrigated agricultural zones that support prosperous towns and fishing villages. The highland valleys are characteristically temperate and provide fertile soil. The alternating hills and flatlands of the sierra are punctuated with breathtaking, snow-covered mountain peaks that reach more than 20,000 feet. The lowlands offer steamy forests and swamps, along with high humidity and tropical downpours.

Though the coast is arid, it is marked by high humidity year-round. During the winter season (May-November), much of the coastal plain is overcast and chilly. During the summer (December-April), skies clear and temperatures can get quite hot.

In the sierra, seasons are defined more by rainfall. The rainy season is generally November through March. The driest months are May through September. In both seasons, temperatures during the day are moderate, while nights are cool.

### **Social Activities**

Most social activities revolve around daily and special events in the community, including religious holidays and processions. Volunteers are often invited to join family and community events such as birthday parties and sports activities, or just to chat over coffee.

Integrating into your community is the key to an enjoyable and rich experience as a Volunteer. By building solid relationships—through both your work assignment and interaction with Peruvian neighbors and other community members—you will have greater opportunities to participate in social activities.

You will need to develop a keen awareness of Peruvian culture and customs. Many celebrations and other social events include significant alcohol consumption. In the interest of safety, you will have to exercise careful judgment when under social pressure to drink.

The Peace Corps prohibits the use of all illegal drugs, including marijuana, by Peace Corps Volunteers and trainees. The government of Peru, with the support of the United States, has taken a strong stand against the illegal cultivation of coca and the use of illegal drugs. It has passed stringent anti-drug laws that mandate stiff prison sentences for possession and use of drugs. Any invitee who feels compelled to use illegal substances should not accept an invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

### **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

Most Peruvians take great pride in being neat, clean, and well-groomed, and Volunteers should follow the example of Peruvians at their worksites and in their communities. Inappropriate dress or grooming is considered disrespectful, may make Peruvians less receptive to you, and may single you out and put you in danger.

During training, and occasionally as a Volunteer, there will be times when it is appropriate for men to wear jackets and ties and for women to wear dresses or slacks and a blouse. In classroom and office settings in cities and larger towns, attire should be professionally casual—skirts or slacks for women, slacks and button-down shirts with collars for men. Work clothes at field or rural sites will be more informal—for example, men and women may wear jeans and boots. Clothes should always be neat and clean.

The climate impacts dress significantly. In warmer areas, men will wear short-sleeved shirts and women, sleeveless blouses and dresses. In colder areas, men and women wear sweaters and jackets. It is best to bring a variety of clothing that can be layered.

Shorts are generally worn only in the home, at the beach, or in other informal settings, not on the street. Visible piercings, other than pierced ears for women (one per ear) or tiny nose studs on women, are strongly discouraged and may make the Volunteer an unwanted source of attention. The same goes for visible tattoos. It is preferable that male Volunteers not have ponytails, long hair, or

beards, but if so, hair must be neatly groomed, and beards must be neat and trimmed.

## **Personal Safety**

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the "Health Care and Safety" chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Peru Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Peru. Using these tools, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. We encourage Volunteers and families to look at our safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at [www.peacecorps.gov/safety](http://www.peacecorps.gov/safety).

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and Volunteer safety. There is a section titled "Safety and Security in Depth." Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.



## Rewards and Frustrations

It takes sensitivity and effort to establish your credibility, both as a professional and as a member of your community. With most Peruvians, you will need to develop friendly social relationships before you can proceed with satisfactory work relationships. Volunteers in Peru must demonstrate flexibility and maturity, the ability to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity, and a sense of humor.

Successfully addressing the challenges of Peace Corps service depends in large part on the attitude of the individual Volunteer. Some common occurrences you may find annoying or frustrating include having to repeatedly explain your role as a Volunteer, limited technical support from your counterparts, numerous delays during the course of your work and daily life, lack of privacy, gossip about you, and perceptions that you are a wealthy foreigner.

Other frustrations faced by Volunteers result from inadequate infrastructure, including poor roads, infrequent and unreliable public transportation, poor means of communication, and lack of access to water and sanitation facilities. Volunteers also may get bothered by community health and hygiene practices, antiquated educational approaches, and an inappropriate dependence on external resources.

On the other hand, there are few more enriching experiences than living and working in a new culture, interacting with people different from you, developing an awareness of diverse values, and helping others to better their lives. Volunteers find that the rewards of Peace Corps service far outweigh the challenges. Most Volunteers report a high level of personal satisfaction in developing new technical and language skills, discovering formerly untapped personal strengths and abilities, broadening their global perspective, deepening their cultural understanding, and helping others live happier, healthier, and more productive lives.

# PEACE CORPS TRAINING

## Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training is the first event within a competency-based training program that continues throughout your 27 months of service in Peru. Pre-service training ensures that Volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform their jobs. Approximately, 95 percent of trainees are sworn in as Volunteers.

Pre-service training is conducted in Peru and directed by the Peace Corps. During the 10 weeks of pre-service training, Peace Corps/Peru staff measure each trainee's achievement of learning objectives and determines if trainees have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, for swearing in as Peace Corps Volunteers.

Pre-service training affords the opportunity for trainees to develop and test their own resources. As a trainee, you will play an active role in self-education. You will be asked to decide how best to set and meet objectives and to find alternative solutions. You will be asked to prepare for an experience in which you will often have to take the initiative and accept responsibility for decisions. The success of your learning will be enhanced by your own effort to take responsibility for your learning and through sharing experiences with others.

Peace Corps training is founded on adult learning methods that include experiential "hands-on" applications, such as conducting a participatory community needs assessment and facilitating groups. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas.

The ability to integrate into a community is one of the core competencies Volunteers strive to achieve both in pre-service training and during the first several months of service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence Volunteers build by living in, and respectfully integrating into, the Peruvian community and culture. Trainees are prepared for this through a “homestay” experience, which requires trainees to live with host families during pre-service training. Integration into the community not only facilitates good working relationships, but it fosters language learning and cross-cultural acceptance and trust, which help ensure your health, safety, and security.

Woven into the competencies, the ability to communicate in the host country language is critical to being an effective Peace Corps Volunteer. So basic is this precept that it is spelled out in the Peace Corps Act: “No person shall be assigned to duty as a Volunteer under this act in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment he (or she) possesses such reasonable proficiency as his (or her) assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which he (or she) is assigned.”

### **Qualifying for Service**

The pre-service training experience provides an opportunity not only for the Peace Corps to assess a trainee’s competence, but for trainees to re-evaluate their commitment to serve for 27 months to improve the quality of life of the people with whom Volunteers live and work and, in doing so, develop new knowledge, skills, and attitudes while adapting existing ones.

Peace Corps/Peru’s competencies are designed to be accomplished throughout the Volunteer’s 27 months of learning. Peru’s competencies include the following:

1. Integrate into a Peruvian community
2. Facilitate participative community development

3. Co-facilitate capacity building
4. Practice wellness and personal safety in the Peruvian context
5. Commit to professional accountability and service within the Peace Corps/Peru mission

Evaluation of your performance throughout service is a continual process, as Volunteers are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for personal conduct and professional performance. Successful completion of pre-service training is characterized by achievement of a set of learning objectives to determine competence. Failure to meet any of the selection standards by the completion of training may be grounds for a withdrawal of selection and disqualification from Peace Corps service.

Progress in one's own learning is a dialogue between you and the training staff. All of the training staff—including the training manager, and the language, technical, medical, safety and security, and cross-cultural trainers—will work with you toward the highest possible competencies by providing you with feedback on learning objective performance throughout training. After reviewing and observing your performance, the country director is responsible for making the final decision on whether you have qualified to serve as a Volunteer in the host country.

Upon successful completion of training, trainees who qualify for Peace Corps service are required by law to swear or affirm an oath of loyalty to the United States; it cannot be waived under any circumstances. The text of the oath is provided below. If you have any questions about the wording or meaning of the oath, consult a staff member during training.

I, (your name), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, domestic or foreign, that I take this obligation freely, and without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion,

and that I will well and faithfully discharge my duties in the Peace Corps (so help me God).

#### Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Peru by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Peruvian experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Peru and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Peruvian agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

#### Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Peruvian language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language

skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your service.

#### Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Peruvian host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Peru. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, non formal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

#### Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Peru. Nutrition, mental health, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

#### Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

### Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

*In-service training (IST): Provides opportunities for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment.*

*Midterm conference: Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.*

*Close-of-service conference: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.*

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

# YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN PERU

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Peru maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer, who takes care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Peru at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

## Health Issues in Peru

Infectious diarrhea, tuberculosis, hepatitis, dengue fever, and typhoid fever are among the illnesses that are widely found in Peru. Malaria, bartonellosis, leishmaniasis, and yellow fever are endemic in specific areas of the country. All of these diseases can be prevented through vaccinations or preventive health measures. Immunizations are required for all Volunteers in Peru and are kept current during their tour. The Peace Corps medical officer will determine your immunization and medication needs based on your medical history and site assignment. For Volunteers assigned to areas where malaria is found, taking an antimalarial medication and sleeping inside a mosquito net are mandatory.

About 40 percent of Volunteers in Peru are assigned to high-altitude locations (above 8,000 feet). A quarter to one-half of all people who travel to high altitude locations experience an unpleasant period of acclimatization that may persist for several days. Symptoms of altitude sickness may include headache, nausea, vomiting, respiratory distress, and insomnia. On rare occasions, altitude sickness may transform itself into pulmonary edema and other life-threatening illnesses. It is not possible to tell in advance who will have problems, although those who have had



previous difficulties are likely to have similar problems each time they go to high altitudes. Those with respiratory infections, such as colds, bronchitis, or pneumonia, should delay travel to high altitudes until they are fully recovered. People with certain pre-existing medical conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, angina pectoris, asthma, or emphysema, should get clearance from a physician before traveling to high altitudes. The Peace Corps medical officer is available to consult with Volunteers prior to their travel or assignment to high altitude locations. There are medicines that help prevent or relieve the symptoms of altitude sickness, which the medical officer prescribes when appropriate. Lima and the training center are located close to sea level, and there are no altitude issues.

### **Helping You Stay Healthy**

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Peru, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at the mid-service conference and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Peru will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Peru, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage “An ounce of prevention ...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Peru during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

## **Women’s Health Information**

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have

programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Peru will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you.

### **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

### **Medical Kit Contents**

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

*American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)

Oral rehydration salts

Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)

Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)

Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)

Scissors

Sterile gauze pads

Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)

Tinactin (antifungal cream)

Tweezers

### **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or

pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Peru. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health care benefits described in the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

## **Safety and Security—Our Partnership**

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems.

Beyond knowing that Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. We depend on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk of burglary—is:

- Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work
- Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria before you start your Peace Corps service.
- Peace Corp provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country authorities in your new community
- Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise
- You lock your doors and windows
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live
- You get to know neighbors
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you

- You don't change residences before being authorized by Peace Corps
- You communicate concerns that you have to Peace Corps staff

This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety that all include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify, reduce, and manage the risks you may encounter.

#### Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for Peru there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

Leave valuable objects in U.S.

Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the U.S.

Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy

Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Peru, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to



Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers in Peru learn to:

*Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible*

*Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs*

*Avoid high-crime areas*

*Know the local language to get help in an emergency*

*Make friends with local people who are respected in the community*

*Limit alcohol consumption*

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Peru. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive.

### **Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime**

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. You can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your

community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Peru may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Peru will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

### **Support from Staff**

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant; this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

## Crime Data for Peru

Crime data and statistics for Peru, which is updated yearly, are available at the following link:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/peru>

Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and crimes that do occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, Peace Corps will be there to assist you. One of our tasks is to ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Peace Corps will help you ensure your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country.

If you are the victim of a serious crime, you will learn how to get to a safe location as quickly as possible and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps can provide you with the help you need.

## Volunteer Safety Support in Peru

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Peru's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Peru office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is

expected that you will do your part in ensuring that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

**Volunteer training** will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Peru. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Peru's **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in Peru at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any security incident to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

## DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to assure that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent history. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Peru, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Peru.

Outside of Peru's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all

Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Peru are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Peru, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

## **Overview of Diversity in Peru**

The Peace Corps staff in Peru recognizes the adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

## **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

### *Possible Issues for Female Volunteers*

Gender roles in Peru are different from those in the United States, and it is important to understand them to be effective and to find personal satisfaction in your project assignment. Most Peruvian women have traditional roles, especially in rural areas, where they

run the household, prepare meals, clean, and rear children. In addition, many women work in the fields, run small businesses, and care for farm animals. Men also have specific roles, and “manliness” is very important.

It is not uncommon for women to endure stares, comments, and requests for dates on the street and in other situations. Female Volunteers are obvious targets because they generally look different from Peruvian women. Female Volunteers may have to accept certain constraints that male Volunteers do not, and adjust to different norms, behaviors, and ways of doing things.

Male Volunteers also encounter harassment, but less frequently. Male Volunteers may be teased about not being “manly” enough for not pursuing women or drinking. Male Volunteers who cook, wash clothes and dishes, and clean the house may be considered strange by their neighbors.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color  
Peru has many ethnic groups, including large Chinese and Japanese populations, and an Afro-Peruvian community concentrated in Lima and other coastal areas. Peruvians from these minority groups, particularly Afro-Peruvians, are sometimes subject to subtle forms of discrimination, and Volunteers, including African-American Volunteers, may experience similar treatment.

All Volunteers may hear racial comments while on the street, although the comments are more likely to be descriptive than derogatory. For example, persons of Asian descent are called Chinos, whether or not they are of Chinese descent. All Volunteers, but particularly Volunteers of color, will be subjected to a variety of questions, comments, and perhaps even jokes regarding their race or ethnicity. While some of these may be mean-spirited, most will be innocent, arising from unfamiliarity with, or misinformation about, other races and cultures. You will find it helpful to maintain a positive attitude about yourself and to

approach any negative comments with patience and confidence. Peruvians, particularly in rural areas, tend to think all Americans are Caucasian and may express disbelief when you introduce yourself as an American. The need for repeated explanations of your ethnic background may become tiresome, but it is a wonderful opportunity to explain the rich cultural diversity of the United States to Peruvians.

#### Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

In general, older members of the community are respected in Peru. Specific challenges for senior Volunteers are often related to language acquisition and adaptation to the basic living conditions of Peru. Also, because most Volunteers are in their 20s, seniors may find that developing a peer support system within the Volunteer community is a challenge.

#### Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

While there is some openness about sexual orientation in the larger cities, homosexuality is not looked upon favorably in smaller communities. We recommend that gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers be circumspect about their sexual orientation with their Peruvian colleagues, particularly at first. Once established in their site, each Volunteer will make the decision with whom to discuss his or her sexual orientation. Support mechanisms are available within the Peace Corps community and from Peace Corps staff.

#### Volunteer Comment:

“As a gay Asian-American Volunteer in a small town in Peru, I often have to face stereotypes and prejudices directed toward ethnicity and sexual orientation. At times, it can be comical to answer questions concerning my skills in martial arts and my relationship to ex-President



Fujimori, but it can be uncomfortable to hear people openly degrade homosexuals. However, to integrate into the community, sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice some of the liberties that one is used to in the States. Fortunately, the support groups and resources provided by Peace Corps/Peru, and my network of friends and family in the States and in Peru, have made it easier to work through the frustrations.”

#### Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion in Peru. Many other religious groups are present and visible around the country, and tolerance of all religions is fairly high. In some smaller communities, divisions exist across religious lines, and Volunteers need to understand these and be careful about being seen as aligned with one side or the other. If you are an observant member of any religion, particularly a non-Christian one, it may be challenging to explain your beliefs to Peruvians. Obtaining special foods and locating a place of worship for major holidays may also be a challenge. Lima has places of worship for most major religions, including several synagogues for the Jewish population.

#### Volunteer Comment:

“I am a youth development Volunteer in a small southern suburb of Lima, Peru, called San Bartolo. The majority of residents in San Bartolo are Catholics, but there are also Evangelicals and Jehovah’s Witnesses. I am the only Jew who lives in my community. Being the only Jew in the community has not been very difficult. I find people here to be respectful of my faith, and I am treated well. Naturally, they are curious to learn what it means to be Jewish, why I am Jewish, and why I do not believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I answer their questions,

and often they are happy to learn something new about another religion and culture.”

#### Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Peru without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Peru staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

#### Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Married Volunteers may have to spend time apart during pre-service training and in-service training events, especially if they are working in different projects. During their service, married couples are still required to live with Peruvian host families and their housing must still comply with all Peace Corps housing regulations.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Peru?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in Peru?

The current is 220 volts. Electrical appliances that utilize 110 volts require a transformer.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and once you have completed the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and will require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Peru do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking.

What should I bring as gifts for Peru friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. You will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within two hours from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour drive from the district capital.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at the above number. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from Peru?

International phone service to and from Peru is good in major cities. Volunteers in smaller communities will typically have access to a community telephone, through which international calls may be made and received. Most Volunteers also have cellular phones. There are reasonably priced local and international calling cards available in Peru.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

The cellular telephone network in Peru is expanding rapidly. Most Volunteers live in communities with cellular service, or have cellular service nearby. The Peace Corps does not provide cellphones or cellphone service to Volunteers, but does arrange for Volunteers to participate in a low-cost group plan. Almost all Volunteers participate in the plan.

Will there be email and Internet access?

While you may or may not have Internet access at your site, there are numerous, affordable Internet locations throughout the country.

Should I bring my computer?

Most Volunteers bring laptops and find that they come in handy. However, if you bring your laptop, the Peace Corps strongly encourages you to insure it.

# WELCOME LETTERS FROM PERU VOLUNTEERS

Congratulations on your invitation to serve in Peru! I'm sure you're getting excited as the time draws near, and rightfully so. Peru is a great country with delicious food, breathtaking scenery, and wonderful people. During your two years as a Volunteer, you'll have the opportunity to become part of a Peruvian family, take part in unique cultural celebrations, work professionally with Peruvians of different classes, see places you've never dreamed of, master a new language, adapt to a different style of life, and form lifelong friendships. In short, it will be one fantastic adventure!

As far as packing goes, don't let yourself get stressed out. You can find most things here, and the lighter you pack, the better. Here are a few tips:

- Stationery, duct tape, and hand sanitizer are useful things that are hard to come by here.
- Bring photos of your friends, family, and hometown to share with people in your community. They serve as great ice-breakers.
- Hand-washing can really stretch your clothes, so try to bring durable socks and underwear. (I buy socks that are a few sizes too small.)
- If you're a music lover, you may want to look into small speakers that you can plug into your MP3 player. They're not as bulky as a stereo and fill your room with music.
- Most camping gear, such as tents, pads, and sleeping bags, can be rented cheaply at the popular tourist destinations.

To tell you a little about myself, I live in the northwestern part of Peru in the department of Piura, known for its beaches, sun,

artisans, and a fermented corn drink called *chicha*. My town has a population of about 2,000 people and is located about one hour inland in the Sechuran desert, where it is quite hot, dry, and flat. Nevertheless, there is much beauty to be found in the rows of palm trees, blowing cotton fields, diverse species of birds, and above all, warm people. I felt instantly embraced by the community and have found such an incredible network of friends and family that it is easy for me to feel at home. I live and eat all of my meals with my host family and find the main diet of rice, beans, and fish to be quite tasty! We have running water for about six hours a week, during which time we fill buckets and storage tanks around the house so we have water all week. The walls of the houses here are made of a combination of bamboo, mud, and brick, with corrugated metal or reed-mat roofs. I wake up at dawn several days a week to go jogging through the fields and have developed a wonderful routine of greeting the farmers on their way to work.

My main job here is to support the association of health promoters, a group of community members who volunteer their time and energy to better the health of the district. In my spare time, I teach at an all-girls boarding school, cook with women in the *comedores* (a type of soup kitchen), read books with kids, and promote leadership among teenage girls. I have helped the community organize its own library. One of the wonderful things about Peace Corps is that your work can be adapted to utilize your skills and interests.

Enjoy your last moments in the States with friends and family. I look forward to meeting you here in Peru!

### — *Community Health Volunteer*

Hello and welcome, future Peace Corps Volunteers of Peru! Happy journeys as you make your way from the life you've known to a new and exciting adventure. No matter where you are coming from, you are bound to be struck by the differences, as



well as the similarities, between Peru and the United States. You will be amazed by the vastly different geographical regions in a country that includes a coastal desert, breathtaking mountains, and a lush jungle.

I live in Northern Peru, in a small rural town about 40 minutes from the regional capital city of Cajamarca. At an altitude of over 9,000 feet, it gets a little cold, and from November to March we experience the rainy season, where it rains almost every afternoon. The houses in my community are built using mud, which they mold and dry into adobe bricks. Kitchens are pretty basic, and everyone I know uses an open fire to cook their food, which mainly consists of rice, potatoes, and noodles. I also cook a lot of my own food and have enjoyed sharing some American traditions with the people in my community.

I live with wonderful host family members who treat me like a daughter and with whom I share the experience of navigating through all of the cultural differences. My community has been very welcoming and is extremely interested in who I am and where I come from. My interaction with host families and communities is one of the most enlightening parts of the Peace Corps experience. It has been eye-opening and mind-expanding. As I'm sure will happen for many of you, the world has become much bigger.

I work with several groups of local artisans who use lambs' wool to weave textiles, including rugs, tapestries, pillowcases, and purses. As a business Volunteer, I am helping them to organize the way they do business, including keeping records of sales and designs and completing orders on time. I also help the artisans find new places to sell their products by introducing them to exporters, supporting them at artisan fairs, and finding stores interested in selling their products.

In the vast and varying geographies and climatic ranges of Peru, it probably makes sense to pack a little bit of everything. But don't

stress; in regional capitals, and certainly in Lima, you can find a lot of the things you will need. The people overall have been very welcoming, and while not a lot of people speak English, they seem to accept bumbling Spanish with a smile. So relax, spend some time with the family, and get your fill of good American food and football.

*Bienvenidos al Perú!*

— *Small Business Development Volunteer*

The misconception among many Peace Corps Volunteers is that they will be isolated in a small village for months on end without the luxuries found in the United States. This leads to the idea that Volunteers have to bring everything from home that they will need for two years. In Peru, this definitely is not the situation.

Every departmental capital offers shopping for clothes, appliances, tools, new technology, and modern communications in the form of high-speed Internet and phones to call home. We would recommend going light on clothes and appliances (things that you can buy cheaply in Peru) and bringing things that will be hard to find here in Peru or that will be expensive (e.g., MP3 player, digital camera, lots of books, durable shoes, and items to continue your hobbies).

If you have a laptop, you should definitely bring one. Peace Corps work involves a lot of office work, document-writing, and information exchanging—not just field work. A laptop will make life much easier and expedite many projects. As always, just be careful with expensive technology, as there is always a risk of theft or breakage.

— *Environment Volunteer*

# PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Peru and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Peru.

## General Clothing

- Three or four pairs of casual pants for work
- Two or more pairs of jeans
- Two pairs of shorts
- Bathing suit
- One pair of dress pants for men
- Sports jacket and tie for men
- Skirts and/or dresses for women
- Collared polos and blouses for women
- One casual, nice outfit (for evenings out)
- Underwear (12 pairs, good-quality cotton)
- Long underwear

- Socks (just enough to get started, as they are available in Peru; it is recommended that some be high performance wool socks for colder sites)
- Light, waterproof jacket
- Fleece jacket and/or vest with hood
- Down or heavy jacket suitable for higher altitudes
- One or two sweaters\*
- One or two sweatshirts\*
- One pair of sweatpants\*
- Baseball cap or wide-brimmed hat (the Peruvian sun is fierce!)

\* Note: These items are bulky and are widely available in Peru, so if you are short of space or weight, you may want to plan on buying them in Peru.

### **Shoes**

- One pair of dress or professional shoes
- One pair of sneakers
- Hiking boots and/or sturdy walking shoes
- One pair of running shoes (if you run)
- Sandals

### **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

- Strong sunglasses (with UV protection and polarized)

- Start-up supply of soap, shampoo, shaving cream, and other personal toiletries
- Hand sanitizer
- Tampons (they are more expensive in Peru)
- Any favorite brands of sunscreen or other over-the-counter medicines (the Peace Corps provides needed items, but they may not be your preferred brands)
- Contact lens solution (note that the Peace Corps discourages the use of contact lenses)
- Towels (available in Peru)

### **Miscellaneous**

- Sturdy, small backpack or duffel bag (with a lock) for short trips
- Multi-tool travel knife (Do not pack in carry-on luggage!)
- A pair of work gloves
- Fanny pack or money belt
- Photos of family, friends, your house, car, pets, and hometown
- Flashlight
- Compact umbrella (available in Peru)
- Digital or film camera (film is widely available in Peru)
- Books to read and exchange
- Cassettes/CDs to listen to and exchange (also available in Peru)
- Travel water bottle

- Watch
- Duct tape and zip-close bags
- A deck of playing cards
- Small pocket notebook (widely available in Peru)
- A jar of your favorite peanut butter
- Favorite electronic items (either inexpensive or insured)
- A laptop computer (insured)
- A USB flash drive
- An extra pack of batteries for electronic items (available in Peru, but often more expensive)
- Sleeping bag (light, stuffable, and preferably waterproof)\*
- Camping equipment (if you are a camper)\*

\*Note: Sleeping bags and other camping equipment can be rented in tourist areas. Also, some Volunteers choose to have these items brought later by visiting friends and family.

# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

## Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

## Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

## **Insurance**

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

## **Personal Papers**

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

## **Voting**

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

## **Personal Effects**

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

## **Financial Management**

- Keep a bank account in your name in the U.S.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.



- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

# CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

## **Peace Corps Headquarters Toll-free Number:**

800.424-8580, Press 2, and then Ext. # (see next page)

**Peace Corps' Mailing Address:** Peace Corps  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement	Ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer	Ext. 2515	202.692.2515 peru@ peacecorps.gov
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer at CWT SATO Travel	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.544.1802
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging and Reporting Instructions Pre-departure <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) 3 to 5 weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging Orientation	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST