

MUSUQ CHASKI - El Mensajero Nuevo



ProjectsAbroad



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¡Feliz Navidad!: Celebrating Christmas in Peru

Christmas is celebrated in many different ways around the globe, so if you are spending Christmas in Peru, you will come across a number of new traditions and customs that you would not come across in your own country.



The rural context of the arrival of the infant Christ allowed early Peruvians to identify immediately with the festivity of Christmas, which is highlighted by artisan creativity, a sense of aesthetics and the religious devotion of Andean settlers. However, Andean Christmas has taken on characteristics of its own by adding elements from each region. In and around Cusco people put together nativity scenes in churches and homes, perform dances and plays, cook typical dishes and produce a wide range of handicrafts. In some Andean communities, the festival continues until *la bajada de los reyes* (the arrival of the three wise men), January 6th.

Four Sundays prior to Christmas marks the beginning of the *Período de Adviento* (Advent), a time when Christians reflect and prepare for the arrival of Jesus. In some places *la Corona de Adviento* (the crown of Advent) is placed as an adornment. The crown consists of branches, green leaves and four candles. Each Sunday a candle is lit with special prayers on the third Sunday. This tradition can be found in a number of countries.



In Cusco the 24th December is known as *Santurantikuy* and all the artisans bring out their figurines for the *nacimiento* or nativity scene to sell, and families display these in their homes the same day. These are typical of the region. The people from the country come down to sell grass and other items for the crib, and food and drinks are also sold. Throughout the week various organizations give away gifts, panetones and chocolate to the poor. On the 24th in the beautifully decorated Plaza de Armas in Cusco you may find carol singers singing carols in Spanish and Quechua. Fireworks are set off in some households.

Mass is attended by some families on Christmas Eve, often at ten, in order for families to be home in order to welcome the *nochebuena* at midnight. In the *misa del gallo*, the baby Jesus is blessed and then placed within the nativity scene. At midnight a toast for the festival is made with champagne in many homes, warm embraces and best wishes are exchanged while a family member places the baby Jesus in his place in the nativity. Then dinner is served as the family gathers around the table to enjoy the food and celebrate together. The typical meal for Christmas Eve in Cusco is *Caldo de gallina*, followed by *paneton* and hot chocolate.



Christmas day is quiet with the streets deserted as everyone sleeps after celebrating late into the night on Christmas Eve, except the children who were lucky enough to receive new toys and the last rockets decorate the morning sky.



Breakfast for those who wake early consists of hot chocolate and paneton, plus any other leftovers from the night before. Christmas dinner is often eaten on Christmas Day, a meal which consists of turkey or pork (the typical Christmas dish in Lima), hot chocolate, paneton, and other traditions which relate to each family. It is a curious sight to see people wandering the street with their oven trays filled with turkey to take to the nearest oven.

Did You Know?

- The first Christmas in the Americas is thought to have been celebrated on 25th December 1492 in "La Española," a colony which became the Dominican Republic and Haiti.
- The Philippines, the primary Christian nation of Asia, is considered "the Christmas capital of Asia".
- In Sweden the Christmas tree is traditionally put up on 24th December and is left for up to 20 days after the celebration of Christmas.
- In 1647, the Puritans banned Christmas in England and it did not return until 1660, under the reign of Charles II. Puritans in Colonial America also disapproved of Christmas and it's celebration was also banned in Boston from 1659 until 1681.
- The Christmas tree is a tradition believed to have begun in Germany.
- Sextus Julius Africanus popularized the idea that Jesus was born on December 25 in his *Chronographiai*, a reference book for Christians written in AD 221.
- Christmas was declared a United States Federal holiday in 1870.
- The *Misa de Gallo* which is celebrated in Peru on 24th December at 12 midnight and commemorates the birth of Jesus is a custom which comes from the early rituals of the temples of Jerusalem. There, Catholics celebrate three masses on the day of the birth of Christ.
- Father Christmas was first recorded in the fifteenth century.



¡Feliz Nuevo Año! Celebrating the New Year in Peru



The night of December 31st is celebrated with parties as in many countries around the world. Peruvians welcome in the new year with family and friends and a number of interesting traditions:

- The colour for New Year in Peru is **YELLOW**, for luck. Therefore, some people begin the new year wearing yellow underwear or clothing.
- Many Peruvians eat twelve grapes at midnight, one for each chime of the clock. For each grape, you make a wish for the new year. This custom is originally from Spain.
- Other customs in Peru include holding money in your hand when the new year starts and sweeping the house so that all the bad luck leaves.
- Some people, if they wish to travel in the new year, leave the house with a suitcase in their hand and walk round the block before returning home.

Project Updates:

What's New?

In **Teaching** at the end of last month the Minisaga writing competition winners were announced as, in first place, Jhoset F. Miranda Fuentes, IEMx Valle Sagrado. In second place, Alcira Palomino Cardenas, IEMx Coya and in third place, Richard Llamaconcca Huaman, IEMx General Ollantay. The prize for the school with the most entries went to IEMx General Ollanta. After the great success of the singing session in October, Claire organised a second recording session in the office on 20th November. Schools will be closing around the 15th December please ask your partner teacher for exact dates if you are staying over the Christmas period.

In **Care**, the painting competition using the theme of Children's Rights ended in November. The winners were: Summy (IEI 659 - Coya), Ruth (IEI 242), Yasmin (IEI 241), Jesica (IEI Lamay), Angie (IEI Piste) and Kiara (IEI 182 Media Luna). Care volunteer Yannick Volkart visited Chinchá after his generous donation in early November, for pictures see below.



Dan O'Shea, the Inca supervisor, gives us news from Huyro...

Once again we've had a very exciting month on the Inca Project in Huyro. We held a First Aid Course in the municipal building and invited teachers from the Huayopata region. The turn out was great and we all feel very proud that we will be able to supply First Aid Kits to all the schools. A big thank you has to go out to Sam & Sarah for all their hard work in raising funding, arriving in Peru, purchasing the equipment and for their involvement in the course.

As always we've continued with our community work in the surrounding area. It was great to have so many artistic volunteers as this gave us the opportunity to paint murals on the walls in the preschool in Amaybamba.

The volunteers have continued their tireless work clearing ruins in the Cochapata mountain and new ruins were discovered in November along with more of the Inca Trail in the mountain.

Finally we had some rain in Huyro and this was very welcome, if not by the volunteers then certainly by the many fruit trees, vegetables and flowers we have growing at our community house. A lot of work has also been undertaken planting different varieties of trees around El Establo. This work has been carried out in conjunction with the engineer and supervisors who manage the 'Reforestation Project' for the Huayopata district which is based in Huyro.

All in all, November has been a very productive month and we are all very much looking forward to December on the Inca Project in Huyro.

Introducing...

...New Volunteers

This month one new volunteer will be joining us...

The Inca project will be welcoming **Herman Zwanepol** who will be arriving from Canada at the beginning of the month.

Volunteer News & Events:

Photos from Chincha

Yannick Volkart - Care & Community
IEI 242, Calca

As reported in the last newsletter, Yannick Volkart had the opportunity to travel to Chincha with Mayten to see where his donation was going to help the victims of the earthquake which occurred back in August. Here are some photos from his visit:



Urubamba's Anniversary

Last month Urubamba celebrated its 168th Anniversary. Celebrations occurred through the 8th and 9th November with Institutions parading on the first day and fireworks and a concert in the Plaza de Armas in the evening. The following day, local schools paraded throughout the Plaza, including some of Projects Abroad's partner schools.

SOCIAL

Last month's social took place on Friday 30th November when we had lunch in Siwara Inn in Urubamba followed by a craft session, making Christmas Decorations for our partner kindergartens.



Our next social will be on 7th December when we will finish creating Christmas Decorations...

Creative Corner:



El Establo Ode

by Wendy Dickieson (Inca)

I arrived in the night, dizzy from the mountain pass,
Everyone greeted me warmly, and I was surprised the light was only gas.
As I adjusted to the bugs and the showers oh so cold,
I learned that everybody could be a friend, no matter how foreign and old.

Work with machetes was difficult at first,
But soon I managed with little thirst.
Now I'm a master at clearing and cleaning,
Because every Inca ruin must be gleaming.
Trekking up to the Cochapata mountain site might be the bane of Dan's existence,
But for me, it allows for yummy galleta subsistence.
At the top, we go exploring,
And if we're lucky, we'll discover walls and be hacking away all morning.

Other days we go to the Inca Trail,
Where only ant attacks can make us wail.
We cut back pink and purple flowers so pretty only the Peruvian sunshine could have made,
And after get to enjoy some smokey lemonade.
Sometimes we go to schools and paint desks and chairs,
And always come away with azul y verde hairs.
Weekends allow time for touring Peru,
From sweaty Quillabamba to Machu Picchu.
We combi with the locals and in Cuzco see the llamas,
And no matter what, we always say "Let's vamos!"

Life is enhanced by an amazing Establo staff,
Who no matter the time or place, are up for a laugh.
Americo saved my life at the waterfall,
Jhon has the dirt on any Inca wall.
Desayuno, almuerzo, y cena are always delicious with Isa and Frida,
And of course I can't forget Raul, Sara, and Senor Garcia!
I saved Dan for last because he's the head honcho,
And I'll always love him even if he has a funny poncho!

My Spanish has gone from nada to poco,
And now I know my foods, from azucar to coco.
For now I need to go where the altitude is low,
But don't worry, because for Peru, it will always be "Hasta luego!"



Hadleigh Stollar - Teaching
IEMx Agropecuario-Urubamba

My name is Hadleigh Stollar and I have been teaching in Peru for one month. As I prepare to hand over my lesson plans and mark my final set of exam papers, I am beginning to reflect on my time here in Urubamba, Peru. I have written this article because I feel it is important for future volunteers to understand what life as a teacher in Peru is really like – and hopefully give future volunteers a greater sense of enthusiasm before they begin their journey out here...

Believe it or not, my story begins with a tale of eyes – all 525 pairs of them! 525 – that's how many pupils I have had looking at me for the last month. 15 classes with 35 pupils in each – I am still shocked about the size of classes to this very day!

My very first lesson, at 11.30am on Monday 20th October saw me enter the classroom of class 1A. That's year 7 in the UK. As I entered the classroom and the pupils stood up out of respect for the "professor" walking into the room, it suddenly hit me in an instant. I had, in the space of a millisecond, realised why I was in Peru and why I had travelled 32 hours to get here. I got this feeling in every class. It was remarkable. And it all came from the eyes of the pupils who were beaming at my every move as I entered the classroom.

Their eyes told me a story, a story of sadness, a story of tiredness and a story of poverty. It's not surprising really, each classroom suffers from an overload of dust, tables and chairs that would be thrown onto the dump in England and in the majority of classrooms, not even a light-bulb exists should the sun go in and extra light is needed.

Thus my role here was clear. I was determined to carry on with the work of my predecessors and induce a real element of fun into learning English. And guess what? That's exactly what I did! The fantastic support from "la oficina de Projects Abroad" has been a springboard from which I have been able to produce my lessons. Snakes and ladders with verbs, noughts and crosses with parts of the body and teaching the time with moveable, pre-prepared clocks have all been a recipe for success. Well I think so anyway.

As the weeks have gone on, the atmosphere has changed in the classrooms. The pupils know that as I enter the room, the backpack on my body has some form of interactive learning within it. They know it is going to be a long hour and a half, but nevertheless, their eyes light up as they know it will be an intriguing lesson. I think they just appreciate being given the time of day by someone from a country which isn't Peru.

So what does it all mean? What is the purpose of it all? The moral of the story is that volunteers must continue with the work of Projects Abroad here and in all the other countries that need our help. The eyes of the pupils in Agropecuario become different with volunteers around, but it is only through a constant flow of volunteers that any success can be reached.

Have I made the difference I wanted to before I left? Who knows, but I do know that I have felt a shift in the atmosphere in school, which may be my imagination or indeed reality – either way; I am leaving the country knowing that for now at least, some pupils can identify parts of the body in English and understand the verb ‘to be’. Not a great deal, but its good enough.

Well done Projects Abroad. Keep up the good work!



Kyle Farmer - Medicine
Siete Cuartones

Having spent far too many hours in airplanes and airports I was delighted when I finally got off the plane at Cusco Airport, if not a bit tired. I got my luggage pretty quickly and was greeted by two of the Projects Abroad staff, who showed me where the main places were (post office, gringo street, etc.) and then took me to meet my family. After ducking through one doorway and a small passage I was welcomed very warmly into the home of the Ramirez family and shown to my room and where everything was. After a quick, and much needed shower, my house mother María and house sister Norma took me into town and showed me around, not that I had any notion to go traipsing through Cusco on my own in my first week.

On my first Monday I was pretty excited as I was going to have my first Spanish lesson and meet the only other volunteer in Cusco, Willemijn. After my lesson I had organised trips for the first month and learnt enough Spanish to talk a bit over dinner with my host family.

My first month went by very quickly, my Spanish lessons going well along with my self-confidence growing as my Spanish was improving. During the month I also got to help out on the Cirplast week, which was great fun and also gave me a good chance to get to know the other volunteers. After this I returned to my Spanish lessons with Fernando.



During my second month I joined the medical programme and began working in a small hospital called “Ministerio de Salud de Siete Cuartones” in Central Cusco. I spent most of my time with Dr. Victor, who is a G.P., and found it to be extremely interesting. Dr. Victor is a kind person who likes to teach, I have enjoyed my time with him.

During my free weekends I travelled with Willemijn (the other volunteer in Cusco) to different areas in Peru, nothing too far though. My favourites would have to be Pisac and Ollantaytambo ruins, well worth the walks; Lago Titicaca, which was just amazing, and of course Machu Picchu.

All in all I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here in Peru and am extremely happy that I got the chance to live and travel in the mountains of Peru. I hope I can persuade some of my family to bring me back some time next year! Good luck to everyone on their projects and I know you will all have fun!

Meet the Family

Projects Abroad works with a number of host families throughout the Sacred Valley and Cusco, this month we meet the **Villena** family in Urubamba...

VILLENA FAMILY FACTS

Family members: *Luzmila, Alfredo & Fransisco*

No. of family members: 3

Town: *Urubamba*



Projects Abroad: How long have you been working with Projects Abroad?

Señora Luzmila: I have been working with Projects Abroad for four years.

Projects Abroad: What is the best thing about having a volunteer living in your family?

Señora Luzmila: To be able to learn a little English and it is an experience that enriches the growth of my son and also ourselves.

Projects Abroad: What is your most memorable experience with a volunteer?

Señora Luzmila: We managed to enter into the personal life of one volunteer that when they felt nostalgia or empty in their life they rang us to hear my suggestions and say that their family in Peru had become very important in their life after living with us. This is the most satisfying and nicest experience for us to know that we can be small guides for someone that lives in our home.

Cocina Peruana: Cooking with the staff

This month's choice is a Christmas special in Peru...

Paneton



A little bit of history...

Paneton is a fruit bread which originally became a Christmas tradition in Italy (*panettone*). Brought over by Italian immigrants, it is now a tradition for Peruvian families at Christmas and the New Year. It is usually eaten with hot chocolate.

Ingredients:

- 600g wheat flour
 - 1 teaspoon of salt
 - 50g fresh yeast
 - 1 tablespoon of sugar
 - 1 cup of condensed milk
 - 200g margarine
 - 6 egg yolks
 - 150g sugar
 - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 - a pinch of nutmeg
 - 1 grated lemon skin
 - 75 g dried orange peel in small pieces
 - 75 g dried lemon peel in small pieces
 - 50 g peeled pecan nuts*
 - 50 g peeled almonds*
 - 50 g peeled hazelnuts*
 - 150 g seedless raisins
 - Wheat flour to sprinkle the surface
- *(chopped in pieces)

Preparation:



- In a large bowl, sieve the flour and the salt and make a hole in the centre. In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast with one tablespoon of sugar and three tablespoons of lukewarm milk. Leave for 15 minutes until bubbles rise to the surface.
- In a medium-sized bowl whisk the margarine with five yolks, the spices and the grated fruit. Then, place this mixture in the centre of the flour, together with the yeast, the rest of the sugar and the milk. Mix well.
- On a floured surface, knead energetically until you have a tender roll. Cover with a cloth and leave to rise in a warm environment for about 15 minutes.
- Then, knead in the dried fruit and the raisins. Form a sphere and place in a high oven dish. Leave it to rise in a warm place until it doubles in size, for about one hour.
- About 20 minutes before this time is completed, preheat the oven at a medium temperature. Paint the surface with the rest of the egg yolk, make a cross in the surface with a knife and cook in a moderately heated oven for about 90 minutes or until golden.

Dancing in the Street



Esther Goldsmith was a volunteer in August 2007. She tells us what it was like getting involved in extra activities at her placement, IEMx Ollantay...

Wow! What an exciting time I enjoyed as a volunteer English teacher in Ollantaytambo, Peru. I taught eleven classes each week and during my stay the School had an Anniversary Celebration. One day between classes the Professors were in the courtyard learning new dance moves from the dance instructor and my students urged me to join in. Not wanting to miss anything fun, I jumped in and mimicked the dance moves, and to my surprise, the next day I was asked to be a part of the Colegio Anniversary celebration. At first I said "you've got to be joking!!!", then I thought "why not? It'll be fun".

Rehearsals were a little challenging for me because my Spanish is at the novice level and at times multiple professors would talk, rapidly of course, and I could not sort out what was said. My success at dancing formula was mimic and remember. Somewhere in the conversation they decided on the costume but I do not know where to buy the four simple items to make my costume complete. One of the professors agreed to help me but somehow when it was time to go to the next town to purchase the items we got separated. On top of that I had a 1:00pm fund-raising event in Urubamba at the Projects Abroad office for the earthquake victims so I had to leave. When I arrived at the office I noticed a huge bowl of baked chicken and I ate like I had never eaten chicken before. With a belly full of chicken my mind returned to the pieces of my costume that I do not have so I walked around the Market Square and the thought hits me; without a costume, I will not be able to dance. They have given me a lead part. This is not good.

There are two Market Squares that are always filled with people and there I was wandering around wondering what to do, when out of nowhere it seems, Carlos, another professor, but most importantly, my dance partner appears. I have only seen him 18 miles away at school so I am elated. I told him that I need help and within 10 minutes he has rapidly walked me to the stores to purchase a white blouse, hair braids, shoes, and lycra shorts. I looked at the lycra shorts and could tell that they were obviously made for a seven year old but somehow I have to squeeze into them. I quickly took the bus home and squeezed into the lycra shorts only to realize my worst fear at the moment; I do not want to sit down because those shorts might explode and ricochet off me and hurt someone.

In complete and colorful costume I am transformed from Esther of Oklahoma, to Esther the Peruana dancer and I took my place in line to start the dance. Our dance number was very exciting, energetic, and included lots of twirling that revealed to everyone looking, my too small lycra shorts. Most of my host family was there to cheer me on. It was so much fun and I instantly became a small town celebrity. For the next few weeks in the oddest of places someone would say something about me dancing in the program. The simple response of "yes" to volunteerism, and "yes" to all of the many exciting challenges that came with it. It was worth every second.

December Diary

What's happening in December?

Festival	Description	Place	Date
The Immaculate Conception	Religious festival that has a lot of importance to the populations in the mountains of the department of Cusco. The celebrations consist of masses and dance presentations from the local area. In the case of the districts of Yauri and Santo Tomas are typical of the area and include bull fights.	Peru	8 th December
Celebration of the Virgen María de la "O"	This celebration takes place in Yucay. A procession is held and 10 different dances are performed. Food is provided in the houses of the leaders of the dances.	Yucay	18 th December
Christmas Eve	Celebration of the birth of Christ – for more details of how the Peruvians celebrate Christmas see the article above	Peru	24 th December
New Year's Eve	Celebration of the new year	Peru	31 st December

Announcements

- Please note that all Teaching & Care volunteers will not have work from mid December as the kindergartens and schools break up for Christmas holidays. Please check with your partner teacher the dates that you finish work. Over Christmas the office will be closed on the 25th December and 1st January.
- Thank you to everyone who has helped bring about this months issue of *Musug Chaski*. If you would like to contribute your experiences, stories, photos or anything else to the next edition then please send them to:
hannahpartis@projects-abroad.org