

# Volunteer in Cusco



## Highlights

**Volunteer in Cusco, Peru, the gateway to Machu Picchu. Stay in the centre of town and help this enchanting but impoverished community by improving schools, working with children and local homes.**

Cusco is a small town at an elevation of 11,150 feet. It's kind of in the middle of nowhere (a few hours by plane from the capital, Lima) but that by no means implies that it's a boring place to be. Before the westerners discovered Machu Picchu and the area, it was an important place for the Incan natives as Cusco was the capital of the Incan empire. There is still some debate about what Machu Picchu was used for but Cusco was always an important city and the Spaniards certainly took that on and put their stamp on it, clear with the Plaza de Armas smack dab in the middle of town as well as with the Catholic cathedral and church. It may be small but Cusco is teeming with life, from the indigenous women who come down from the mountains to sell sweets and cocoa leaves on the street, to dreadlocked backpackers passing through to hardcore hikers looking for a natural high. It is a truly enchanting place and once you visit, you will be trying to find the right words to describe it to family and friends back home for years to come - but it won't be easy, it's a unique and inspirational place that should be on everyone's "bucket list".

Children in the Cuzco area sometimes do not have things we assume everyone gets like an education, clean clothes and books to read. It's a sad truth to confront but once you meet these kids you will be amazed at how much joy they give you in the week you spend with them. By being a volunteer in Cusco, you will be doing many activities alongside these kids and will really get to see how something simple like making a photo album with them or helping them prepare dinner influences their lives in a positive way. Yes, the work might be challenging but when you are making repairs to the children's home (or Albergue) you won't notice the thin air or even that you might not speak Spanish. The majestic mountains, the brightly coloured ponchos, the local people so eager for you to try a Pisco Sour or Ceviche will inspire you to help out as much as you can while hopefully learning about this ancient and beautiful place.

## Is it for me?

This one is not for the faint of heart. It's certainly not luxurious (no hot water at the accommodation) but Cusco is a rugged town in the middle of a beautiful but harsh environment. You must not be afraid to get dirty, live a spartan week and confront some possibly upsetting truths about rural Peru. You will be surrounded by a high level of poverty, which is not pretty, but if you want to do something positive with your free time, then you will love this volunteer vacation in Cusco.

You will be in a group, living dorm style so it's not for anyone seeking privacy. You do not need to speak Spanish (in fact for many locals Spanish is not their first language but rather they still speak Quechua). One very important piece of advice is that Cusco is at a very high altitude. It is a good idea to get there a few days before you start this tour to get used to the thin air. Do not underestimate this, you will feel it as soon as you step off the plane and taking a few days to do nothing but get used to it could be the difference between a great trip or being ill during the duration.

## Accommodation

You will be staying in the children's home you will be renovating, just a few minutes from the centre of Cusco. It is dorm style, but you will have electricity and running water. Be forewarned though, the running water is not necessarily hot water... Dinner is included in the tour and will consist of traditional Peruvian food made from fresh, local ingredients.

Prices from

**818** GBP (7 days) per person

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## Itinerary

**Sunday:** After breakfast you'll help the children get ready for a parade in the Plaza de Armas. Then you'll have the rest of the morning off to explore, attend Sunday Mass (very important to Cusco residents), check email - whatever you want. After lunch you'll take a walk to Sacsayhuaman with the kids and explore the ancient ruins there. In the afternoon you'll be able to play with the kids and then participate in a cultural scavenger hunt and team building activity. Afterwards you'll help the kids get ready for bed and you'll be able to enjoy some free time.

**Monday:** You will wake-up at six and help the kids through their morning routine. Then you will all have breakfast and a Spanish lesson. Mid-morning will be spent constructing a computer room and then lunch. During the afternoon you will help with wheelchair construction and in the evening help the children make dinner and get ready for bed.

**Tuesday:** After your usual morning routine you will visit the Piscac ruins and market. After lunch you'll continue with the wheelchair project and then computer lessons. The evening again will consist of some free time, helping the kids make dinner and then helping them get ready for bed.

**Wednesday:** Wednesday morning will be spent around the children's home fixing whatever needs to be repaired and improving classrooms. In the afternoon you will give the children computer lessons and then lead them in craft projects such as making photo albums and painting murals. The evening follows the usual routine.

**Thursday:** You will make an excursion to the magnificent Machu Picchu. Wake up is at 4.30am and you will return to Cuzco at 8pm.

**Friday:** Wake up on Friday is at 6am followed by getting the kids ready for the day. You will then help with the maintenance of the Albergue until lunch. In the afternoon you will have a fiesta with the children and visit a local Shaman. At night you'll have dinner with the kids and then get ready for bed.

**Saturday:** Wake up on the last day is 6am where you will review the project with the rest of the group and group leaders and share journal entries. Then you'll enjoy breakfast and say good bye to everyone. Departure for the airport is 11.30am.

## Details

### Getting there

To reach Cusco, you need to fly to Lima, the capital, where you can catch a connecting flight Cusco.

### Price includes

Accommodations, meals, excursion to Machu Picchu

### Typical Duration

1 week

### Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

### Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

### Travellers should bring

A detailed packing list will be sent out once you are registered.