



The genius of Inca stonework still amazes visitors from around the world.



March saw the floodwater retreat at the Taricaya Reserve where our Conservation Project has its home. February saw water levels rise over 3 metres above normal seasonal levels causing widespread devastation. Read about my visit to the centre and how staff and volunteers are working hard to get everything back on track. (article)

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Heavy skies during Carnavales won't deter locals with water-bombs and flour. Take an umbrella.

'Carnavales' is a moveable festival celebrated in either February or March of each year, bursting with energy, culture, music and interesting rituals. In Cusco, the celebrations are held in slightly different ways depending on the specific district you are visiting, but there are some central themes running through them all. These celebrations happen before Lent and are principally found in predominantly catholic countries.

Peruvian 'Carnavales' are often accompanied with water fights in the streets. I remember the first time someone threw a bucket of water over me in the street. I stood, soaked to the skin, with what must have been a look of shock on my face as the poor girl who had happily initiated me into the festive season was a little unsure whether or not she should run away or hide. Luckily I was with local friends who explained, once they had stopped laughing, how women usually fought with men and vice versa. Over the years I've had water balloons go through the window of my car, shaving foam applied to my face and I've also done my fair share of aquatic urban-warfare on unsuspecting locals as they never suspect a foreigner to participate.

During this festival the water fights are just one part of this vibrant period. In Cusco's main square there are processions and dances from award-winning groups from around the region, all desperate to show off their costumes and choreography to an appreciative public of national and international spectators. There are also gastronomic side-

shows with traditional foods such as 'puchero'; which is a delicious beef stew that definitely makes you feel better after a soaking.

One of the nicest traditions around this time of year is the 'yunsa'. This tradition sees married or unmarried couples dancing around a tree decorated with ribbons, balloons, toys, fruits, bottles of liquor, and other prizes. Each couple strikes the tree three times with a machete or an axe and the couple that eventually fells the tree is named as the hosts and organisers for the following year's yunsa. The moment the tree falls hundreds of spectators rush in to grab prizes; it is really something to behold and often causes some minor injuries depending on the fervor of the group.

At the end of the day, Carnavales is a positive festival despite the occasional reports of violence you read about in the papers. Some individuals do try to use the general mayhem to their advantage and the police usually ask people to be extra careful with their personal belongings during this period. Nevertheless, there are heavy sanctions of up to eight years in prison for those individuals who don't respect the spirit of the celebrations and allow it to become violent. If you're out and about during this period, make sure you're not carrying expensive cameras or wearing your favourite clothes; you're probably going to get a bit wet and dirty.



**Corn grown at the Inca Project. This year's crop was monumental.**

### MEDICAL PROJECT

Recently, Projects Abroad signed new and improved deals with local hospitals, clinics and even the Ministry of Health in the region to improve the level of service provided to our visiting volunteers and particularly those helping out on our Medical Project in the city. For some years now we have offered opportunities for medical professionals and interns to work alongside local medical practitioners in order to learn about the local system and bring their own perspective to local healthcare providers. Our strong ties with regional authorities have been reaffirmed in the past months with unprecedented support for our work. We have guaranteed improved conditions of care for all of our visiting volunteers in the event that they fall ill and require treatment during their time with us. Our partnership with the Clinica Peruano Suiza is a key component to this security for our volunteers, as they can make contact with insurance companies and take care of the paperwork required should volunteers be admitted. The level of care offered by this prestigious clinic is excellent. Additionally, we have a renewed partnership with the excellent Lorena Hospital and welcome volunteers with proficiency in Spanish to a number of opportunities

within the city's institutions. All of these achievements are possible through the trust Projects Abroad has generated with these partners and we are delighted to be developing and improving our services and projects every year.

### INCA PROJECT

With the way the weather is until the end of the month it is impossible to put definite plans in place for the month of March. However, there will be some regular cleaning and clearing work being done at Inkatambo in preparation for the dry-season and ongoing research and investigation into this important site.

Resident archaeologists Jhon and Zenobio will be giving their regular lessons and workshops to the volunteers at 'El Establo', as well as supervising digs and leading site visits throughout the year. Having two qualified archaeologists on the team gives this project a huge amount of credibility and volunteers are constantly learning from their interactions with them. There has been some remarkable work done in piecing together pottery fragments from 2012 excavations and this is actually much harder than it sounds.

March sees local children returning to school so the volunteers will be returning to their duties at the local nurseries to offer support to these important institutions. The library in the centre of Huyro will also be a regular feature on their weekly schedule to support reading and support homework sessions that take place there.

Last month saw a bumper harvest of corn for 'El Establo' and the volunteers may just be slightly sick of the sight of this delicious food by now having hauled it all inside, husked it and removed the kernels from several hundred kilos or more of Peruvian 'choclo'.

Recently the Inca Project has had over 20 volunteers on site which has made light work of drainage tasks. A local tea factory also had our volunteers' help with some important clearing, which forms part of the general community work that our team always throws themselves into with energy and enthusiasm.

Here's to a great dry season!



**Personal attention from enthusiastic and patient volunteers makes a child's day more interesting and productive. Your time is incredibly valuable to them.**

#### CARE

Summer Schools came to an end earlier this month, allowing our care volunteers to shift their focus to community work in the region. Community work is varied and always of huge benefit to the organisations that receive our volunteers. This year we painted one of the nurseries in the town of Calca as buildings here often need a touch of paint every now and then due to the constant sun during the dry season and the heavy rains in the wet season.

Our next stop was an old people's home in Cusco where we spent time with the residents, helping with meal times and lending a hand with tasks and activities around the centre. This work is particularly rewarding as visits do not happen all year. From here we also spent time with the children in one of Urubamba's orphanages, with volunteers getting stuck in with everything and anything that was asked of them. All-in-all a very varied and productive period of community work which gave our

volunteers an insight into the lives of some very different socio-economic groups.

The 10th of March marked the day that schools re-opened for the academic year and we were finally able to introduce our volunteers to their placements and the people responsible for running them. There was a lot of excitement on the first day with activities planned by the regional government with the aim of starting the year positively for all concerned. Volunteers will be supporting their teachers over the coming academic year in their respective placements.

#### NUTRITION

Our nutrition volunteers have spent several weeks in Cco-tahuincho working closely with families on healthy eating habits. They have visited people's homes to help prepare meals and have elaborated and delivered a number of talks and activities to further promote the idea of a healthy lifestyle. It was also possible for them to join our other care volunteers at the orphanage where they got in-

volved with many activities, most importantly the creation of a weekly menu for the children.

Early in the month a trip was taken to Espinar to observe a Nutrition Project in another part of the region to learn more about what is being done. Our volunteers talked with locals about their own materials and what we do here in our area and ideas were exchanged. They helped to create some resources there and visited the local advice centres to see what they were doing locally. All of the volunteers are now back in Urubamba and continue to support local families and efforts to change the habits of these families through visits, materials and group talks. Regular contact and support is what these families need to be able to stick to new regimes, and our support in this is vital if we are to create role models in the community that other families can emulate.

### Teacher Training ends, school begins.

The Teacher Training Programme graduation ceremony took place on the 20th of February and enabled volunteers to go back into high schools to deliver English to students alongside their Peruvian support staff.

A total of nine volunteers are with us in March and their first day at their placement is always a chance to settle in, meet the staff and students and familiarize themselves with their new job for the next few weeks. Our teaching supervisor, Jessica Marroquin, has been busy introducing our volunteers to their teaching partners, school principals and students. The first day involves orientation of the site, meetings with key personnel and lots and lots of questions being answered. Volunteers get the opportunity to meet some of their students and there is usually a back-and-forth exchange of questions with students wanting

to know all about their new English language support staff.

The long school holidays that began back in December last year are finally over and many students will be reunited with their friends after long visits to family in other parts of the country. Some of their teachers will have recently finished our annual Teacher Training Programme in Cuzco and will be using their new found confidence and skills in their classrooms. It's an exciting time of year with a great deal of energy which new volunteers can take advantage of.



Graduation day - Teacher Training

### Sport

Ken Ogata from Japan was with us for part of March in Urubamba on our Sports Project. Ken's placement was to support basketball training for young children in Urubamba's relatively new Coliseum and he did a fantastic job of settling in and using his considerable skills in this sport to make the experience for the children truly memorable.

It was very revealing when Ken joined us on a basketball social event recently; he clearly loves this game as he ran rings round the rest of us taking part. It was clear to see that his love for the game went hand-in-hand with a very clear sense of fairness as he gave passes, supported his teammates and enjoyed the chance to play with others.

Ken didn't speak much English or Spanish but he communicated his passion for his sport perfectly with his young students. The Coliseum is a fantastic resource for Urubamba and allowed Ken to run drills and

get some friendly games going with the groups he supported. We wish him well and thank him for his support over the past weeks. .



Sports volunteer Ken Ogata on his final day at his project



Volunteer Björn Andrews and project coordinator Yessika Espinoza supervising food bingo.

Björn Andrews is nineteen and from Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. He recently left school, and before throwing himself into a mechanical engineering degree, he made the decision to pack his bags and head for South America to learn more about the world.

Venezuela was Björn's introduction to South American culture, but his experience was marred by the fact that the organization he used to volunteer there was not spending volunteer money professionally. On arriving in Peru however, Björn was met by Projects Abroad staff and he noticed a big difference.

*"I'm really happy that Projects Abroad is a proper organization [...] when Projects Abroad say something, they do it, if they say there's going to be a car to pick you up there's a car. It's very different".*

Björn chose the nutrition programme here in Urubamba for a three month stint and from day one threw himself into the work, taking to the tasks set for him with consummate ease.

The nutrition project is particularly important in Peru due to the high number of families living in extreme poverty who cannot afford to eat properly. Part of Björn's responsibility was to give lectures and talks to groups of mothers on the nutritional choices they should be making for their children. Local 'intervention cen-

tres are poorly equipped, but with enthusiastic guest speakers like Björn it helps to focus attention on the issue of sensible food choices.

Björn's interest in health and sport were an excellent background for his work with the local women in Urubamba. He has an excellent knowledge of which foods contain the right levels of proteins, vitamins, carbohydrates, fats and minerals and he enjoyed sharing this knowledge with the groups.



Giving a talk on vitamins

*"The Nutrition programme is quite varied, sometimes we're doing talks or in schools [...] we also spent some time in a hospital in Cusco".*

Away from his daily involvement with the project, Björn particularly enjoyed his experience with his host family;

*"The mother is always worried about me, and she's always trying*

*to do or organize things that I've said I'm interested in. She's a very good cook and I've learned a lot about Peruvian cooking."*

After two and a half months living with a local family, it's clear that Björn has settled in brilliantly. He's had many a conversation with his host father who used to be a professional footballer in Cusco, plus he watches champions league matches with one of the sons. Weekends are spent travelling and Björn has already seen the Nazca Lines, lake Titicaca and Machu Picchu.

*"Peru has so many amazing things to see, I found it hard to believe how the Nazca culture could do something so big that needs to be seen from the air".*

In a short space of time Björn's experience in Peru has given him a greater understanding of its people, culture, and a particular insight into the lives of some extremely poor communities he would never had contact with in Europe. His mechanical Engineering degree awaits, but his experiences here will last for a lifetime.

Our community project partner, Miriam, said he had been a fantastic person to work with. We extend our thanks to a hard-working and friendly volunteer.

The ocarina is a wind instrument that can be placed in the category of vessel flutes. Variations do exist, but a typical ocarina is an enclosed space with four to twelve finger holes and a mouthpiece that projects from the body. It is traditionally made from clay or ceramic, but other materials may also be used, such as plastic, wood, glass, metal, or bone. The origins of this fascinating instrument are somewhat disputed with some experts pointing to a Chinese origin, whilst others point to a Mesoamerican emergence. It was certainly important to both cultures and was also taken to Europe by colonists, sparking new versions which were often smaller and sometimes worn as pendants. It is very likely that the original version of this instrument was transformed and evolved naturally over thousands of years with the natural movement of peoples and cultures around the globe.

Peru, through its colonization in the 16th century, lost much of its cultural heritage as the Spanish systematically erased or subdued expressions of local culture in their transformation of their new territory. Music, dance and ceremonies were particularly targeted and instruments such as the Ocarina slowly began to drift into obscurity. Some historians such as Federico Kauffmann Doig mention Ocarinas in their research on Andean instruments and in a paper written by Cesar Bolaños (a music expert), he points to Ayacucho as the region most likely to have been responsible for the instruments' popularity here in Peru. It is thought that these instruments were in use in cultures previous to the Inca, and Wari, going as far back as the Huarpa culture. The word 'ocarina' is thought to come from the qheswa 'Oq'arina' which means 'object that can rise/levitate'.

The Ocarina's predominantly ceramic incarnation further highlights the importance of this medium to the Inca culture and those that precede it. The great skill that is involved in producing these instruments is testimony to the craftsmanship of these talented people.

In Urubamba, in one of our fantastic host families lived Francisco Casapino Del Castillo. This man dedicated his time to the production of Ocarinas and his research on the subject was both a hobby and a passion. His love for the Ocarina means the skill of its production hasn't been lost and his collection was an important one. Francisco sadly passed away over a year ago and we at Projects Abroad who worked with him were tremendously saddened by his passing. We would like to thank him and his family for their friendship and for Francisco's dedication to this piece of Peruvian cultural heritage.

## Millions of photo opportunities all around us

As information manager for Peru, it is my job to tell the story of our volunteers, as well as follow and report on the progress made at our projects. Part of this requires me to take photos, recording videos and conduct interviews that may be published on our website, in our newsletter and sometimes print-versions. It's a real privilege to work in Peru, not only because I live here and my family is here, but also because it is truly a beautiful place.

On my visits to talk to volunteers or meet them for social activities, I'm almost always reaching for my camera to catch some passing scenery. There are times when I don't have my camera with me and I miss things that I may never see again (like

the time I saw a llama spit at its owner just as she was preparing to stifle a sneeze).

Our photo competition is now in its third month and I've been really pleased with the level of participation so far. Entries have been varied in their content but landscapes are always popular. Some of the best shots we've had have been from some of our volunteers on their weekend trips when they have their cameras with them and catch some impressive sights. I was pleasantly surprised that we haven't had many Machu Picchu photos yet, because Peru has so much more to offer than just the famous ruins.

In the coming months I'm looking forward to hopefully see-

ing some more wildlife shots and more portraits. It's hard to take pictures of people while they are posing, but it's equally difficult to take photos secretly as it can sometimes be considered rude. A good photographer will see beauty everywhere, but you certainly don't have to be a professional to capture Peru's charm. Here at the office we are always excited when new entries arrive and we enjoy going through them and picking a winner. If you're heading this way or have recently been with us and forgot to enter a picture; do send it to us and we'll consider it. Towards the end of the year we'll be picking a 2014 overall winner who may see their work published in some other form. Happy Snapping!

## March's Winner! PERU



This month's winner is Taylor Tomasso from The United States. So far no portraits from any of you, and very few shots of cultural events, but we're enjoying looking at your pictures. Be creative, look for pictures that capture what Peru means to you! We're looking forward to even more entries next month. See the winning photo [HERE](#)



Usually when people are asked about coffee they think of Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala or even Italy funnily enough. With the exception of the Italians, all of these fine nations have done wonders in marketing and promoting their coffee to a worldwide audience. Peru has a smaller production of coffee than the bigger players, but recently it has been gaining a reputation for the quality of its organic varieties. Back in 2010, a small farmer in the region of Sandia, near Puno, was awarded the honour of having produced the 'World's Best Speciality Coffee' as recognized by the Speciality Coffee Association of America. This simple farmer had produced a coffee to beat all others and it has opened up the market for many other Peruvian coffee farmers. Ironically, Peru's strength lies in its lack of industrialization. Small farmers produce their crops mainly using organic methods and the overall volume is impressive enough to have sparked interest in buyers around the globe. My wife's family has farmed coffee organically for generations and upon

hearing the news of Peru's success on the international stage we were left with one question: Why are we getting paid less each year for our product?

The answer lies in the way coffee is bought and sold at a local level by small cooperatives. Producers still rely heavily on the cooperatives to negotiate their prices, but with a little work it is hoped that they will form small associations and go it alone to achieve a better price for their labour. It is well-known that coffee brings greatest profits to the end retailers and roasters that have become so culturally popular back home. For every 46 kilos of dried coffee that farmers in my region harvest, they receive around 200 soles or \$71.43. Typically, one kilo of roasted coffee can make 40 cups of coffee in your local café, which retail anywhere up to \$4. Each kilo of coffee brings in \$160 for the retailer. Multiply that by the 46 kilos of coffee the farmer sold.... \$7360.00 a little over 100 times the value. Of course, coffee

loses weight during the roasting process, but it is still a huge difference. Hopefully farmers will strengthen their resolve to demand higher prices for their coffee, and with the rise of more independent buyers and small chains dealing directly with farmers, we should see some improvements.



Coffee Cherries

## Picarones

This delicious Peruvian-style donut is best made with sweet potato but has a number of interesting variations. Buy it hot on the street.



### Ingredients

- 125 gr. cornflour
- 750 gr. wheat flour
- 375 gr. sweet potatoes
- 375 gr. pumpkin
- 2 eggs
- a pinch of aniseed powder
- The rind of one orange
- The rind of one lemon
- 1/2 cup beer (blonde)



### Para el almibar:

- 75 gr. dark (brown) sugar
- 350 gr. white sugar
- Grated orange and lemon peel



### If Homer were Peruvian...

### Preparation

Cook the sweet potatoes and the pumpkin in boiling water. Make a fine purée, add the beaten eggs with the beer, the flours and the aniseed. Leave the mixture/batter, covered with a cloth, in a warm place for around 3 hours.

Take tablespoon sized lumps of the batter, make a hole in the centre and put them in hot (but not too hot) oil. Drain well on kitchen paper then cover them with the syrup.

To prepare the syrup, dissolve the sugars in a cup of water, add the grated citrus peels and heat until you achieve a thick syrup.

