



The variety of projects offered in Peru is awe-inspiring. A visit to Peru is always an unforgettable experience.

## THIS MONTH

**Editorial** 2  
Comings and goings

**New Faces** 3  
Stéphanie Schwartz

**Volunteer Stories** 4  
Catherine Mattheson, UK

**Volunteer Stories** 5  
David Jorge, France

**Project Updates** 6-7  
Teaching / Inca

**Qhapaq Ñan** 8  
Zenobio Valencia García

**Recipe of the Month** 9  
Caigua Rellena



<https://www.facebook.com/smpap>



[mytripblog.org](http://mytripblog.org) - Peru



<https://www.youtube.com/user/Projectsabroadperu>



[Proj\\_AbroadPERU](https://twitter.com/Proj_AbroadPERU)

[www.projects-abroad.co.uk](http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk)

ProjectsAbroad



Projects Abroad, like any volunteer organization, is characterized by arrivals and departures, greetings and farewells. Most of us who work for the company have also volunteered at some stage in our careers and we remember the feeling of arriving in a strange new place where everything and everyone is new. All of us start out as strangers and yet, for the vast majority of us, we leave with amazing new friends and contacts that will stay with us for a lifetime.

As a recently appointed new member of staff I have been thinking a lot in the past few weeks about my own experiences as a volunteer here in the Sacred Valley back in 2001. I arrived, fresh and eager to get stuck in and threw myself into the work landscaping a new local school and spending time with the students and staff.

Urubamba was a very different place, much smaller and with a trickle of passing tourism served by a handful of bare-bones restaurants and corner shops. Our daily journey from our base in Cusco involved taking local buses crammed with local farmers and their livestock. Many a journey involved stops to re-attach escaped chickens to the roof and we marveled at how the guy on the door seemed to exist half-inside, half-outside, seemingly indifferent to the dangers of passing traffic to his dangling exterior limbs.



Eventually, after weeks or months, it's time to leave. Some go travelling, some stay on to help, and in my case I found myself in love and with a job on a local newspaper. That's Peru for you.

Here at Projects Abroad there's a strong sense of community. The staff have made me feel extremely welcome and during my short time here I have been able to observe the personal connection between staff, volunteers and our community partners in the various projects we operate in the area. New volunteers are given a personal introduction to their host families, orientation in their project and a regular point of contact in the office and during weekly social activities.

The beginnings and endings of journeys here in Peru are full of emotion and a stint as a volunteer is one of the best ways to get a feel for the real Peru, the Peru that sometimes gets missed on the organized tours we see shooting past our homes and placements. You may have just joined us here, you may be about to leave, or perhaps you haven't yet filled out the application form, but whatever the case it goes without saying that you're soon going to be going through a huge range of emotions.

Don't be a stranger, get in touch with us if you have any questions and whether you're coming or going, we hope you enjoy every moment.





## Mélanie Schwartz

### Research & Training Centre

My name is Mélanie and I have worked in many different positions within Projects Abroad since March 2012. A few weeks ago I landed in Peru to join a brand new Projects Abroad Team: The Research & Training Centre. If you had told me four years ago, when I was a care volunteer myself, that I would be here in Peru doing what I'm doing, then I wouldn't have believed you. Truthfully, I could not be happier about how things have turned out.

After some years working as a qualified teacher for a variety of services for disabled people, I decided to broaden my knowledge in education by combining it with study in International Relations. I already knew I wanted to be involved somehow in partnerships with local organizations in developing countries, a desire that was confirmed and reinforced whilst volunteering. I believed that further education and training would be crucial in realizing this objective, thus, I signed up for a Master's degree in International Education, Social Mediation and Intercultural Awareness in Paris.

A few days after completing my thesis a good friend, that I had met whilst volunteering in India, emailed me about job opportunities with Projects Abroad. Since I had enjoyed my different experiences as a volunteer in Europe and Asia I jumped at the chance to join the team. I wanted the opportunity to help give future volunteers an experience as great as mine had been, ensuring both their success and happiness as well as that of our local partners.

After working with our operation teams in both Nepal and India, I was excited to hear that Tim, Country Director of Projects Abroad Peru, was about to launch a Research & Training Centre. This excitement was only surpassed when I discovered that I would soon be one of its lucky members!

Volunteering has continued to develop, both in terms of the number of volunteers applying for place-

ments, and the variety of projects people are interested in. More and more volunteers from around the world are packing their bags and flying out to our numerous destinations, willing to invest their time and energy to support our partners. Consequently, Projects Abroad has continued to grow to meet this demand, hiring new staff and developing new partnerships along the way. In this situation of fast growth, in order to maintain the high level of service and support we provide to our volunteers and partners, it is essential that each member of our staff is highly qualified and also a specialist in their field. By creating our own training modules we can ensure that the courses we offer to our colleagues are as pertinent to our specific needs as possible, and that focus is given to the topics most relevant to a Projects Abroad workplace.

Besides offering training courses we will also be collecting a range of data over time, allowing us to carry out research with the aim of adapting and improving our work practices and even the projects we are involved in. This process will undoubtedly require time and meticulous analysis, but research is essential to enable us to make effective and sustainable progress, enhancing the professionalism and consistency of our operations. I am glad to be involved in this important initiative.

I am thrilled to have made the choice to live and work in Peru. It is an incredible experience to share the life of a Peruvian family, to discover the fascinating history and culture of their country and at the same time it's a great chance to improve my Spanish. I hope all of our new volunteers will also be excited about our developments and I am sure that we will have the opportunity to meet in or around the office during the next few weeks.

Cuidense y disfruten de su experiencia en el Perú.

## Catherine Mattheson Nutrition

Catherine Matheson, 22 from the UK has always had a great interest in travelling and wanted to experience life in a completely different culture. After finishing a Biology degree and, alongside some casual work, she decided to learn Spanish. Naturally, wanting to put this Spanish to good use she decided to apply to participate in Projects Abroad's nutrition placement in Peru.

Arriving in Cusco she was driven to Urubamba, her new home for the coming weeks. Despite being pretty tired after the long flights, Catherine says she was still able to admire the stunning mountain scenery and appreciate the completely different 'world' around her.

On arrival in Urubamba, Catherine was given a quick tour before being taken to her host family. "They couldn't have been more welcoming" recalls Catherine of her first few days. Visits to the market and an introduction to the ubiquitous "mototaxis" followed, which were to become her daily commuter vehicle of choice. With a bit of patience and some miming here and there, Catherine was able to communicate successfully with her family and at her placement. Of course, being totally immersed in the language definitely helps!

Catherine's placement was about a 20 minute walk or 5 minute moto-taxi ride from her house. "All the staff there were very friendly" and she was welcomed and given her orientation by her supervisor and the other nutrition volunteers. The main aims of the nutrition project are to educate mother in the local community about the different food groups and the importance of healthy balanced diets. The project focuses teaching on particular nutritional deficiencies found in the area, such as anaemia. The project has various locations but one of its main centres is the "Centro de Vigilancia" in the community of Ccotohuincho in the town of Urubamba. This centre provides free, government-funded,



meals (breakfast and lunch) for mothers during weekdays. It also gives workshops on nutrition, has equipment to measure and monitor the children's height and weight, and vaccinations can also be administered. Volunteers are there to help the facilitators provide new ideas and different ways of delivering the information to the mothers. A good example of this is inventing games and quizzes to engage and increase the likelihood of the mothers learning and putting into use the knowledge they have acquired.

A typical day at Ccotohuincho she recalls: "... you would help prepare and serve breakfast to the mothers and the children, and then either help to give a workshop or visit families with the facilitators." Other work includes giving some general hygiene advice and there is a good program of early stimulation to help with cognitive and emotional development. About once a month there are visits to schools to treat the children's teeth with Fluoride mouthwashes. "After some initial apprehension, the children cheered up particularly when we gave them a free toothbrush!"

For Catherine, the living conditions in the poorer communities were quite shocking and it showed the challenges that the mothers have to face day to day. By interacting with the mothers, gaining their trust and helping to educate them, she feels that Projects Abroad can make a difference. Ideally this will eventually help to prevent or greatly reduce the inci-

dences of malnutrition among the children, which will allow them to grow into healthy independent adults.

During her time with us here in Urubamba Catherine feels she learned a lot about Peru and its culture through her host family chats over a cup of tea after dinner. The bull and dogs in the back yard were part of the family too." It was pretty amazing waking up in the heart of the Sacred Valley with its magical mountain scenery either side." She loved eating the local food and even had a go at cooking 'aji de gallina' a very popular national dish of lightly spiced chicken. In general she found that people were very friendly and laid-back in Peru with a more family-orientated style of living. Visiting the magnificent Machu Picchu was one of the highlights of her trip but also exploring the tourist attractions in and around Cusco proved interesting. Typical Peruvian dancing and visits to the many markets were all memorable experiences. "Bartering was something you had to learn how to do quickly!" Asked to give advice to future nutrition volunteers she says that learning as much Spanish as possible allows you to greater appreciate what Peru has to offer, both in and out of your placement. "Go in with a positive attitude and get involved as much as you can. Don't be worried if the mothers seem a bit unfriendly at first – they just need to get to know you!"



## David Jorge Inca Project

As with any adventure, it begins with a dream of getting away from it all, which, in my case, meant from Paris. A passion for travel, discovering and sharing new cultures and a thirst to learn more about the world around me, that is what drives me. This is how I stumbled upon Projects Abroad, an organisation that seemed to offer everything I was looking for. It was time for a breather, to postpone my studies for six months, to sort out my affairs and jump head-first into the unknown. Would I have the necessary qualities for this type of project? Would I enjoy the work? Would it meet my expectations? How would I get on with the other volunteers? These and many more questions swirled around my head and the only place I would find the answers lay so very far from my home sweet home.

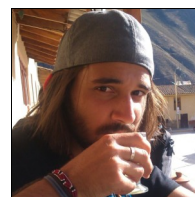
It's funny to discover, in the end, nowhere on earth is quite as far away as we might imagine. You board the plane and sit watching the landscape rushing by below, everything seeming so small. You land, much as you took off, leave the plane and then stare open-mouthed at the spectacle that arriving in any new place affords you. For me, the plane's doors in Paris shut on an immense city of multi-storey buildings, alive with ant-like, almost trivial activity, but they opened on another world composed of mountains each larger than before and buzzing with a different vibe. In the end you realise it's you who is foreign.

Cusco, Urubamba, Huyro, a journey of around four hours giving us a taste of what's to come. An amazing unspoilt panorama greets us around every turn. Piercing the clouds and imagining what's waiting for us below in what is called « El Establo ». It's a house which, at first glance, seems extremely ordinary, four walls and a roof. However, once inside you can appreciate the magic of this place. The walls are adorned with the happy scribbles of ex-volunteers and then you're greeted by your fellow volunteers and you suddenly realise that all of those questions you had before you left were completely redundant. There's no doubt you're going to have a great time. Living with a group of strangers can sometimes be difficult, but living with Inca Project volunteers is a different story.

The staff is just as great. Far from the traditional model of boss and subordinates, here there is a true spirit of sharing and cooperation that allows everyone to learn. The work is amazing, it's an archaeology project but when you get here you realise that it is so much more. This is a glimpse of the unknown Peru, something you would never get to see if you simply came here on holiday. We work with local archaeologists who share with us their knowledge of the area and its rich historical legacy. You will be able to participate in exploration, cleaning and clearing, cartography or excavation of Inca or pre-Inca artefacts on-site that have been hidden for hundreds of years.

Away from work there's also the chance to get to know your fellow volunteers. This project attracts people from all over the world, speaking different languages and sharing their culture. New friendships are formed and groups go off exploring other parts of Peru in their free time. Evenings are spent in quiet contemplation of our good fortune at being here, far from everything.

Alongside the important archaeological work done here the project collaborates with the local community, visiting the schools, playing with the children and doing work in the library. You can give your time and support and even share a little of your culture as you learn about theirs. Removed from our western habits and routines you realise that there are things more important in life than a hot shower or the latest mobile phone you thought about buying. This is a chance to really find out who you are and give a little of your true self to something. Consequently, you return from your experience a changed person with a new way of looking at things. That's the Inca Project.







All of our teaching placements offer secondary-level support in English and our volunteers perform an invaluable role.

Last month many of our schools celebrated Student's Day on September 23<sup>rd</sup> as part of celebrations for the arrival of spring. The event was held outdoors with activities and great food throughout the day.

Holly Lamden, an English volunteer on placement in Juan Bautista School in Coya, particularly enjoyed the experience as she said it is not something that is celebrated back home in England.

Volunteers played volleyball, many of the students played football or went swimming and one of the highlights was an epic tug of war contest. Everyone had a great time and a lot of good food was enjoyed too. A day out of the classroom always provides opportunities to discover things about your students and Holly had the chance to share a little of her life back home with her groups. She told them about life in England, spoke of her family and friends and needless to say there were a few questions about The Royal

Family. There was a lot of enthusiasm for the day's events and everyone agreed it had been a great success.

Holly really enjoyed seeing the students having fun. "Schools aren't only about work" she commented, and this had been a fantastic example of how getting out of the classroom can great for both staff and students alike.





Volunteers sorting through recently excavated artifacts from one of their many digs.

### Project Updates by Daniel O'Shea

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

A new dig was started up Q'ochapata in sector III in October but the seasonal rains have slowed progress. Hiking and exploring the Pistipata and Sihuaymarka regions of the district were carried out regardless of weather conditions. The coming months will make progress slow as rain becomes heavier and more frequent.

#### MAINTENANCE:

Drainage is back on the agenda as our volunteers prepare in earnest for the onset of a four-month wet season. A huge amount of thanks and credit has to go to the volunteers for

getting 'stuck in' with this. Other exciting news is that the new banana field in Establo has finally been cleared enough for Wily to start clearing with his machine.

#### COMMUNITY WORK:

Volunteers and staff attended the celebrations for O.A.P. day in Huyro on the first of October and joined in with a range of activities. The volunteers danced and spoke with the pensioners from the Huayopata district and it was a very positive day.

The project has continued with the library activities with local children and now visits between 2 & 4 PRONOEIs every Friday morning. There have also been donations of a lot of much needed materials.

#### SPORTS:

The local teachers came to play football with us recently (feeling confident after soundly beating team Establo last month) and they were utterly trounced by the staff and volunteers. The match was a fantastic team effort and the result was a shock for the visiting team, so much so that no teachers turned up for the post match celebrations!

*The Inca project is in Huyro in the district of Huayopata. Volunteers help on archaeological digs, trail maintenance and a range of other community-based projects. See our article by lead archaeologist Zenobio Valencia García on page 8 and read David Jorge's volunteer experience at the Inca Project on page 5.*



Update by **Zenobio Valencia García**



Qhapaq Ñan (The great Inca road) in the Amaybamba Valley is once again beginning to reclaim its importance. Through varied field research we have been able to ascertain and document that it once served as an important main route along the Inca trail. Extending through the Vilcabamba region it never fails to surprise as it continuously leads us to the discovery of new networks and archaeological sites.

Its very intricacy dictates that the supposition of a connection between the Amaybamba Valley and Machupicchu is carefully and thoroughly investigated. In order to achieve this we need to pool together the efforts of all our researchers and intensify our explorations in the area. Unfortunately, the oral or undocumented information received from the very first explorers who managed to go beyond the mountain range of The Vilcanota valley (where Machu Picchu is situated) and the Amaybamba valley (where we are currently working) fail to offer sufficient archaeological evidence of such a connection. This is simply because the explorations were neither scientific nor conducted by archaeologists. Despite the fact that the route is geographically

navigable, many doubts still remain surrounding the idea that these important places were interconnected during the times of Yawantinsuyu (Incan territory).

It is imperative, that our project conducts an archaeological expedition with the aim of finding concrete evidence of such pathways. This expedition will then allow us to verify if such routes were designed to connect both valleys, which individually, remain transcendently important. In our recent explorations (approx. 3 weeks ago) we were able to find traces of what appeared to be a potential route. However, despite the fact that it has all the characteristics of a solid lead, it remains clear that many further expeditions are needed before any confirmations can be made.

As people who are familiar with such tropical zones, we appreciate just how difficult it can be to work in such terribly undulating and unpredictable landscapes. The immediate requirements of the project, outlined above, are necessary developments for the successful realization of its goals. The importance of professional and intensified



investigation is clear, and we are confident of the combined and continued support of our volunteers and the invaluable public and private bodies that have been with us on this journey since the very beginning.

The discovery of a potential link between these two sites, could be one of the most important discoveries for Peruvian archaeology for many years. Furthermore, there is the possibility that in the future it may become an important draw for tourists, which will in turn aid in the development of the nearby towns of the Amaybamba valley, and possibly even those which extend beyond it.

**Check out our YouTube page for videos on this important project.**





This interesting bread, in surprise that a country of the form of a doll, is hugely popular at the end of October as part of the celebrations for what we in the west would consider Halloween. Here, it is customary to remember departed family members and families will visit the tombs of their loved ones to spend time with them and even have a bite to eat in their honour. It's no

## Pan Wawa

One clue that this delicious treat is available is the cloud of bees that swarm around the vendors outside the markets, buzzing around the bread and its sweet decorations. The bees know their food.

## Caigua Rellena

"Caigua Rellena" is a very simple dish, tasty and easy to prepare. This is a dish that shows off the subtle taste of this 100% Peruvian vegetable, rich in fibre, low in calories and bursting with nutritional goodness. This little-known veggie is used a lot in natural medicine and is believed to have curative properties.

### Ingredients

4 large caiguas (20 cm)  
250 g minced beef  
100 g black olives  
100 g raisins  
1 large onion (diced)  
2 tomatoes (diced)  
2 boiled eggs (sliced)

1 teaspoon crushed garlic  
200 g cheese (sliced)

Salt & Pepper to taste

### Preparation

1. Start by cutting the end off the caiguas (the thinnest end - like a balloon) and scooping out the seeds and fibres carefully with a spoon
2. **Next, fry the onion and garlic until transparent, then, add the minced beef and fry for about 5 minutes until cooked.**
3. Add the tomatoes and simmer for 10 minutes (you can add some stock if it gets too dry).
4. **To finish off, add the raisins, the egg and the olives.**
5. Allow to cool for about 5 minutes then begin to fill the caiguas with the mixture using a dessert spoon.

Don't fill them up completely, leave a space to add a slice of cheese.

Next you should arrange the caiguas side by side (vertically if possible) in a small pan and add some stock to the base of the pan and cover. Simmer on a low heat for around 15 minutes then remove and enjoy. Serve with rice.