



# Focus on PERU School Program

*"I only want to thank AFS Peru for what they have done for me and my AFS experience in Peru. It has been the greatest time I ever had. It is very nice to have an intercultural exchange, and young people from all over have this opportunity. Please accept my best wishes and gratitude"*

*Melanie Silcock, participant from New Zealand*

The word "Peru" is derived from an Inca word meaning "land of abundance." Once the heart of the great Inca empire and cradle of many other ancient civilizations, Peru appeals to anyone with a passion for history, anthropology, archeology, nature or simply travel. Located in the west central part of South America, its terrain embraces the Andean peaks surrounding Machu Picchu, lush tropical rainforests, Amazonian jungles, sandy beaches, arid deserts and remote farmland oases and fishing villages. Likewise, Peru's people are as diverse as its spectacular landscapes. Nearly half the population is made up of Quechua Indians, descendants of the Incas, who live in the highlands of the *Sierra*. *Mestizos*, whose heritage is part-Indian and part-European, comprise another segment of Peru's populace, while 10% are of Spanish ancestry. While each group remains true to its customs and lifestyles, all Peruvians are known for their warmth and spirit.

## ***AFS & Your Experience***

AFS Peru has been in existence since 1959. Since then, nearly 4,000 people from such countries as Austria, Canada, France, New Zealand and Thailand have participated in AFS Peru's intercultural exchange.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural experience. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

## ***Landing in Peru***

Once you land at Cuzco International Airport near Lima and collect your baggage, you and your fellow AFSers will pass through customs and be greeted by AFS staff and volunteers.

## ***Arrival Orientation***

Before going to your host community, you will take part in a day-and-a-half orientation organized by staff and volunteers. In addition to having a chance to rest after your long flight, you will meet other AFSers and learn about AFS in Peru as well as about Peruvian culture.

## ***Living in Peru***

### **Lifestyle and Family Living**

Because Peru is so diverse—with different cultures, climates and natural environments—Peruvians and Peruvian families have varied customs. By paying close attention, you will quickly learn about your host family's lifestyle.

Generally speaking, however, Peruvians are known for their warmth and generous displays of affection. Parents also tend to be protective of their children and may expect you to ask permission to go out with friends and abide by any curfews they set.

Peruvians' sense of privacy differs from some other cultures, and Peruvian host families may feel unappreciated if you wish to be alone while they are together, even if they simply gather to watch TV after dinner.

They also have different expectations for their sons than for their daughters. Boys are usually allowed more autonomy than girls. For example, Peruvian girls have less freedom than girls from most European and North American countries. While customs are changing, household chores are divided along traditional lines. "Women's work" includes cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing and other everyday tasks. Men take care of household repairs and "outside jobs," such as paying bills.

Peruvian host families, like all AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives.

### **Dress and Appearance**

Peruvians wear many types of clothing depending on their region and social class. Generally, western-style clothes are worn in urban areas such as Lima, and traditional clothes are common elsewhere. AFSers should bring jeans and T-shirts, a sweatshirt, lightweight sweaters, a swimsuit and sneakers. If your host family lives in a high altitude, you will also need a warm jacket. Remember to bring one or two nice outfits (suits for men and dresses for women) for special occasions.

### **Diet and Meals**

Peruvian cuisine is known for its rich variety and for its ability to incorporate influences from different cultures, including Spanish, Chinese, European, African and Japanese. Ingredients popular in traditional Peruvian dishes are rice, potatoes, chicken, pork, lamb and fish. Most of these meals include one of the different kinds of "*aji*" or Peruvian hot pepper, which are yellow *aji* pepper, red *aji* pepper, red *rocoto* pepper, as well as many other spices.

Lunch and dinner are the two largest meals of the day. Breakfast is usually quick and light: milk, coffee, bread, juice and cheese. Some families also enjoy having an afternoon snack. Very few Peruvian families are strictly vegetarian, and most expect their guests to taste everything offered to them.

### **School Life**

AFS students usually enroll in the fourth or fifth year of secondary school. The academic year begins in April and ends in December, with 14 vacation days in the summer. Peruvian students attend classes Monday through Friday.

Students have the same classmates through the school year and the same schedule as well. Students learn about Spanish literature, math, English, Peruvian history, economics, civics, arts, handicrafts, social sciences, chemistry, physics and more.

### **Teen Life**

In their free time and on weekends, young Peruvians get together with friends to watch movies, dance or hang out in the town square or at a local café. You may also have the opportunity to get involved in such local community activities as sports, music and crafts clubs. This is a great way to learn about your community and to make new friends.

### **AFS Activities**

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Peru will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) and talk about expectations for the future program as well as past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

### **Travel**

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Peru, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Peru. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

### **Spending Money**

About US\$1,500 in travelers checks, when carefully budgeted, is more than enough spending money for an entire year. Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do such things as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the expenses are your responsibility.

Spending more than your peers and family may create a distance between you and them.

### **Safety and Support**

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Peruvian. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has three rules: no driving, no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes and no hitchhiking. Any student who violates any of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Peru may have additional rules.

### **Health Precautions**

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Peru (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

## **Documents**

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices of your host country, and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. AFS will help you obtain the visa and provide you with instructions regarding the required documents.

## **Program Prices**

Please [contact the AFS office in your home country](#) for information about program price and scholarship possibilities and what the program price covers for the various program offerings. In most cases the program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

## ***Country Information***

### **Geography and Climate**

Peru is located on the west coast of South America, south of the equator. Geographically, it is a diverse country with many ecological zones. Of the world's 120 ecological habitats, Peru has 80: arid deserts; tropical rainforests; tundra; steep, snow-capped mountains; deep canyons and beaches. The country can be divided into three environmental regions: the coast, the jungle and the *sierra* or highlands.

Peru's climate falls into basic two seasons—wet and dry—though this varies depending on the region. The coast and western Andean slopes are generally dry, with summer falling between December and April. The rest of the year, the coastal fog (the *garua*) moves in and the sun is rarely seen. In the Andes, the dry season lasts from May to September, while the wet season takes up the remainder of the year.

### **Population**

Peru has a population of 28,409,897. Approximately seven million live in the greater Lima area.

### **Language**

Spanish is the official language, and Quechua is officially acknowledged as a second language. Also, Aymara is recognized as a regional language.

## **Government**

Peru is a constitutional republic. Under the constitution adopted in 1980, Peru is governed by a president with wide executive powers who is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The president appoints the government. The bicameral legislature consists of a Senate (60 members) and Chamber of Deputies (180 members); legislators are also elected for five-year terms.

## **Religion**

Peru is predominantly Roman Catholic, though many of the country's Native Americans blend Catholicism with their traditional beliefs.

## ***Launching Your AFS Experience***

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Spanish words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Peru, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Peru and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Peru. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living life as a Peruvian. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or national AFS office. In addition, AFS Peru will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Peruvian people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

If you have not already received a full AFS application packet, please contact your local AFS volunteer or national office to request one. We wish you a wonderful experience!

## **Curiously Peruvian**

- ✦ Peru is the world's potato capital, boasting more than 1,000 varieties and vibrant colors including purple and blue potatoes.
- ✦ The world's highest railway is in Peru. The Central Railway climbs to 15,694 feet in the Galera tunnel, 108 miles from Lima. Tourists take it to get to the ruins of Machu Picchu.
- ✦ Spanish explorers discovered peanuts in Peru in the 16th century.
- ✦ Llamas were domesticated from Guanacos in the Andean highlands of Peru 4,000 to 5,000 years ago and were among the first domesticated animals in the world.

## ***How to Apply***

To become a participant in this country's School Program, contact your nearest AFS office. To locate an AFS office, go to <http://www.afs.org/contact>

Student age (upon arrival)	15y to 18y 6m	
Country data	Size	1285,216 sq. km.
	Population	28,409,897
	Official languages:	Spanish and Quechua
	Government	Democratic constitutional republic
Currency:	Nuevo Sol	
Useful website		
AFS Peru website		

AFS program destinations are not always available to residents of all countries. If a program interests you, please contact your nearest AFS office to find out if it is an option for you. You can locate your nearest AFS office at <http://www.afs.org/contact>