



MÁXIMO NIVEL

VOLUNTEER & INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

**San Jose, Costa Rica
Cusco, Peru
Arequipa, Peru**

About Máximo Nivel

Máximo Nivel was founded as an intensive language institute, and over time has developed its expertise in both tourism and volunteer programs. Máximo Nivel now has offices in Cusco and Arequipa, Peru and in San Jose, Costa Rica. Giovanna and Ken Jones – founders of Máximo Nivel – have also established the Máximo Nivel Foundation which provides food, clothing and other aid to orphanages and funds the English Learning Room at street children’s centers in Cusco, Peru and San Jose, Costa Rica.

Máximo Nivel provides a safe and supervised environment for volunteers worldwide to come and learn about Peru and/or Costa Rica – two of the most diverse countries in the world. Máximo Nivel works in partnership with NGOs, the national police, municipal governments, hospitals and clinics, and other organizations to provide volunteer programs and organize development initiatives that benefit children and/or conservation of Peru’s and Costa Rica’s natural environments.

Throughout your volunteer or internship placement you will have the support and guidance of our experienced country coordinators, and you will have access to the entire Máximo Nivel staff – they will be your support team and will provide you with 24-hour assistance.

Máximo Nivel has hosts between 10 to 50 foreign visitors each week. This combined with our other programs – Native English Program, Native Spanish Program, and our TEFL/TESOL program – means that you will join a lively atmosphere filled with lots of opportunity for cultural exchange and opportunities to make friends from all over the world.

Our success is based on our commitment to quality and to providing the highest level of service possible to all of our clients.

Facilities

Máximo Nivel’s Cusco, Peru office is located in a modern office building – just 3 blocks from the historic Plaza de Armas, and just across the street from Q’oricancha (the Inca Temple of the Sun).

Máximo Nivel’s Arequipa office is located just 3 blocks from the Saga Fellabella mall and just 4 blocks from Arequipa’s Plaza de Armas.

Maximo Nivel’s offices in San Jose, Costa Rica are located in the district of San Pedro, just 5-10 minutes by taxi from the center of San Jose, and just a 5-minute walk from two of San Jose’s major universities.

Maximo Nivel’s offices have been designed with the needs of our clients and staff in mind. Every location provides modern computers running Windows XP, high-speed Internet connections including office-wide WIFI access, a small library, and a snack bar where every morning the coffee and tea are piping hot and FREE.

Every classroom is equipped with comfortable chairs, an oversized whiteboard, and a cassette and CD player. The main teaching rooms have a surround sound system, DVD player, cassette player, and TV.

What Máximo Nivel Offers You

- Personalized volunteer placement based on your skills and interests.
- Safe, comfortable housing and three meals per day Monday – Sunday.
- An experienced English-speaking program manager who will provide orientation, supervision and guidance throughout your stay.
- 10 hours per week of intensive Spanish instruction.
- Unlimited free access to high-speed internet and modern computers plus office-wide WIFI access Monday – Sunday.
- Free Salsa lessons every Saturday at our institute.
- Monthly get-to-know-you party with open bar and dancing at our institute.
- A toll-free emergency hotline in the U.S.

We Take Good Care of You

Máximo Nivel offers you a wide range of services to help make your volunteer or internship project be both comfortable and enjoyable. We advise you on a wide range of topics, including: what to bring for your trip; what airlines to fly; what type of accommodation best suits you; how much money you need to bring; visa requirements (if any - depending on your nationality); and all of the ins and outs of day-to-day life in Peru and/or Costa Rica.

From the moment you arrive, we put all of our efforts into making your stay enjoyable. We meet you at the airport and take you to your family-stay, apartment, hostel, or hotel. We provide you with all the information you need regarding cash machines, shopping, trekking, sightseeing, and nightlife. We also provide a full city tour, including the most famous and important sites in Cusco and/or San Jose. And every month, there is a party for our foreign visitors – volunteers, students, teachers, etc. – including open bar and dancing.

Volunteer & Internship Projects

Máximo Nivel offers volunteer and internship projects in Peru and Costa Rica. These projects provide the unique opportunity to live and work in Peru and/or Costa Rica while experiencing the countries' rich cultural diversity and building your proficiency in Spanish. Through the various project opportunities you are able to make a contribution to global society while at the same time bettering yourself.

The majority of our volunteer and internship projects take place in Cusco and Arequipa, Peru or San Jose, Costa Rica. However, we also offer volunteer and internship projects in other areas and cities including: Lima, Trujillo, Iquitos, Puerto Maldonado, and Urubamba (in Peru); and the Pacific and Caribbean coastal areas (in Costa Rica).

Project Areas

Projects offer opportunities for international travelers and students to help out, develop skills and even undertake in-depth study of a particular area in an international setting. Volunteer and internship opportunities include:

- Childcare
- Healthcare
- Environment & Conservation
- International Business
- Teaching English
- Construction
- Not-for-profit/NGOs
- Social issues (Poverty, religion, etc.)

During your project, you will engage in daily activities working under the supervision of a local manager and Máximo Nivel's country coordinator. You will receive a full orientation and be fully supported by the Máximo Nivel staff. However, it is important to remember, that ultimately the success of your project depends on you and what you make of it. We strongly encourage you to be outgoing and "ready to pitch in" – in a busy environment with a lack of funds this will go a long way to ensure you are as deeply involved as you want to be.

Child Care

Poverty, abuse, and alcoholism have left many children in Peru and Costa Rica without families, depriving them of the parental love and care they need. Máximo Nivel's volunteer projects aspire to change these children's situation by providing caring and nurturing volunteers to work and play with them. The orphanages support and protect these children, but most are under-funded and need all the help they can get. Your assistance helps keep these children off the street, and helps provide them with a happy and productive childhood.

In Peru and Costa Rica, hundreds of poor children live and sleep on the street. Street children projects focus on getting these children off the street, and providing them with shelter, food, and education. Various educational, recreational, and health projects are ongoing to support these unfortunate children.

Depending on individual skills and interests, volunteers will act as mentors, help children with their homework, and teach English. However, your love and support are the most important elements for these disadvantaged children.

ORPHANAGE

Volunteers provide care for the children, helping them with their homework, workshop assignments, playtime activities, etc. You may work with other volunteers and/or teachers, and assistants. Most orphanages receive either boys or girls, though there are a few that receive both girls and boys. The children – ages 5 to 16 years – very much need your care, attention, and companionship.

DAYCARE AND NUTRITION CENTER

Volunteers work at a daycare center that provides housing, care, and food for working single mothers and their children. The children – ages 0 to 5 years – very much need your care, attention, and companionship while their mothers are working. These projects receive children whose mothers can't afford regular day care services.

As a volunteer you will care for the children, providing nurturing and playtime activities, etc. You will work with the resident psychologist, assistants, and possibly other volunteers. Volunteers are very much needed to bring energy and commitment to these centers.

CLINICA SAN JUAN DE DIOS

Clinica San Juan de Dios offers free treatment to mentally and physically disabled children. The clinic is home to between 50 to 60 children, and employs five teachers, five nurses, and three physical therapists.

Volunteers are assigned various tasks depending on their skills and interests. All volunteers must help in the clinic feeding, bathing and playing with the children. Volunteers may also work as teaching assistants in the school, assisting with art projects and helping the children with their work.

POLICIA DE LA FAMILIA (CUSCO ONLY)

Volunteers work with a group of abandoned street children – young kids and teenagers – who are in temporary residence at a police headquarters building. Population of the shelter varies from as few as five to as many as 40 children. This project is one of the poorest and least organized that Máximo Nivel works with. These children have most often been separated for long periods from their families and/or come from abusive homes, and have often been exploited. Whereas the police provide a place to sleep and one meal per day, there is no other substantive help.

Volunteers care for the kids, providing organized activities simply to combat boredom, as the children are not permitted to leave the police station; these children love company and enjoy having volunteers visit with them.

Teaching English

Máximo Nivel's volunteer projects in teaching English offer volunteers ample opportunity to explore the day-to-day life in Peru and/or Costa Rica while helping young students improve their English skills. Work includes teaching English (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, writing, listening, etc.) to primary, middle, and high school students 2-4 hours per day.

Most volunteers work in the *English Learning Rooms* at small community centers, orphanages, or shelters for street children. At these projects volunteers work with and assist the fulltime teacher – a professional teacher certified in ESL (English as a Second Language). You will help teach regular English classes and also tutor the children and help them with their homework.

EARN YOUR TEFL/TESOL CERTIFICATION

If you have at least 4 weeks and are interested in a career teaching English as a second language, Máximo Nivel offers you an excellent opportunity to earn your TEFL/TESOL Certification in Cusco, Peru or San Jose, Costa Rica.

The certification in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) is recognized worldwide as a teaching qualification for teachers of English as a second language (ESL). The TEFL/TESOL program will show you how to effectively teach English to non-native speakers, and will equip you with both the theoretical and practical concepts required to teach English anywhere in the world.

Máximo Nivel's accredited 150-hour program includes 100 hours of classroom instruction and 25 hours of practical teaching and observation and an additional 25 hours of required self-study and research outside of the classroom. Both intensive and fun, the TEFL/TESOL program provides you with comprehensive training in a professional and supportive environment, and is available as a 4-week/onsite course or hybrid online/onsite course.

Following the TEFL/TESOL program you can apply for both volunteer and paid positions. Positions are available throughout Peru, Costa Rica, South America, Central America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Healthcare

Máximo Nivel's health projects provide volunteers with the opportunity to work in hospitals, clinics, and with special projects providing healthcare to disadvantaged and at-risk people in Peru and/or Costa Rica. Volunteers work alongside doctors, nurses, therapists, and other medical professionals in urban or rural areas.

Depending on your medical experience and Spanish language skills you may be asked to assist with various procedures such as delivering babies, suturing wounds, and giving vaccinations. Some volunteers may help with vaccination and public health campaigns.

Placement in health projects requires notarized documentation of your medical school, nursing school, or other medical credentials.

Medical placements ARE available for people without medical training. These volunteer projects are generally located in an urban hospital or clinic and often involve working with children who have mental or physical disabilities. Volunteers will generally help feed, bathe, and play with the children; and may be asked to assist in physical therapy.

CLINIC/HOSPITAL

Medical volunteers assist with general check-ups and examinations of patients, as well as assist in triaging emergency patients and possibly in traveling to patients' homes in rural areas to help with vaccinations and/or to care for patients who have become immobilized. Many volunteers will also work firsthand with patients struck with tropical diseases.

Depending on the volunteer's ability to conduct themselves in the Spanish language and the expertise they demonstrate, the clinics will let you work as independently as possible.

Here is an excerpt from a volunteer-doctor in Peru:

I found this both humbling and empowering. That they can practice the quality of medicine that they do with the financial restrictions they face is very impressive. I felt it was very clever [of them] to have me work in topical medicine as it is very visual given my limited to non-existent Spanish. To me, anyone volunteering at the clinic is afforded an extraordinary window into medicine in Peru and they can make a real difference. [Volunteers] bringing additional money can also make an extraordinary difference as the cost of an X-ray is only \$6.00 and medicine is \$1.00, yet a number of patients cannot afford these small amounts, which could be life changing.

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Conservation

Peru and Costa Rica are two of the most bio-diverse countries in the world. Opportunities abound for conservation projects in the Rainforests of Costa Rica and Peru and in Peru's Andean mountains. Máximo Nivel offers unique, tailor-made volunteer projects including:

- Biodiversity inventories
- Eco-Tourism work in protected areas
- Turtle Project (Costa Rica only)
- Animal care
- Re-forestation
- Eco-Agriculture

REFORESTATION

These projects help rural communities and small villages to reforest areas that have lost native flora or fauna – encouraging and working with the local inhabitants to recover native species of trees, plants, and animals.

Volunteers work with professional environmentalists and other professionals, and project work includes some travel as well as office hours for planning and study. Depending on the volunteer's ability to conduct themselves in the Spanish language and the expertise they demonstrate, the project supervisors will let you work as independently as possible.

ANIMAL CARE

Volunteers work on special projects including biodiversity inventories, turtle and/or bird conservation and other protection projects for rare and endangered animal species. These projects take volunteers from high in the Andean mountains to the warm and tropical Caribbean coast of Costa Rica and include university-run zoos designed to protect, breed and re-introduce certain species back into the wild.

Volunteers work with professional organizations and perform their duties side-by-side with scientists and other volunteers who are dedicated to these critical animal protection projects.

AGRICULTURE (PERU ONLY)

Volunteers work in a small mountain community called SallaFalla. The project is an eco-agro project, which was originally begun by the University in Cusco and the McKnight Foundation in the U.S. The project is based around the large number of potatoes that exist in the mountains, and which provide the basic sustenance for the mountain communities. Growing methods and the sharing of seeds has become a major issue, resulting in widespread loss of knowledge from generation to generation and loss of seed stocks in many regions.

Volunteers work with the villagers during their annual harvest and planting seasons (depending on the time of year), and will work side-by-side with them as they tend their crops. Most villages speak some Spanish, but it is their second language; their native language is Quechua. Volunteers on this project must be prepared to *rough it*.

Construction

Volunteers on construction projects work on repairing or building a new home or school for orphaned children or for a rural village. Construction work will be physically demanding, including digging, removing dirt, carrying bricks, mixing cement, plastering, painting, cleaning, and various other needs related to construction. Local Peruvians will work side-by-side with volunteers.

Working hours are normally Monday – Friday from 8:00am to 12:00pm and 2:00pm until 4:00pm, though this may vary based on weather, project needs, and construction schedule. At all times you will be supported by in your in-country coordinators, but they will not be onsite at your project. There will be a Peruvian foreman leading construction, who will determine your work program.

Volunteer Expectations

Costa Rica and Peru offer environments that are simultaneously beautiful and challenging for foreign visitors. Peru truly is the archeological capital of the Americas and offers numerous natural environments to enjoy, from coastal desert to highlands, to rainforest, while Costa Rica is the jewel of Central America and offers visitors both Pacific and Caribbean coasts, rainforest, and more. At the same time, Peru and Costa Rica are developing countries, and volunteers must bear in mind that there are occasional power failures, water shortages, temperature fluctuations and other uncontrollable situations.

As well, Peruvians' and Costa Ricans' conception of "time" can be difficult and frustrating for those accustomed to a more structured life. Work can often be delayed or interrupted because of holidays, weather, vacations or unexpected events. Volunteers need to remain flexible, patient, and good humored. When traveling anywhere, it is best to leave behind your preconceptions and what you're used to - and enjoy the differences. After all, that's why you're traveling.

The volunteer experience is a commitment that includes a willingness to overcome challenges of various sorts. In cases where volunteers are experiencing difficulties, we strongly encourage creative and collaborative solutions. If you are put in an uncomfortable position, every effort will be made to accommodate you, but it is also important that volunteers remain flexible and understanding. Open-mindedness and patience will go a long way toward ensuring an enjoyable volunteer experience.

Schedule

We recommend that you begin your volunteer experience with the optional 1-week or 2-week crash course in Spanish language. Although most projects do not require Spanish, some basic language skills will go a long way in making you more comfortable at your project site and for getting around your selected destination - Peru or Costa Rica.

Most volunteers work between four to six hours per day. Depending on your project site this is generally from 8:00am/9:00am until 12:00pm/1:00pm and then there may also be some work (optional or required) in the afternoon. Please note that volunteers who are Teaching English generally do not work in the mornings, but do work during the afternoons and evenings from 4:00pm to 8:00pm, though this varies from project to project.

Things to Bring

When traveling anywhere, it is best to leave behind your preconceptions and what you're used to - and enjoy the differences. After all, that's why you're traveling.

The key to packing for a trip to Peru is to pack for a variety of conditions. The best way to deal with the extremes that Peru has to offer - the intense sun during the day, the cold mountain nights, and the heat and humidity of the Amazon Basin - is to dress using several layers.

The key to packing for Costa Rica is to prepare for a warm and often humid climate. The coastal areas are steamy and hot with lots of sunshine; and the San Jose (Central Valley) region is warm by day and cool by night with intermittent sunshine and light rain.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST – PERU

- Day pack
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Hiking boots
- 2 pairs of pants (lightweight)
- 2 T-shirts
- 1 short-sleeved shirt
- 2 long-sleeved shirt
- 1 pair of shorts
- Thermal underwear
- Fleece jacket
- Hat or cap
- Towel and personal bath kit
- Sun block, lip balm, sun glasses
- Camera

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST – COSTA RICA

- Day pack
- Comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots
- Sandals
- 2 pairs of pants (lightweight)
- 2 T-shirts
- 3 short-sleeved shirts
- 1 long-sleeved shirt
- 3 pairs of shorts and bathing suit
- Hat or cap
- Towel and personal bath kit
- Sun block, sun glasses
- Camera

STUDY MATERIALS

- Laptop computer (if possible)
- Notebook and pen
- Spanish-English dictionary

Spanish Language

Máximo Nivel does not require volunteers to speak Spanish. Indeed, almost all projects are accustomed to hosting foreign visitors – and it's your help that is needed not your Spanish language skills. Note that medical placements are a notable exception as your Spanish language skills will determine the level of independence you'll have in your medical project.

Visas

A valid passport is required to enter and depart Peru and Costa Rica. You must also provide evidence of return or onward travel. U.S. and European citizens do not need a visa for a tourist stay of up to 90 days or less.

When entering Peru and/or Costa Rica, you should specifically ask for a 90 day stamp in your passport. This will be sufficient to cover most volunteers and interns to the end of their project – if you are on an extended project visa renewal is easy to do via an overnight trip to Bolivia or Panama or purchasing an extension at the immigration office.

Máximo Nivel – Executive Team

Máximo Nivel’s executive team is here to help you. We are in charge of, amongst other things, arranging for you to be met at the airport, welcoming and orientating you, and arranging standard and non-standard accommodation. During your course of study, the executive team is continuously available for help and consultation, and to make sure that your stay is comfortable and enjoyable and that our Native Spanish Program consistently meets the highest standards.

Ken Jones

Executive Director of Máximo Nivel, Ken has dual-citizenship in Peru and the U.S. Born and raised in upstate New York and southern Louisiana, Ken has made Peru and Costa Rica his homes for more than 4 years now. He speaks English and Spanish fluently, and has more than 15 years of experience living and working in various parts of the world - including Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Ken has a Masters in Organizational Development and an MBA in International Business.

Eliza Raymond

Director of International Programs, Eliza is originally from England but has lived all over the world. She speaks English, Spanish and French fluently, as well as basic German and Russian. She has a Masters degree in Tourism and is TEFL certified. Eliza has been working for Máximo Nivel since April 2007.

Chris Larsen

Executive Director of Máximo Nivel-Arequipa, Chris is a U.S. citizen with permanent residency in Peru. Chris was raised in Wisconsin, but lived for many years in Arizona and Southern California. He served in the United States Air Force from 1984 to 1993. Chris is a fully-certified teacher in the states of Arizona and California, and has worked as a classroom teacher, mentor teacher, and coach for nearly 10 years. Chris has a Bachelor’s in Education, a Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction Development.

Tom Kearin

Director of Operations for Máximo Nivel, Tom was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts, and now makes his home in Cusco, Peru. Tom is an ex-corporate Vice President turned ESL teacher. He has more than 18 years of experience in technology companies and consulting. Tom has traveled most of the world and has spent the majority of his time in South America and Europe. Tom has a Bachelor's in Accounting, an MBA in Finance, and is a certified accountant (CPA) in the states of Massachusetts and Nevada.

Mark Deming

Mark is Máximo Nivel’s General Manager in Cusco, Peru. Mark graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor’s in Political Science and Latin American Studies. He also completed a 1000 hour post-graduate course in TESOL at Seattle Pacific University. Mark has traveled and taught in Spain, Central America, and South America. Mark is fluent in both English and Spanish and also speaks conversational French.

Housing

Most volunteers stay at **The Family House Bed & Breakfast.**

The Family House bed and breakfast offers accommodations in similar to a traditional family-stay, but with more independence and privacy. Volunteers stay in shared rooms with one or two other volunteers. Your stay includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner Monday through Sunday. Guests are given a key to their room and to the house and are free to come and go as they please. There's lots of opportunity to practice your Spanish with Juanita (the house mother), Mauricio (the chef), Mercedes, and Giovanna. Laundry services are available for a small extra fee. The Family House is within walking distance (10-20 minutes) from the Máximo Nivel office.

Note that depending on the project and availability of housing, volunteers may stay with a host family or hostel.

For volunteers who prefer private or shared apartments or housing in a hostel or hotel setting these options are available and this may increase or decrease your project cost (see page 17).

Traditional Family-Stay

Family-stays are all with pre-approved families and include breakfast and dinner Monday through Saturday. All of our host families are middle-class and live in homes and areas that are attractive. All family-stays include a private room and most include private bath. Many of the families have been hosting international travelers for years. Guests are given a key to the house and are free to come and go as they please, but they must respect the routine and rules of the family. All family-stays are within walking distance (10-25 minutes) or within a 5-minute taxi ride from the Máximo Nivel office.

Private Apartment

Our private apartments are all modern, very comfortable, and fully furnished. Apartments come with equipped kitchens including plates and utensils required to live comfortably and cook for yourself. All apartments are very centrally located and are within easy walking distance or a short taxi ride to the Maximo Nivel offices.

Shared Apartment

Like our private apartments, our shared apartments are all modern, comfortable, and fully furnished. Shared apartments all have 2 private bedrooms, though the bath is usually shared. The apartments are fully furnished with equipped kitchens including plates and utensils. All apartments are very centrally located and are within easy walking distance or a short taxi ride to the Maximo Nivel offices.

Hostel

There are also many inexpensive hostels throughout Cusco and you may elect this option if you want to save money while still remaining 100% independent. Máximo Nivel works with three different hostels, all of them clean and safe with excellent service and amenities including TV rooms, 24-hour kitchens, and more. All hostel accommodations include private rooms with private bath. All hostels are a 5 to 15 minute walk from the Máximo Nivel office.

Hotel (3-Star)

Cusco and San Jose have a great deal to offer in terms of hotels, ranging from 1-star to 5-star accommodations. Máximo Nivel works with two 3-star hotels, both of which are

modern and comfortable with all the necessary amenities plus breakfast included. All hotel rooms are private with a private bath. If you desire more luxurious accommodations please request the hotel option when you register.

Meals

Volunteers are provided with three meals a day. A full breakfast is served every morning, and normally includes eggs, cereal, fruit, yogurt, tea and coffee, and other breakfast foods. Lunch is a light affair of soup or sandwiches; for volunteers working during lunch hours a box lunch will be prepared for you. Dinner is a more social affair as volunteers all gather together and talk about the day's activities. Dinner generally includes a small appetizer, main course of meat and/or pasta, salad and vegetables, Peruvian rice and/or potatoes, and a sweet desert.

Vegetarians and other people with dietary restrictions can be accommodated. Please advise us ahead of time when making your reservation.

Volunteers who prefer to stay in apartments, hostels, or hotels do NOT receive meals or will have limited meal service. Corresponding discounts (or charges) are detailed on page 17.

Telephone & Internet

Internet and telephone services are available at the Máximo Nivel offices seven days a week. Whereas computer and high-speed Internet access are *free*, international phone calls require a calling card.

Projects based in the rainforest or in rural settings will not have the same phone and Internet service as Cusco, Arequipa, and San Jose. Volunteers must be prepared for intermittent service or no service in these areas. In the most rural projects the only communication available is by shortwave radio.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is located in Central America and borders Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. A chain of volcanoes and mountains - part of the Andean-Sierra Madre chain - runs the length of the country and separates the Caribbean Sea on the east coast from the Pacific Ocean on the west coast.

Of all of the places on earth, Costa Rica is by far one of the most exotic. The country offers unparalleled natural beauty, active volcanoes, rainforests, and a wide range of national parks and eco-tourism. In addition, Costa Rica has over 1,000 miles of gorgeous white-and-black sand beaches, copious amounts of sunshine, world-class sport fishing, snorkeling and surfing!



Population: 4,160,000

Geography: 51,100 Km²/19,730 miles²

Costa Rica is approximately the size of West Virginia.

The highest point is Cerro Chirripo 3,810 meters/12,460 feet a.s.l.

Capital: San Jose

Founded: 15 September 1821

Currency: Colon (CRC)

U.S. dollars are accepted in all places of business and are available at most ATMs. Other currencies can be easily exchanged.

President: Oscar Arias Sanchez

Language: Spanish

Weather:

REGION	ALTITUDE	TEMPERATURE		GENERAL DESCRIPTION
		MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	
San Jose	1,170 m/3,839 ft above sea level	24°C / 75°F	27°C / 80°F	In May-November (Rainy Season) warm with intermittent rain and sunshine with Spring-like conditions. In December-April (Dry Season) warm with very little to no rain and Spring-like conditions.
Pacific	0-400 m/0-1,312 ft above sea level	29°C / 84°F	32°C / 90°F	The May-November (Rainy Season) and December-April (Dry Season) seasons are less pronounced small showers possible year-round. Generally hot, humid and lots of sun year-round.
Caribbean	0-400 m/0-1,312 ft above sea level	29°C / 84°F	32°C / 90°F	The May-November (Rainy Season) and December-April (Dry Season) seasons are less pronounced and the Caribbean coast is receives a great deal of rain year-round. Hot, humid and sunny year-round.
Highlands	2200-3800 m / 7,218-12,467 ft above sea level	10°C / 50°F	27°C / 81°F	In May-November (Rainy Season) warm with intermittent rain and sunshine with cool to warm temperatures. In December-April (Dry Season) warm with very little to no rain and Spring-like conditions.

San Jose – Costa Rica

San José is the capital city of Costa Rica and is the gateway to both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts as well as Costa Rica's rainforests. The City is located in the Central Valley and has a population of 1.2 million people. Situated at 3,773 feet above sea level the city lies between three volcanoes.

San Jose is a modern city and benefits from the most developed economy in all of Central America. The city is an eclectic mix of modern and colonial architecture and is interestingly both fast-paced and laid-back. Being a cosmopolitan city, San Jose offers visitors great nightlife, theater, shopping, and tourism.

Getting Around

San Jose uses a modern grid system for its streets and avenues, so even though it is not perfect in its organization it is generally easy to find your way around. Note that people do not use street numbers, but instead use landmarks and other buildings to refer to where something is located – so directions are given as “100 meters south and 50 meters east...” – with a little practice the system actually works quite well. While in the Capital, you have access to the best public transportation in all of Central America, though if you prefer not to take busses, taxis are also available 24 hours a day – all registered taxis in San Jose are red and are equipped with meters. If you're walking, Costa Ricans are very open and friendly and are always willing to lend a hand with directions; and if you can't figure out where you are, find a local church – every church in Costa Rica faces west.

Eating Out

San Jose offers an excellent selection of both traditional Costa Rican food and international fare. In San Jose, you can enjoy delicious and inexpensive local meals at a number of restaurants and at the central market, while Mexican, American, and Japanese restaurants are also prominent and of very high quality. Prices range from as little \$2 for a huge plate of traditional food to very expensive and elegantly prepared international dishes. And of course don't forget to try Costa Rica's world-famous coffee.

Shopping

San Jose has a number of shops, malls, and art galleries, and here you can buy will excellent souvenirs, clothes, cigars, and coffee. The Central Market is also something not to be missed.

Nightlife

San Jose offers a large variety of restaurants, casinos, and dance clubs and has a lively nightlife as well as some good places to relax and listen to either traditional or modern music.

The first thing you will notice about Costa Ricans (Ticos) is their openness and friendliness – they are all excellent ambassadors for their country. That said, like any large city San Jose can present a number of dangers and you should never walk alone at night, and you should be careful with your valuables.

Peru

Peru is one of the world's greatest centers of ancient civilization. Prior to the invasion by the Spanish conquistadors, the country's diverse cultures and civilizations, that culminated in the well-known Inca Empire (Tawantinsuyo), were some of the most advanced in the world, and they left behind one of the richest collections of architecture, metallurgy, ceramics, and textiles known to man.

Peru is located in the west central part of South America, and is the 19th largest country in the world. It shares borders to the north with Ecuador, to the south with Chile and Bolivia, and to the east with Columbia and Brazil. Peru's geography, climates, and cultures are diverse due to the natural variation of its regions, which include the coast, the Andes, and the Amazon jungle.



Population: 27,483,000

Geography: 1,285,215 Km²/494,208 miles²

Peru is approximately three times the size of California. The highest point is Huascarán at 6,768 meters (4.2 miles) above sea level.

Capital: Lima
Founded January 18, 1535

Currency: New Sol (S/.)
U.S. dollars are accepted in all places of business and are available at most ATMs. Other currencies can be easily exchanged.

President: Alan Garcia

Languages: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara

Weather:

REGION	ALTITUDE	TEMPERATURE		GENERAL DESCRIPTION
		MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	
Lima	101 m/331 ft above sea level	16°C / 61°F	19°C / 66°F	In May-October cool, foggy days and cool nights. In November-April hot, sunny days and humid warm nights. High humidity.
Cusco	3,326 m/10,912 ft above sea level	01°C / 34°F	21°C / 70°F	In May-October (Dry Season) sunny, warm days and cold, clear nights. In November-April (Rainy Season) intermittent rain and sun during the day with mild, rainy nights.
Arequipa	2325 m/7628 ft above sea level	07°C / 46°F	19°C / 66°F	In May-October (Dry Season) sunny with warm to hot days and cool, clear nights. In November-April (Rainy Season) some rain, but still lots of sun during the day with mild nights. Low humidity.
Machu Picchu	2080 m/6824 ft above sea level	12°C / 54°F	25°C / 77°F	Partly cloudy sky in the mornings. Warm to hot temperatures during the day. Light to heavy rain in the afternoon or evening.

Cusco - Peru

Located in the south eastern Andes Mountains, Cusco sits at an altitude of 3,400 meters above sea level (11,000 feet). Cusco is the historic capital of the Inca Empire and is the gateway to the sanctuary-city of Machupicchu. Indeed, Cusco is one of the most spectacular highlights of South America.

Cusco is not a small mountain pueblo. In fact, Cusco is a cosmopolitan city of 400,000 people. As the tourism mecca of South America, Cusco is the most popular tourism stop-over in the region, with more than 600,000 international visitors per year. However, Cusco is one of those rare places able to preserve its unique character despite its prominence in international tourism.

Stately and historic, with stone streets and buildings that are built on Incan foundations laid down more than five centuries ago, the city buzzes with energy. Once the religious, political, military, and cultural center of the Inca empire, today Cusco thrives as one of the most vibrant cities in South America.

Getting Around

Cusco does NOT have comprehensive public transport. Most people walk or take taxis. "Combis" (shared mini vans) are available, but most visitors to Cusco will not find these comfortable or efficient. That said, Cusco is a small city, and walking in the warm sun is not something to be missed. As well, taxis are regulated - from 6:00am to 10:00pm taxis charge only S/. 2.00 (\$0.60) to go anywhere in the city; and S/. 3.00 (\$0.90) between 10:00pm and 6:00am.

Eating Out

Cusco has excellent food - all relatively inexpensive and some VERY inexpensive. In Cusco, it is possible to get a 3-course lunch plus drink for as little as S/. 3.00 (\$0.90). By eating in local restaurants, visitors can enjoy good food at very low prices, though caution is always advised, as food handling is different in developing countries compared to Europe or the U.S.

Shopping

Cusco is by no means a shopping paradise - certainly not in the same way as London, Paris, Milan, and New York. However, you will be able to buy excellent souvenirs as well as world-class alpaca wool products (sweaters, blankets, etc.) and traditional Inca textiles still produced by hand. Cusco and the surrounding villages are also famous for their handicraft markets. There are also open-air markets for great fruits and vegetables.

Nightlife

Most clubs and bars in Cusco are concentrated around the Plaza de Armas and in the San Blas district. Cusco has a lively nightlife with a wide variety of clubs and bars; Cusco also has some good places to relax and listen to either traditional or modern music.

Cusco is a safe city, but it pays to be vigilant, especially late at night. You should never walk alone at night, and you should be very careful with your valuables.

Arequipa - Peru

Arequipa is known as the White City for its beautiful white walls of sillar, a volcanic stone. The city lies at the foot of the Mount Chachani, Mount Misti, and the snow-capped Mount Pichu Pichu volcanos. Arequipa's Plaza de Armas was placed on the World Cultural Heritage list by UNESCO, and includes Mixed Baroque churches and mansions from the Colonial Period like the Monastery of Santa Catalina. Arequipa is much more a colonial Spanish-feeling city than Cusco with its beautiful patios, and plazas, and the irresistible Arequipa-style cuisine.

The Colca River valley is just 3 hours and 45 minutes from Arequipa, and the Colca Canyon is one of the most extraordinary destinations in Peru. Visitors can also do many types of adventure sports in the valley such as mountain biking, trekking, and white water rafting. And, at the Cross of the Condor, visitors have the chance to see the majestic flight of the condors.

Getting Around Arequipa

Arequipa does NOT have comprehensive public transport. Most people walk or take taxis. "Combis" (shared mini vans) are available, but most visitors to Arequipa will not find these comfortable or efficient. That said, taxis are inexpensive and most charge between S/. 2.50 (\$0.75) to S/. 3.00 (\$0.90) to go anywhere in the city.

Eating Out

Arequipa is known for its own style of Peruvian cuisine. Some not-to-miss traditional Arequipan dishes include: Chupe de Camarones (chowder of shrimp, milk, eggs, and oregano), Rocoto Relleno (hot peppers stuffed with chopped beef, cheese, and milk and served with mashed potatoes), Soltero (salad of fresh cheese, lima beans, onions, olives, tomatoes, and peppers), Ocopa (boiled potatoes covered with a fresh cheese sauce, lima beans, onions, olives, and peppers) and many more.

Shopping

Arequipa has decent shopping. While still nowhere near what Lima offers in terms of selection and style, Arequipa does have a small mall, complete with brand name clothes, and a Cineplex. Arequipa also has some of the best Alpaca wool products in Peru, produced by hand.

Nightlife

Arequipa has good nightlife in the old quarter of the city, with plenty of bars, restaurants, and discos. There are numerous bars just up the road from the Plaza de Armas on Calle Santa Catalina, and most offer a good happy hour with drink specials early in the evening. Sunday through Wednesday it is usually pretty quiet, but with a little looking a good time is almost always to be found. Thursdays through Saturdays, most places are crowded as the weekend heats things up a bit.

Overall, Arequipa has a wide variety of clubs, bars, and restaurants, and the vast majority closer to international standards than other areas of Peru; the city also has some good places to relax and listen to rock, jazz, and blues.

Project Prices - 2008

Peru

	1 Week	2 Weeks	3 Weeks	4 Weeks	5 Weeks	6 Weeks	7 Weeks	8 Weeks
Program including Family House	\$550	\$1,060	\$1,250	\$1,460	\$1,620	\$1,780	\$1,940	\$2,100
Program including Family Stay	\$600	\$1,160	\$1,390	\$1,600	\$1,780	\$1,960	\$2,140	\$2,320
Program including Shared Apartment	\$510	\$980	\$1,130	\$1,335	\$1,445	\$1,555	\$1,665	\$1,775
Program including Private Apartment	\$545	\$1,050	\$1,235	\$1,460	\$1,575	\$1,685	\$1,800	\$1,915
Program prices including Hostel and Hotel accommodation are available upon request.								

Costa Rica

	1 Week	2 Weeks	3 Weeks	4 Weeks	5 Weeks	6 Weeks	7 Weeks	8 Weeks
Program including Family Stay	\$550	\$1,100	\$1,350	\$1,550	\$1,750	\$1,950	\$2,150	\$2,350
Program including Shared Apartment	\$520	\$1,040	\$1,260	\$1,450	\$1,635	\$1,820	\$2,005	\$2,190
Program including Private Apartment	\$595	\$1,190	\$1,485	\$1,700	\$1,945	\$2,190	\$2,435	\$2,630
Program prices including Hostel and Hotel accommodation are available upon request.								

Depending on the time of year and your specific project, discounts may apply to the above prices.

Some people ask, “...why do you charge for volunteering...?”

Please understand that your volunteer project includes a number of benefits (see box below). As well, Máximo Nivel has a staff dedicated to delivering and servicing our volunteers and our project partners. The services we provide and the staff and support we dedicate to offering volunteer projects means that we must charge money for these programs.

MÁXIMO NIVEL’S PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- Personalized volunteer placement based on your skills and interests.
- Safe, comfortable housing and three meals per day Monday – Sunday.
- An experienced English-speaking program manager who will provide orientation, supervision and guidance throughout your stay.
- 10 hours per week of intensive Spanish instruction.
- Unlimited free access to high-speed internet and modern computers plus office-wide WIFI access Monday – Sunday.
- Free Salsa lessons every Saturday at our institute.
- Monthly get-to-know-you party with open bar and dancing at our institute.
- A toll-free emergency hotline in the U.S.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to speak a foreign language in order to enroll in the program?

It is NOT necessary to speak Spanish before you arrive in Peru and/or Costa Rica, although it is always helpful. Máximo Nivel is available to help you with anything and everything you need. For specialized placements, such as medical and health related projects, volunteers are required to take at least a 7-day crash course in Spanish. We strongly recommend Spanish classes for volunteers staying longer than 4 or 5 weeks.

Is there an orientation program?

When you arrive in Peru or Costa Rica, you will be met at the airport. You will receive a full orientation when you arrive. If your project is not near the Maximo Nivel office or you are based in another city there will be a welcome orientation by phone with our country coordinator and you will also receive orientation at your project site.

Does the program provide insurance for volunteers?

Volunteers are usually covered by their medical insurance in their home country. However, this is not always the case, and volunteers should check with their insurance company. Emergency medical insurance IS available at an additional cost for those who need it.

Can I change my volunteer placement if I am dissatisfied?

Máximo Nivel will of course make every effort to change a volunteer placement if the reasons for the request are genuine. Volunteers should note that it is only possible to change a project based on availability. When making a change, we will make every effort to find a similar type of project for you. Cancellations are NOT possible.

Can I come with a friend, or can I be placed with other volunteers?

Máximo Nivel allows volunteers to come with a friend or even with a large group. You may be placed in the same or nearby homes, lodges, and projects. It is important to inform us in advance, so that complete arrangements can be made for all of you.

What should I expect with regard to living conditions?

Depending on your project destination, volunteers are provided housing in either volunteer residences, hostels, or with host families. Various accommodations offer different amenities, but all are comfortably furnished with 24-hour hot water, and excellent security. Depending on availability, rooms may be shared or private, and bathrooms are generally shared. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided Monday - Saturday. Laundry services are offered for an additional fee.

How many people will I be living with?

Depending on your volunteer project you may be the only person living with a family of 3 to 5 people, or you may be in a residence with 3 to 5 other volunteers.

How long do volunteers usually stay? Is there a minimum stay required?

Máximo Nivel allows volunteers to stay 1 week or more; 1 week is the minimum length of stay. This allows sufficient time to get accustomed to the living conditions and then time to implement and assist with volunteer projects in a productive way.

How much extra money should I bring?

Carrying extra money depends on your personal spending habits, and you may want some extra money for personal expenses, sight-seeing, souvenirs, etc. Generally speaking, we recommend bringing about \$ 250.00 (USD), or just bring your credit card. Note, travelers checks in Peru tend to be problematic to use and are NOT recommended.

The best method for getting money is to simply use ATMs. Most banks in Peru and Costa Rica offer 24-hour ATM access.

Do I need a Visa to enter Peru or Costa Rica?

Depending on where you are from you may or may not need a special visa to enter Peru or Costa Rica. Most people, including those from the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Europe, automatically receive a 90-day tourist visa upon entering Peru and Costa Rica.

Will I have phone and Internet access?

Máximo Nivel's offices have international phone and Fax service. As well, our clients and students have free access to our computer centers with high speed internet and WiFi connections; and all the computers run Windows XP and MS-Office 2003; access is provided Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Projects based in the rainforest or in rural settings will not have the same phone and Internet service as Cusco, Arequipa, and San Jose. Volunteers must be prepared for intermittent service or no service in these areas. In the most rural projects the only communication available is by shortwave radio.

What should I do in case of an emergency?

If you experience an emergency while you are in Peru, please contact Máximo Nivel immediately.

Is the water safe to drink?

Tap water in Peru is NOT safe for drinking, BUT water straight from the tap in Costa Rica is excellent. Tap water can be purified by boiling it or adding purification tablets, such as *Micropur*, which can be purchased at most pharmacies. Generally speaking, bottled water is easy to buy in stores. Showering and brushing your teeth with water is rarely a problem.

Do I need vaccinations?

It is recommended that travelers to Peru and Costa Rica have vaccinations for Hepatitis A and Tetanus. Typhoid Fever and a malaria prophylactic are sometimes recommended, but necessary. Other immunizations may be necessary depending upon the circumstances of your project and personal medical history. Anti-malaria medication is NOT required, but is recommended if you are planning to visit the jungle. You should visit a travel-health clinic or your physician at least four weeks before arriving in Peru.

Should I bring any medicine?

It is recommended that you bring medications for travelers' diarrhea and altitude sickness. The best way to prevent traveler's diarrhea is to be careful of the food and water that you eat and drink. *Ciprofloxacin* (Cipro) or *Levofloxacin* (Levaquin) are good choices for treatment of traveler's diarrhea.

In Peru, *Acetazolamide* is the drug most often used to prevent altitude sickness. The usual dosage is 125 milligrams or 250 milligrams two or three times daily starting 24 hours before ascent, and continuing for 48 hours after reaching altitude.

See your physician for specific recommendations.

Are Peru and Costa Rica safe countries?

Yes, and you can relax while you are here.

That said, it's still important to use common sense.

- ▶ Be careful if traveling on buses, as petty theft is common.
- ▶ Ask for a receipt when you store your backpack or luggage.
- ▶ Do NOT carry your passport or any credit cards and cash that you will not need.
- ▶ Use only registered taxis.
- ▶ Do not walk into unknown areas by yourself at night.
- ▶ Avoid any contact with drugs, as laws are very strict in Peru.

Contact Máximo Nivel

International Course Enrolment Centres for Registration & further Information: □

English Speakers:

www.LanguageCourse.net
 info@languagecourse.net
 Tel. US: +1-800 613 63 45
 Tel. UK: +44-709 200 15 64

German Speakers:

www.LanguageCourse.de
 info@languagecourse.de
 Tel. +49-221-8000 94 29□

Spanish Speakers:

www.Cursos-de-Idiomas.com
 info@cursos-de-idiomas.com□
 Tel. +34-932688775

Italian Speakers:

www.Corsi-di-Lingua.it□
 info@corsi-di-lingua.it□
 Tel. 800 125 755 (numero verde) □

□

Russian Speakers:□

www.LanguageCourse.ru□
 info@languagecourse.ru □

French Speakers:□

www.Cours-de-Langues.fr □
 info@cours-de-langues.fr □
 Tel. France: 0800 767 700 (numéro vert)□
 Tel Canada: +1-800 713 7135 (numéro vert)

Dutch Speakers:□

www.Talen-Cursussen.nl□
 info@talen-cursussen.nl □

Japanese Speakers:□

www.Discount-Ryugaku.com□
 info@discount-ryugaku.com□

Swedish Speakers:□

www.LanguageCourse.se□
 info@languagecourse.se□

Payment Options by Internet



Payment Options in Peru and Costa Rica



THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING SPANISH

SPANISH IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD

By population, Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in the world, second only to Chinese. (Summer Institute for Linguistics, 1999)

There are 332 million native Spanish speakers in the world.

15% of the population in the U.S. speaks Spanish as their native language.

LANGUAGES MAKE YOU MORE VALUABLE

A person who knows 2 languages has the value of 2 people.

After English, Spanish is the most valuable language to know.

Your salary and your career opportunities increase when you speak a second language

START LEARNING SPANISH TODAY!

Studying Spanish shows you are committed to bettering yourself and your career.

Studying Spanish shows you are educated, knowledgeable, and worldly.

Studying Spanish today is a commitment to yourself, to your career, and overcoming procrastination.