

VISIONS Peru

June 29 - July 26 (28 days / 4 weeks) • \$4,650

August 3 - 22 (20 days / 3 weeks) • \$3,750

SACRED VALLEY OF THE INCA
IMMERSION IN SPANISH AND QUECHUA CULTURES
EXPLORE CUZCO, MACHU PICCHU, INCAN RUINS
PISAQ AND OTHER MARKETPLACES
65 TO 95 HOURS SERVICE CREDIT

Peru claims 84 of the world's 103 known ecological zones and 28 different climates, placing it among the five countries with the greatest biological diversity in the world. Stretching along its Pacific Coast is a continuous coastal desert at whose southern end begins the Atacama, one of the world's harshest deserts; its eastern boundary lies within the lush Amazon Basin. The Andean peaks rise to their most majestic height in the heart of Peru's southern interior in which lies our home base of Urubamba (population 8,000). It is 8,000 feet up in the Sacred Valley of the Andes, about one hour from Cusco, the old Inca capital and *un centro de turismo*. Evidence of the formidable Inca Empire is everywhere in the highlands where Quechua, the ancient Inca language, is widely spoken.

Historically, the sierra region is home to Peru's poorest. In collaboration with local community sectors and in the *faena* tradition, we build schools and classroom additions, irrigation canals, wells, potable water septic systems, even the valley's only fire station. Partnering with ProPeru Service Corps, we assemble and install *cocinas mejoradas* (cleaner-burning stoves) in highland homes. Our *talleres* (internships) with small sustainable businesses engage us with traditional weavers, potters, carpenters and bee keepers.

Spanish language skills inevitably increase conversing with Nico, our projects manager, with our cook Neyda while helping her prepare a meal, and with the *maestros* who work with us daily, teaching adobe building techniques.

Touring, trekking and camping are weekend pastimes. We explore Ollantaytambo, the immense fortress of Saqsaywaman whose walls boast 125-ton stones, and PISAQ market where merchants have been selling their wares for over four centuries and. In Cusco we discover gilded art adorning Spanish Cathedrals, walk historic Plaza de Armas and browse the shops.

We hike to the Maras salt mines, an ancient sprawling complex of shallow pools dug into the hillside filled with naturally saline waters. We journey to Chicon Mountain to camp under massive snow-capped peaks. We go to Machu Picchu to spend the day, starting our journey by train, passing centuries-old aqueducts, tombs and terraces on the way. We overnight in a hostel on the banks of the Urubamba River, and rise before dawn to be at Machu Picchu's Sun Gate just as the sun's first beams break over the majestic peaks.

Participants in this language immersion program must have a minimum of two years of high school Spanish or equivalent proficiency.