

International Service Project to Peru

In May 2018, Office of Student Life and the Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement will sponsor a one-week service project in Peru. The dates of travel are May 19–May 26, 2018. The trip is open to all Mount Wachusett Community College students that will be returning for the fall 2018 semester and will be 18 years of age and eligible to obtain a passport by March 21, 2018.

Why Peru?

According to Nations Encyclopedia, despite years of promises and billions in social programs, the bulk of Peru's population (54%) lives in poverty, according to the *CIA World Factbook*. Of the poor, the [UNDP](#) estimates that 19% live in "absolute poverty," meaning they survive on less than US\$1 a day.

Peru has historically been one of the poorest and most unequal countries in Latin America. Although government statistics report that only a third of the Peruvian population lives below the national poverty line. The average GDP per capita is \$5,000 (USD), a sum that the majority of U.S. citizens can barely imagine earning in a month or two in order to make ends meet.

According to World Vision, In addition to economic concerns, Peru faces challenges in education, healthcare, and child protection.

The Host Organization

True Nature Education (<http://truenatureeducation.com/abroad/>) is our host organization. Their non-profit division is the Creer Service Organization. Trips coordinated through Creer have a holistic approach inclusive of service side-by-side with local people, the opportunity to explore local culture, various activities such as a dolphin experience or snorkeling, as well as geotourism. Geotourism is defined as a best practice form of tourism which sustains and enhances the character of a place such as culture, heritage, and well-being of local residents and of course the local environment. This organization was chosen after an extensive screening process because it provides the safest, most affordable and most comprehensive service and cultural experience to its participants.

The Project

True Nature Education has worked closely with MWCC to plan an educational and exciting travel opportunity. A sample itinerary (subject to change) is as follows:

May 19 – Travel from Logan Airport in Boston to Cusco, Peru – Despacho Ceremony (Peruvian welcome ceremony) and dinner.

May 20 – Orientation, waterfall hike, service project # 1 at local school, evening mediation

May 21 – Service project # 2 at local school, evening cultural lecture

May 22 – Depart for Pisac to Trek and Market

May 23 – Morning yoga, service project # 3 at local school, cooking class

May 24 – Machu Picchu

May 25 – Free time to explore and pack, closing ceremony

May 26 – Travel from Cusco, Peru to Boston

Application Information and Registration Fee

There will be eight student (8) spaces available for the trip. Two chaperones from MWCC will accompany students: Shelley Errington Nicholson (Director of Brewer Center), and Greg Clement (Associate Dean of Students).

For those interested in applying, the completed application is due **October 13** in the Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement. Applications are also available on line at the Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement website <http://mwcc.edu/democracy/>. Applications may be submitted online or printed copies can be picked up at the Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement. There are two parts to the application including an essay.

A total of \$2,200 is due by February 1, 2018. **The first deposit of \$350 is due upon acceptance.**

Budget breakdown:

Total Cost: \$2200 per student

These fees will cover the flight to Peru, transportation while at the site, housing, and all meals. Participants are encouraged to receive the proper vaccinations and medications needed to travel to Peru the cost of these immunizations can range from \$100-\$200 per person (usually covered by insurance) and are not included in the program cost. Part of the trip planning will include an information session on health issues. A small amount of personal spending money should be taken for souvenirs and optional activities. Travel insurance is built into the cost of the program.

Accommodations

We will be staying at the Sacha Munay Retreat Center and Learning Institute in Pisac, Peru. <http://sachamunay.com/>

Fresh, clean, safe drinking water will be available at all times. All food is prepared with U.S. stomachs in mind and will be safe to eat. Food allergies and other concerns such as vegetarian or gluten free will be accommodated whenever possible as long as they are communicated to the site in advance of the trip.

Expectations and Requirements of Volunteers

Participants are expected to exhibit sensitivity to the host culture. As learning is a primary goal of the International Service Project, participants will prepare for the trip by completing reading packets, attending orientation meetings, and participating in a pre-service activity. In addition, participants are expected to facilitate and participate in reflections about the service and activities. Prior to the trip, all members of the group are expected to participate in all fundraising activities. All participants must be covered by a travel/health insurance plan, which includes emergency medical evacuation. It is the individual's responsibility to obtain a passport and any necessary visas. After being advised of the health risks associated with travel, the participant is responsible for making decisions regarding appropriate health precautions.

Those selected for the trip will automatically become members of the new MWCC Cultural Engagement and International Service Club and as such will be expected to participate in club related activities and projects including a pre-service project with a local community agency to be conducted in the spring.

All participants must attend a series of **mandatory** meetings leading up to the trip. Topics such as safety, fundraising, Peruvian culture, poverty and the importance of service.

Safety

While in Peru, it is imperative that all students follow the safety guidelines put forth by the College. These guidelines are based on Consular Reports and information from the United States and Peruvian governments. The following are some of the precautions being taken:

- a.) Travel alone will not be permitted;
- b.) Travel at night and on dark, unsafe roads will not be permitted;
- c.) Travel will only be conducted with the whole group, a tour guide, a driver, and private transportation; and
- d.) While in Peru students will abide by all rules established by the MWCC staff.

Mount Wachusett Community College places great importance on the safety of the participants during the trip and therefore takes numerous precautions to ensure a successful trip. The following are some of the precautions being taken:

- a.) Participants will be registered with the American Embassy in Peru;
- b.) Lodgings at both sites are secure and located in safe areas; and
- c.) Consular and Travel Safety Reports will be reviewed and evaluated constantly.

Prior to the trip, there will be several meetings to address issues of safety, including personal property such as valuables and passports, appropriate dress, and culturally appropriate behavior that will alleviate drawing attention to oneself. When in another country, you are often surrendering many of the rights and freedoms that United States citizens take for granted. This should be kept in mind at all times during the trip.

The site has an emergency evacuation plan in place, for individuals and/or the entire group. In addition, our host site will have a phone with international calling capabilities in case of an emergency. Please note that Wi-Fi and cellular service may be anywhere from unreliable to non-existent depending on our specific location during the trip. Please let those at home know you may be out of touch for the entire trip and not to be concerned if they do not hear from you.

Application Process

Applications will be reviewed by a committee comprised of MWCC faculty and staff. In addition, this committee will be conducting half hour interviews with candidates who meet the minimum qualifications. Please note students who are selected for participation in the International Service Project to Peru must remain in good standing with MWCC up to and throughout the duration of the trip. International Service Project Coordinators retain the right to decline participants who do not demonstrate necessary qualifications and requirements for the trip.

If you have any questions about the above information or about the application process, please contact Shelley Errington Nicholson at mnicholson5@mwcc.mass.edu or 978-632-9219 (room 152) for assistance.



MWCC International Service Trip 2018 Application

Demographic and Personal Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Phone: _____

Area of Study: _____

Student ID#: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Students who do not achieve the age of 18 years by May 19, 2018 are not eligible for participation in this activity!

Are you eligible for a U.S. passport? (You can check here: <http://www.dhs.gov/how-do-i/apply-us-passport>)

- Yes
- No **(If no, you are not eligible to apply!)**

Language:

Native Language Fluency: _____

Other Languages Spoken: _____

Have you ever traveled outside of the U.S.?

- Yes
- No

If yes, where and when?

The following questions can be answered LEGIBLY in the space provided below, or you can attach a separate paper – if you do so, please make sure your name is on the paper.

Please use the space below to list your previous and current volunteer activities – this includes MWCC related and non-MWCC related service and volunteerism, as well as MWCC and community club and organization participation.

What do you personally want to get out of an international service experience?

How will an international service experience compliment your academic studies and future career plans?

Why this particular opportunity and why now?

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Please provide at least three fundraising ideas below:

1.
2.
3.

Traveling internationally with a group of people can be stressful. How do you handle stress?
What do you do when you feel you are becoming overly stressed or overwhelmed?

Finally, what are you most nervous about in terms of this trip?

Anything else that you would like to tell us?

By signing this application, the applicant acknowledges that they are responsible for their own health insurance, immunizations and other travel precautions should they be selected to participate in the international service project.

Student Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____