



UP CLOSE BOLIVIA, La Paz – Bolivia Volunteering for Groups 2017

Service Projects for Groups: Support to community based projects and intercultural experience of living and working alongside local people in semi-rural villages with indigenous Aymara people.

Location: Mallasa and Jupapina, on the outskirts of La Paz,

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References and resources

- Webpage: www.upclosebolivia.org
- Please click here to see a short video which presents many of the projects and describes what life is like as an Up Close Bolivia volunteer <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE2RAEK4KGg>
- For updates, photos and posts from our current volunteers you can also visit the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UpCloseBolivia?ref=hl>

UP CLOSE BOLIVIA is based on the concept of “RECIPROCIDAD” which means “reciprocity” - a concept at the heart of Andean culture. It is all about giving back and contributing in a way which enriches both the person who is giving and the person who is receiving equally. The essence of our work is to ensure the needs and expectations of our volunteers and the local community projects are mutually met and both parties are enriched and strengthened.

Who are we?: UP CLOSE BOLIVIA is a family run enterprise, it is deeply rooted in the local community and we seek to give the volunteers a true sense of belonging and welcome into our village. The founders of UP CLOSE BOLIVIA were also instrumental in the set up and sustainability of the Valley of the Moon Children’s Centre and are part of the Board of the Equine Therapy centre Fundación Porvenir.

Where we are based and our Relationship with our community: The villages of Mallasa and Jupapina are 30-45 mins by bus from the city centre. They are semi-rural villages, surrounded by mountains and Mallasa is home to the Valley of the Moon an important local and international tourist attraction as well as parks and the city zoo. There is a very strong sense of community - perhaps the most enriching aspect for our volunteers to date has been participating in this small community and getting a very real flavour of Aymara indigenous culture. As very few people speak English it is also the perfect place to learn / improve your Spanish!

We work with our neighbours to strengthen the local community based tourism and we will work with them to provide your group with opportunities to go trekking and explore the villages and mountains where we live. We will facilitate intercultural encounters with local people, so that the international students have a chance to learn about the differences and also similarities of growing up in Bolivia in their own country of origin.

Our work responds to the expressed needs of our community organisations with which we plan and implement our work. We are involved in many projects (see below). We focus especially on the rights and well-being of the most vulnerable sectors of



the community, such as children and young people. Through our work we seek to create an environment which respects and promotes their right to thrive in a safe and green environment which also offers increased potential for employment, optimising and sustaining the wide diversity of natural and human resources available.

We have been receiving volunteers for many years and we love to see them meet new challenges and channel their energy to leave a lasting impact on themselves and on our community. The projects we will implement with the group will complement on our longer term development projects and they are designed to be intensive both in terms of time and energy to achieve tangible results for the group and the community.

Responsibilities as a Volunteer to Live in Community:

The boundaries between the projects we work with, the community, the family home and the volunteer accommodation are very intangible. We seek to live with the same values of mutual respect in the projects, our volunteer houses and the community. So it is very important that volunteers treat each other, their team, and especially local people, with kindness and great respect. For example, in small communities like Mallasa and Jupapina, the taxi driver, or the lady in the local shop probably have children in the projects where we work. If volunteers behave inappropriately in the community it will reflect badly on Emma and Rolando's family, the organisation and fellow volunteers of Up Close Bolivia. Our good relationship with the community enables us to work and reach our goals. If those relationships are hurt then it hurts everything we do. It takes years to build these relationships and they could be destroyed through the action of one of our volunteers. Re-establishing the relationship after breaking trust and respect would be very difficult.

We are accountable to the Community to deliver results:

Whilst the most enriching aspect of being an UCB volunteer is living and working in the community, we are also very concerned about meeting our objectives and ensuring that we are meeting the expectations of the community. We are in constant communication with our neighbours and ask for honest feedback and suggestions from them. We expect all our volunteers to commit to share our objectives and work towards agreed results. We may take you out of your comfort zone, but we will be there to support you and will share with you the feeling of satisfaction when you finish your placement with us.

The Projects We Support

Up Close Bolivia works with community organisations on several projects throughout the year. The arrival of groups is a wonderful opportunity to make an impact and have a product in a few days which complement our on-going and more long term goals. With groups we often use art, particularly murals, occasionally theatre and workshops etc., to raise awareness about local sustainable and ecological development and on specific issues such as children's rights, recycling, nutrition, sustainable use of water etc. We can combine this with information to the group about the Bolivian context, development issues and cultural customs and events with local schools and organisations. Ongoing Projects – if the group is only here for a short period it may not be possible to have hands on work with children, due to their vulnerable situation, quick turn over of many volunteers can upset them. However, there may be opportunities to work on more manual tasks with these projects

- 1. The Valley of the Moon Children's Centre.** This happy community-run centre for 60-80 local indigenous children from poor backgrounds, aged six months to four years, in Mallasa. The role of the volunteers is to give practical support to the local women who work in the nursery and keeping the nursery clean. Volunteers provide educational support in the Montessori based curriculum, preparing additional activities and lessons to reinforce certain aspects of language development, social skills etc. Some volunteers also help out in the busy kitchen, to prepare wholesome and nutritious meals and work in the Nursery Green House. The Valley of the Moon



Here is a video made by one of our volunteers about the Children's Centre

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0Xum1kAwYM&feature=youtu.be>

Here is a blog from some past volunteers which gives a good overview: <http://twooregonians.com/2012/02/social-service-excellence-the-valley-of-the-moon-childrens-centre/>

2. Support to Equine Therapy Centre – we support a local foundation that provides therapy using horses to children and young people with special needs, with physical and mental health disabilities and children with behavioural issues. This is a new and very innovative project in Bolivia. It is located in a nearby neighbourhood about 30 minutes by local bus. Volunteers provide practical support to take care of the horses, the infrastructure and also receive training to assist in the therapy sessions. This project may involve work at the weekends which can be compensated with rest/ travel days Monday – Thursday.

2. Support to La Paz Zoo: Our volunteers work alongside the zoo team on a programme which improves the quality of life for the animals and birds, many of which have survived trafficking or abuse and come to the zoo as a refuge. Volunteers take part in the enrichment side of animal care. This includes working in the kitchen to prepare interesting foods and snacks for the animals, creating enrichment “toys” for the animals as stimulation and occasionally altering or maintaining cages and arenas to increase general stimulation and welfare. It is an opportunity to work in a beautiful environment alongside very friendly and knowledgeable committed zoo staff. It also provides a very unique opportunity to interact more closely with animals than you are normally able to have by just visiting a zoo, and to learn fascinating information about many unique species. For safety reasons volunteers are never expected to interact closely with any of the larger or more dangerous species. Volunteers also contribute to environmental education programmes supported by the zoo. Volunteers at the zoo can work full or part time.

4. Children's Refuge with children and young children who have suffered violence and abuse.

Our volunteers run sessions which build on their own skills and expediences, for example art through, music, dancing, sports activities etc in the afternoons. Although there are reasonable restrictions regarding the appropriateness of activities for these vulnerable children, this project provides volunteers with the most creative freedom and opportunity to use their personal skills. Volunteers are in charge of designing and planning one to two hour activity sessions and the children hugely enjoy the variety of activities they receive from different volunteers. The children love the arrival of the volunteers as these sessions provide a welcome distraction from the emotional and legal turmoil they find themselves in. We need very creative and responsible volunteers to work in this project due to the particular vulnerability of the children. Volunteers with any specialist therapy skills are particularly welcome. The sessions with children and youth take place in the afternoons.

5. English teaching in local schools: The valley in which Mallasa and Jupapina are located, and the surrounding countryside are very beautiful and attract many international and national tourists, whilst thousands of visitors [come to see the Valley of the Moon, La Paz Zoo and the local parks and valleys](#). As a result, there is great potential here to develop community-based tourism, and we require volunteers to come and teach English in the local school.

Up Close Bolivia works to build capacity among local people so that they can take advantage of opportunities in local tourism. We provide support to local family-run initiatives and our volunteers also run English classes at the local schools. The students are very enthusiastic and the classes serve as a cultural exchange between the students and volunteers, where the students present and share their culture and identity, as well as having the opportunity to learn about similarities and differences with foreign cultural practices. The objectives of these classes are: to increase their vocabulary, to promote their interest and appreciation about cultural practices and customs in Bolivia and across the world, and finally to promote self-esteem of students to express themselves in front of a group.

6. Environmental and art work: Up Close Bolivia works with community organisations, using art, particularly murals, occasionally theatre and workshops etc., to raise awareness about local sustainable and ecological development and on specific issues such as recycling, worm composting and mini greenhouses. On a regular basis, we offer our services to local organisations to improve and clean up the environment, this may involve tree planting, clearing rubble, rehabilitating playgrounds and schools, amongst other activities. Click on these links to see more photos of some of our art and environmental work [Click on these links to see more photos of some of our art and environmental work](#)



<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.363222043718266.83858.341087705931700&type=1&l=41b7551ec6> Murals
[More Murals Painting the local school](#)

7. Football Coaching: Football is the national sport in Bolivia but until recently it was exclusively for boys. Up Close Bolivia supports a local football school in La Paz that aims to integrate boys and girls, fostering not only technical expertise but also key values around team work, gender equity and communication. The football school is situated in a nearby neighbourhood about 30 minutes from the volunteer houses and the support sessions take place three times a week.

Team Preparation

Skills Required / to be learnt

No previous experience or specific skill sets needed – the team will be instructed before completing any task and will be accompanied by our local staff.

Equipment

No specific equipment is needed. All project materials will be provided by Up Close and is included in the budget.

Team Preparation - In country before project phase

Orientation

Up Close will provide pre departure information and an orientation session upon arrival which will cover logistics, security information, cultural context and information about the projects.

Costs

A personalised budget will be prepared for each group to cover

Accommodation
 Project Materials
 Local Transport
 Coordination Costs
 Option Excursions of Cultural Events
 Optional

- Welcome group dinner
- Departure/farewell dinner bbq
- Meals everyday or if the group prefers they can prepare meals themselves.

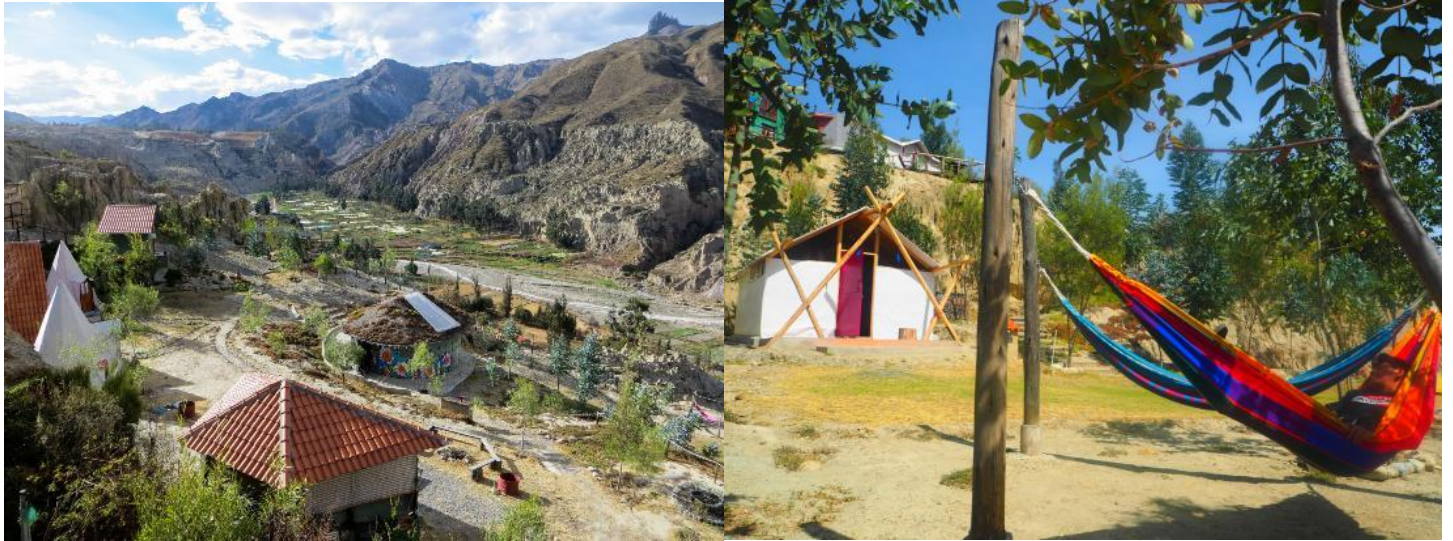
There is an option item of distinctive protective clothing – t shirts and caps. We recommend this as it is also important for the community to be able to identify the volunteers easily as we will be working with schools and young children.

Accommodation & Facilities for Students and faculty Staff

There is accommodation available in our volunteer houses for up to 16 people in the grounds of our family home with some of the best view in La Paz over the mountains and down in the valley below. There are single and shared rooms – depending on availability. The houses are very comfortable and fully equipped, with kitchen, shared living areas, hammocks, Wi-Fi, cable TV and DVD machines and access to the family washing machine. Photos of accommodation:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.44221132486023.97273.341087705931700&type=1>

For large groups we offer accommodation at Colibri camping and Eco-lodge which is on the same mountain side
www.colibricamping.com



The campsite features:

- Meeting Room
- 2 Tipis – one with 2 single beds and the other with a double bed
- 2 cabins capacity for 4 people in each – one double bed and 2 single beds in each.
- Space for up to 10 tents,
- Brand new bathrooms – guaranteed hot showers
- A fully-equipped covered outdoor kitchen, including a gas cooker, fridge/freezer, coffee press, juicer, toaster, double sink, new plates, cups, pots, pans
- Free WIFI
- Fire-pits and BBQs
- Electrical sockets for charging
- Free purified water
- Hammocks
- Shaded mirador with chairs/table
- Book exchange
- Shop, including Bolivian artisanal beers, wine, cheese and essentials
- Hot tub (100Bs)
- Breakfast service
- Laundry service

Responsible and Reciprocal Tourism

As part of our ongoing support to local community-based, responsible and reciprocal tourism, we can link you up with wonderful opportunities to explore more of the local culture, customs and landscape of Bolivia.

Bolivian Cookery Class: Learn To Cook Traditional Bolivian Food

Our neighbours are wonderful skilled cooks and very happy to share with you their passion for preparing some of the most delicious Bolivian dishes – including vegetarian options. They will bring all the fresh local ingredients you need to cook and later you can enjoy the fruits of your labour with a 2 or 3 course meal. The class lasts around 1.5 – 2 hours.

Trek down from Devil Tooth Mountain Trek and Visit to Rural Indigenous Community

From the volunteer houses you see the amazing rock of the Devil's Tooth mountain. We can give you printed instructions to follow the path back to the campsite. The trek is down-hill and quite easy apart from some eroded areas where you need to take care. The trek takes 3-5 hours and has some amazing views of the Andes. There is also the option of having lunch before the descent with the local indigenous women's organisation, a local community based tourism initiative supported by Up Close Bolivia. 80Bs for taxi up to the base of the Muela. Optional Lunch with local indigenous women

Horse Trek up to the Devil`s Tooth Mountain

Our friend Ivan has beautiful horses and is a true Bolivian Cowboy. His Ranch is in the foothills of the Devil`s Tooth Mountain which towers above Colibri Camping. You will ride through the most amazing landscape with views towards the city in the distance and the glaciers of the Andes, up to the fields and the village at the base of the Mountain. The ride takes about 2 hours and is suitable for intermediate riders. You should bring; long trousers, boots and sun block.

Quad biking in the Valley of the Moon or the Valley of the Sun

Our neighbour Doña Brigida and her family run the most established Quad Bike Tour Company in La Paz. Local guides will accompany you on an unforgettable, adrenalin filled ATV tour of four wheeling off road adventure through valleys, villages and up to the high plains where, on a clear day, you will have breath-taking views over the Andes and glaciers. The tours start with a practice and instructions on how to drive the quad bikes. You should bring; warm clothes, long trousers, boots and sunglasses. The tour lasts about 2 hours and you can ask us about options for longer trips if you are interested.

Try Local Restaurants and Bolivian delicacies

If you are here over the weekend, make the most of the many wonderful local restaurants which draw people to come from the city to enjoy traditional Bolivian cuisine. We will give you a list of restaurants and help you make a reservation, so that you can have lunch in one of the family restaurants situated nearby

Yummy Options include:

- *Spicy Guinea Pig served in the house of the patio of the Carvajal family on the corner of calle 4 in Jupapina.*
- *Watia: a traditional meal of meat and vegetables cooked under the earth using hot rocks and firewood.*
- *The Spicy Lamb dishes called T`impu, served by our neighbour Mrs.Mechi in her popular and bustling restaurant on the main road. Her yellow painted restaurant is open every day.*
- *Not so traditional - but a real gem and open every evening (apart from Mondays) is Il Portico, the best pizza in La Paz cooked in a wood burning oven and prepared by Marcello, an Italian who has also made his home in Jupapina.They are closed on Mondays, but open every other evening from 7pm onwards, also open at lunchtime at the weekends. You can order in pizza.*
- *In the neighbouring village of Mallasa there are several little cabins near the entrance to the zoo which serve typical Bolivian food and during the weekend you will be spoilt for choice by the number and diversity of restaurants which mainly cater for local tourists.*

Discover Local Tourist Attractions

The Valley of the Flowers - Start the day with a walk down to the Valley below the campsite, where our neighbours cultivate flowers for the local markets. (You do not need a guide for this, just make sure you take sun screen, good walking shoes and a bottle of water for the climb back up).

La Paz Zoo - Just 5 minutes from Jupapina is the La Paz Zoo, which Colibri also supports through our volunteer programme, working to improve the quality of lives of the animals through the animal enrichment programme. The zoo is in a beautiful setting and is home to many Andean and Amazonian animals and birds, the majority of which have been rescued from trafficking and cruel treatment.

The Valley of the Moon - A 10 minute walk from the zoo uphill you will come to one of the main tourist attractions in La Paz - The Valley of the Moon which is so called due to the amazing and quite bizarre rock formations, is like nowhere else on earth and you can spend an enjoyable hour walking through the valleys and crevices and perhaps spot some *viscachas*, local Andean hares.



And If you want to Go Furth Afield....

We are happy to share our tips and insights into travel in Bolivia. We can help you to book excursions, tickets and tours for you to the Salt Flats, the Bolivian Amazon and Lake Titicaca.

Additional Services Provided

1. Coordination prior and throughout the duration of the programme with local community authorities, and grassroots organisations and local service providers
2. Logistical support and acquisition of all materials necessary for the projects
3. On-site staff representation throughout duration of program, with duties including but not limited to:
 - Supporting program participants onsite from arrival to departure, including 24/7 emergency assistance
 - Being available to address any logistical or programmatic problems that arise at any time
 - Accompanying group on excursions but not on daily travel to placement sites
 - Having experience in local community
 - Speaking local language in order to communicate with individuals who do not speak English
 - Coordination of Group service activities
4. Loan of cell phones for faculty/staff leaders rented by onsite team with initial set-up of minutes (Leaders responsible for cost of topping up minutes)
5. Acceptance letters or other materials necessary to secure entry clearance/visas (if applicable)

Items not included in the Proposal

- Airfare to/from host country
- Daily transportation to service sites
- Health Insurance
- Visa and passport fees (if applicable)
- Language classes: We can set up Spanish classes with experienced teachers – the intensity and level of these classes will be set up to suit your needs