

ABOUT QUECHUA 9

Map.....	8	Abbreviations	
Introduction.....	9	used in this book.....	10

BASICS 11

Pronunciation	11	Negatives.....	41
Vowel Sounds.....	11	Prepositions.....	41
Consonant Sounds.....	12	Conjunctions.....	42
Stress.....	15	Numbers & Amounts	43
Intonation.....	16	Cardinal Numbers.....	43
Grammar	17	Ordinal Numbers.....	44
Word Order.....	18	Fractions.....	45
Articles.....	18	Amounts.....	45
Root Words.....	18	Times, Dates & Festivals	47
Suffixes.....	18	Telling the Time.....	47
Nouns.....	24	Days of the Week.....	48
Pronouns.....	25	Months.....	48
Adjectives.....	29	Seasons.....	49
Adverbs.....	30	Dates.....	50
Demonstratives.....	31	During the Day.....	51
Possessives.....	32	Festivals &	
Verbs.....	32	National Holidays.....	52
Modals.....	37	Christenings & Weddings....	55
Questions.....	39	Toasts & Condolences.....	56

PRACTICAL..... 57

Getting Around	57	Around Town	69
Finding Your Way.....	57	Looking For.....	69
Directions.....	59	Telecommunications.....	70
Addresses.....	60	Sightseeing.....	71
Taxi.....	60	Going Out.....	75
Buying Tickets.....	62	Accommodation	79
Bus & Car.....	62	Finding Accommodation.....	79
Train.....	65	Requests & Queries.....	80
Boat.....	65	Complaints.....	83
Driving.....	66	Homestays.....	83
Bicycle.....	67	Departure.....	86

Shopping	87	Materials	91
Looking For . . .	87	Colours	92
Making a Purchase	87	Toiletries	93
Bargaining.....	89	For the Baby	93
Souvenirs	89	Smoking.....	93
Clothing	90	Sizes & Comparisons	94

SOCIAL 95

Meeting People	95	Family	117
You Should Know.....	95	Questions & Answers	117
Greetings & Goodbyes.....	95	Family Members	120
Civilities.....	96	Talking with Parents.....	121
Forms of Address.....	97	Talking with Children.....	123
Apologies	98	Interests & Activities	125
Body Language	99	Common Interests.....	125
First Encounters	99	Sport.....	126
Making Conversation.....	100	Music.....	128
Nationalities	102	Talking about Travelling ...	131
Cultural Differences.....	103	Staying in Touch	131
Age.....	105	Trekking	133
Occupations	106	Getting Information.....	133
Feelings.....	108	On the Path.....	136
Breaking the		Camping	138
Language Barrier	109	Weather.....	139
Religion	110	Geographical Terms	141
		Fauna	142
		Flora & Agriculture	145

FOOD 147

Through the Day.....	147	Regional Specialities.....	154
Special Diets	147	At the Market	158
Eating Out	148	Drinks.....	161
Andean Staple Dishes.....	152		

SAFE TRAVEL 163

Health	163	Special Health Needs	168
With the Healer	163	Parts of the Body.....	169
Ailments.....	164	Emergencies	171
Women's Health.....	168	Police.....	172

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL 173

Communication & Cultural Differences.....	173	Transport	174
Community Benefit & Involvement	173	Accommodation.....	175
Environment.....	174	Shopping.....	175
		Food	176
		Sightseeing.....	176

DICTIONARIES 177

English–Quechua Dictionary.....	177	Quechua–English Dictionary	203
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INDEX 223

QUECHUA



ABOUT QUECHUA

Travelling in the Andes will be much more enjoyable and worthwhile if you can speak some Quechua, the language of the Incas, also known as *runasimi*, **roo·nah·see·mee**.

Despite the official status of Spanish, which was brought to Latin America by the conquistadors, you'll find that Quechua is spoken in six South American countries: Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina and Chile. Most Quechua speakers are found in the Andes, although some live in the jungle or on the coast.

Quechua is actually a family of languages that has been spoken by many different peoples in the Andean region long before the Incas began to consolidate their empire in the 13th century AD. The Inca empire reached the height of its development in the 15th century, just 70 years before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1532. The Incas adopted Quechua as their official language in order to facilitate communication with their multilingual subjects.

Today, there are approximately 24 different dialects of Quechua, divided into regional branches known as Northern, Central and Southern Quechua. All these varieties combined are spoken by approximately eight to 10 million people, making Quechua the most widely spoken indigenous language in the Americas.

IN CASE I DON'T SEE YOU ...

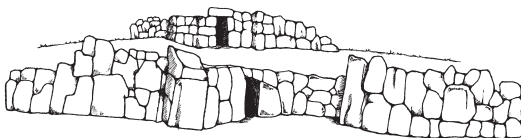
The expressions *Wuynus diyas*, *Wuynas tardis* and *Wuynas nuchis*, for 'Good morning', 'Good afternoon' and 'Good evening/night', were borrowed long ago from Spanish and have become much more common than the original Quechua words.

In this phrasebook, we use the Cuzco variety of Quechua, a southern Peruvian dialect (in the Southern Quechua linguistic branch), which is the most widely spoken in the Quechua family. It's well understood in the Peruvian departments of Apurímac, Ayacucho, Cuzco, Huancavelica and Puno, in all of Bolivia, and in the province of Santiago del Estero in Argentina, despite small differences. It can be partially understood in all other Quechua-speaking areas of the Andes, although there are some minor regional variations in pronunciation, word endings and vocabulary. You should be able to get your basic message across with Cuzco Quechua wherever you travel in the Andes.

By speaking some Quechua, you'll break down invisible barriers and show people that you have a genuine interest in their culture and language. Hearing it spoken by foreigners, however haltingly, will be appreciated by native speakers. They'll gain through seeing their language valued by visitors, and your experience will be enhanced through the goodwill shared with them.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

adj	adjective	pl	plural
adv	adverb	prep	preposition
f	feminine	pron	pronoun
inf	infinitive	sg	singular
m	masculine	v	verb
n	noun		



BASICS > pronunciation

Quechua is fairly straightforward to pronounce. Beside each word and phrase in this book, you'll find a simple pronunciation guide. It appears in colour and words are divided into syllables with a dot. The Quechua writing system is represented by italic letters.



VOWEL SOUNDS

In spoken Quechua, there are five vowel sounds that correspond to the three basic written vowels (*a*, *i* and *u*) of the official Quechua writing system, as approved by the Peruvian government in 1985.

Sound	Description	Quechua
ah	as the 'a' in 'father'	a
ee	as the 'ee' in 'see'	i, iy
e	as the 'e' in 'bet'	i (when found before or after consonants q, q' or qh)
oo	as the 'oo' in 'hoot'	u, uw
o	as the 'o' in 'got'	u (when found before or after consonants q, q' or qh)