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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 ...

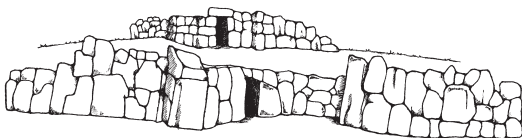
The expressions *Wuynus diyas*, *Wuynas tardis* and *Wuynas nuchis*, for 'Good morning', 'Good afternoon' and 'Good evening/night', were borrowed long ago from Spanish and have become much more common than the original Quechua words.

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)