

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



May 2008

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.



A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Trainee:

Welcome to the Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic. Although we are just names to you at this point, the staff will become your main advice and support team while you serve the Kyrgyz Republic. Notice that we don't say serve "in" the Kyrgyz Republic, but "serve the Kyrgyz Republic". Everything you do, the energy and skills you contribute, the understanding and patience you demonstrate, the leadership which people observe in the way you adjust to life, roll with the punches, manage yourself in tough times...all of these will be manifestations of your contribution to the Kyrgyz Republic and the Kyrgyz people.

More than curiosity about the Kyrgyz Republic or a desire to experience Central Asia will be required of you as a Trainee and Volunteer. Maintaining a professional appearance and attitude will contribute to your success. The schools, organizations and agencies in which you will work, and the principals, directors, students, and parents who are prepared to welcome you, have high expectations.

We have conducted significant site development and laid the groundwork for viable partnerships. You can count on our preparing meaningful and challenging assignments; what we're counting on is your strong sense of motivation. Thus, the desire to be a Volunteer and to serve MUST be your primary motivation in coming to the Kyrgyz Republic.

We take our responsibility to support you seriously and are eager to help you be a successful Volunteer and contribute to the long and honorable history of Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic and the Peace Corps worldwide. In 2007, we celebrated 14 years of Volunteers serving in the Kyrgyz

Republic. Your Volunteer colleagues here now are working hard to maintain our reputation of service. When you arrive, you will begin to make your own mark and contribute to this long tradition.

Since September 11, 2001, the Peace Corps has become more important than ever. The challenges are still enormous and the resources are few. When Volunteers were evacuated from the Kyrgyz Republic in September 2001, we learned from our Kyrgyz partners just how much they value the program and the Volunteers. They are excited that the Peace Corps has returned and will warmly welcome you.

In this former republic of the Soviet Union, you will find that there is plenty to be done. You should come with an openness and willingness to adapt, to make new friends with the wonderful people of this country, and to learn to respect and love the people and culture of the Kyrgyz Republic.

I, and all the staff of Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic, look forward to working with you as a colleague in this endeavor.

Claudia Kuric
Country Director

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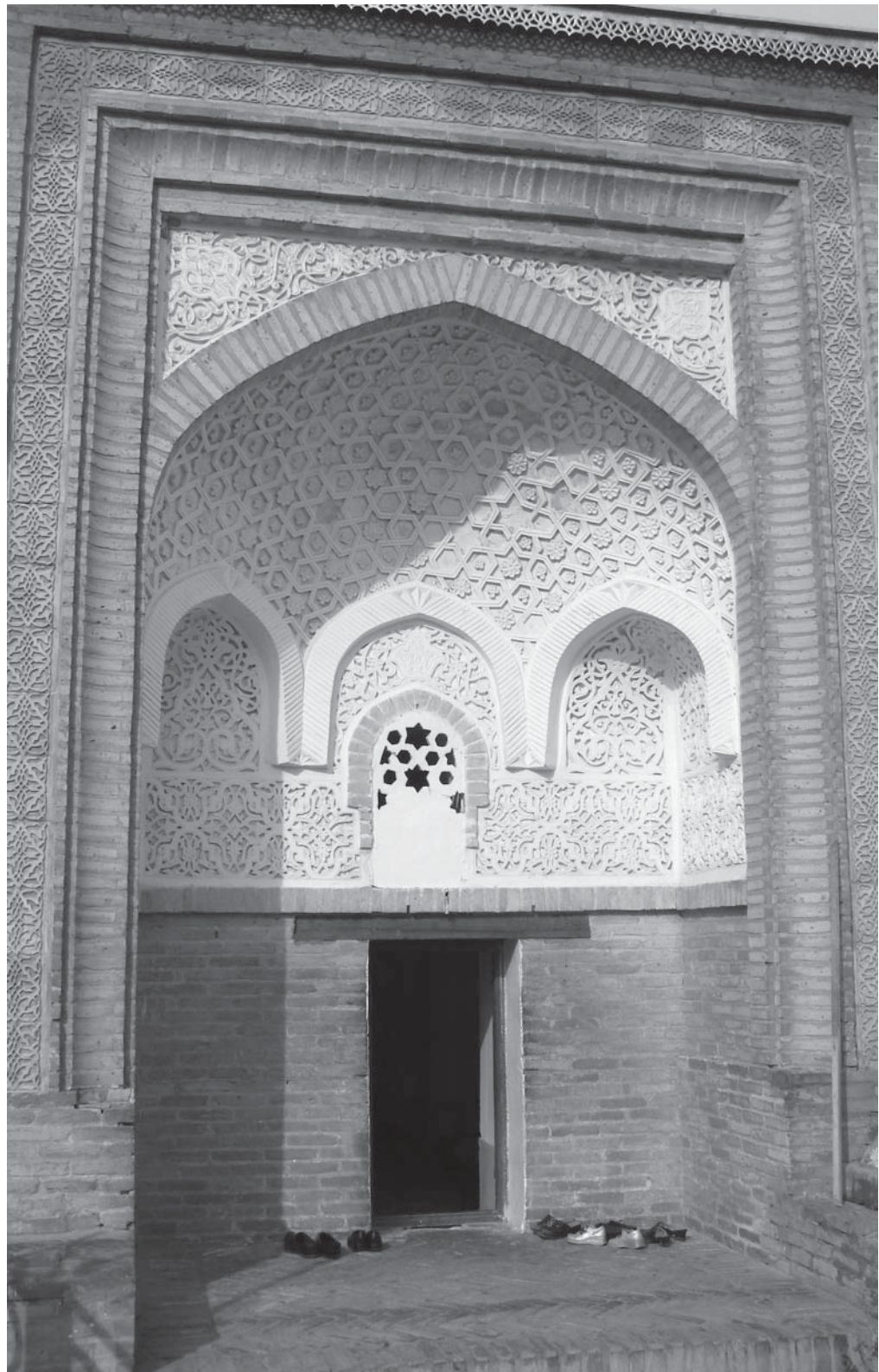
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PEACE CORPS/KYRGYZ REPUBLIC HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in the Kyrgyz Republic

Since the first Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in the Kyrgyz Republic in 1993, more than 500 Americans have served in the country. Volunteers have taught English, built the capacity of organizations and led sustainable community development projects throughout the country. Peace Corps' programs respond to requests from the government of the Kyrgyz Republic to assist with increasing the level of English competency among its teachers and students and to help organizations and communities develop capacity through sustainable development.

Fifty-three dedicated Volunteers were serving in small communities throughout the Kyrgyz Republic when they were evacuated as a precautionary measure after September 11, 2001. Prior to sending Volunteers back to the Kyrgyz Republic, the Peace Corps conducted a thorough safety and security review. Part of this work included reviewing the impact of the coalition military base at Manas Airport, located outside of the capital, Bishkek. The Kyrgyz people and government were very supportive of the Peace Corps, and three Volunteers returned in March 2002 to reopen the program. Today, there are more than 100 Volunteers serving in communities throughout the republic.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in the Kyrgyz Republic

Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic works in three primary areas: Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in secondary schools and universities; Sustainable Organizational and Community Development (SOCD); and Health Promotion (HP).

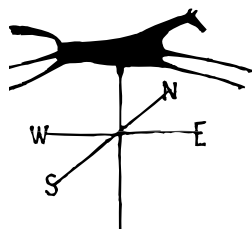
Volunteers in the TEFL sector primarily build the capacity of English teachers, teach the English language in secondary schools universities, and other educational institutions, and a few are also teaching history and literature to more advanced students. Volunteers serve as regular members of the teaching faculty in their schools and teach between 150 and 200 students each year. Most are also involved in extracurricular activities such as conducting English Clubs, HIV/AIDS education, computer training, and youth development through girls' or boys' clubs. TEFL Volunteers also work with Kyrgyz educators to develop language instruction resources and conduct training workshops in teaching methodology for teachers at all levels.

Volunteers in the Sustainable Organizational and Community Development sector are assigned to a variety of agencies and institutions across the country. Volunteers work with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government-sponsored community-based groups to increase their organizational capacities and assist local communities in promoting sustainable community development.

Volunteers in the new Health Promotion sector are assigned to work with health promotion units, health-focused NGOs and local health promotion schools in order to promote healthy lifestyles and health practices in the community. Volunteers address issues such as basic hygiene, women's reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and STI education, disease prevention, and Lifeskills education.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC AT A GLANCE



History

The Kyrgyz Republic is a beautiful, mountainous country in Central Asia that is bordered by Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. There is little contemporary documented history about the Kyrgyz people and their land, as the Soviets “Russianized” the indigenous ethnic groups and cultures across the Soviet Union. The Kyrgyz people are traditional nomadic herders who have often been subjected to the influences of foreign rulers and cultures due to their strategic location on the Silk Road.

The earliest known residents of the area that is now the Kyrgyz Republic were the warrior clans of Saka, also known as the Scythians. These gold-laden, nomadic horsemen traversed the land between the Black Sea and western China from about the sixth century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. From the sixth century to the tenth century, the Kyrgyz region was controlled by various Turkish groups, many of whom lived on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul, the second highest lake in the world after Lake Titicaca in South America. These groups, particularly the Turkic Karakhanids, introduced Islam to the area between the tenth century and twelfth century.

Historians believe that the ancestors of today’s Kyrgyz most likely came from Siberia’s upper Yenisey River basin and were driven south in the 10th century by the Mongol incursions into the region. Mongol influence continued until 1758, when the Manchus (of China’s Ching dynasty) defeated the Mongol Oyrats of the Zhungarian Empire, leaving the Kyrgyz people to continue their herding lifestyle in peace.

An important influence in the cultural development of the Kyrgyz region was the extensive trade route known as the Silk Road, which took 200 days to traverse in full. The Kyrgyz region, along the route's middle section, was one of the main stopovers for traders traveling from western China to the Mediterranean Sea from the second century to the thirteenth century, providing sources of transportation (horses and camels) and lodging for the traders.

Russians and Ukrainians soon began settling there. Repressive Russian policies, particularly land appropriation, led to open revolt throughout Central Asia in 1916. The Russians retaliated and drove one-third of the Kyrgyz population into neighboring China.

The Kokand khanate, based in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan, ruled the Kyrgyz during the eighteenth century. In 1865, the Russians, joining a number of allied Kyrgyz forces, defeated the Kokand khanate and gradually brought the Kyrgyz under the rule of the czar. The new rulers appropriated land for Russian settlers until the Kyrgyz revolted in 1916. Massacres ensued, resulting in the death of 120,000 Kyrgyz and prompting an additional 120,000 to flee to China. The Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created in 1926 and in 1936 became a republic of the Soviet Union known as Kirghizia.

Part of the Soviet Union for most of the 20th century, the Kyrgyz Republic declared its independence on August 31, 1991. Today, the country is a vibrant mix of Russian and traditional influences struggling for economic vitality. Once regarded as among the most conservative of the former Soviet republics, the Kyrgyz Republic is attempting to promote liberal economic policies and to integrate itself into the global community. However, poverty remains widespread, particularly in rural areas. Per capita income in the Kyrgyz Republic is one of the lowest in the former Soviet Union, with most people earning around \$300 per year.

Government

The Kyrgyz Republic's government is a unicameral parliamentary system with a strong executive branch. The legislative assembly consists of 75 popularly elected members who serve four-year terms. There are more than 10 political parties in the country. The presidential term is five years. The current president, Kurmanbek Bakiev, was elected in July 2005 after popular demonstrations earlier in the year led to the ouster of long-time president Askar Akayev. In November 2006, anti-government protesters took to the streets, calling for the president to resign and for lawmakers to amend the constitution to take some powers away from the executive office. As a result, lawmakers drafted a new constitution, which defused the crisis. Today, the government remains stable under the leadership of President Bakiev. The next presidential election is scheduled to take place in 2010.

Economy

The Kyrgyz people were largely traditional nomadic shepherds. However, the Soviet period led to the establishment of collective agriculture, and 200 collective farms operated in the Kyrgyz Republic prior to independence. Today, agriculture accounts for 40 percent of the country's economic output, and there are more than 29,000 private farms and almost 610,000 farmers. The major agricultural products include wool, leather, potatoes, sugar beets, poppy seeds, tobacco, fruits, grains, and medicinal plants. The government hopes to diversify the economy, with a focus on light industries, microelectronics, and tourism.

The country's transition to a free-market economy has not been without its trials. However, the economic reforms have resulted in several milestones: World Bank membership and Most-Favored-Nation trading status with the United

States in 1992; introduction of non-Soviet currency in 1993; observer status in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1993; becoming the first Central Asian country to receive International Monetary Fund funding in 1993; Asian Development Bank membership in 1994; and World Trade Organization membership in 1998.

People and Culture

The Kyrgyz think of themselves as the poets and artists of Central Asia. Nothing illustrates this spirit more than the *Epic of Manas*, the longest narrative poem in the world. Manas is a hero who, according to legend, unified tribal leaders long ago in the mountains and valleys now known as the Kyrgyz Republic.

About 5 million people live in the Kyrgyz Republic, mostly inhabiting the fertile foothills and plains north of the Tien Shan Mountains. A quarter of the population lives in Bishkek, the capital. The countryside of Manas comprises more than 80 ethnic groups from all over Asia and Eastern Europe. While the people are predominantly Kyrgyz, a significant number of Uzbeks live in the south and many Russians live in the north. Both Kyrgyz and Russian are the official languages.

While most of the Kyrgyz people are Muslim, Islam has a light influence on their daily lives. In the north, many people of Russian and European descent are Russian Orthodox Christians, but this religion plays a minor role in Kyrgyz culture.

The country has a very rich mix of traditions and customs. The Kyrgyz people are known for their felt and ceramic crafts and for their Silk Road-related history. Soviet culture fostered opera and ballet groups, theaters, and museums. Ancient tribal affiliations still govern social norms in many

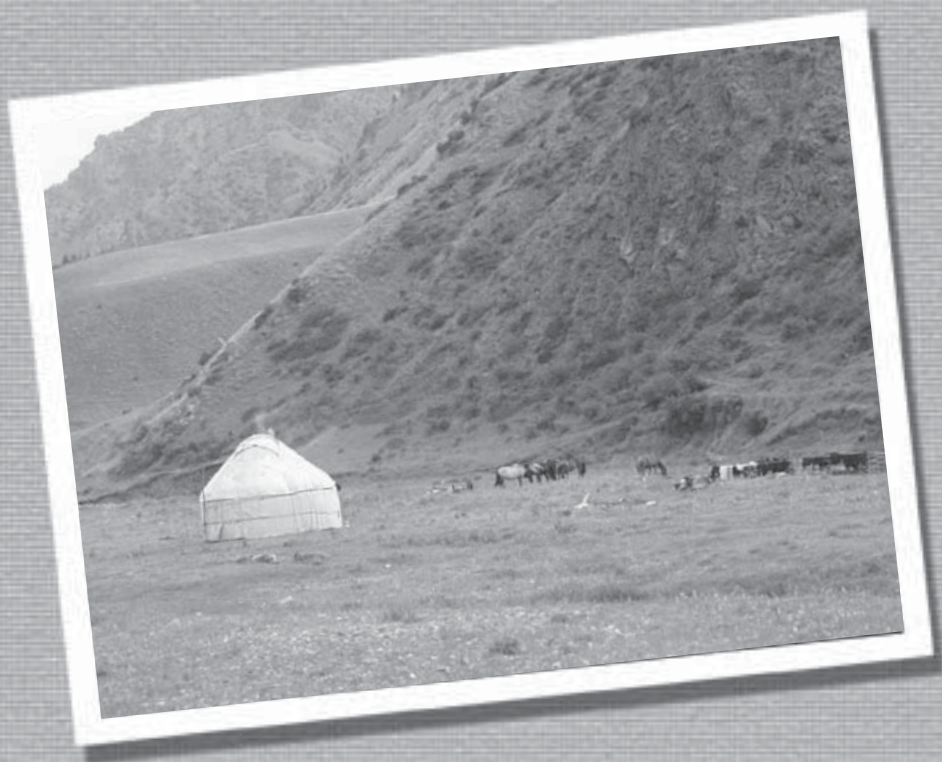
parts of the south, where you find more of a mix of western and traditional Uzbek and Kyrgyz cultures. Aging, Soviet-style towns define the north. Most people in Bishkek wear Western-style clothes and fret about the same things Americans do: Jobs (or the lack thereof), bills, and pothole-covered roads. Wherever you are in the country, though, you will find people proudly wearing traditional garments and hats, especially around the bazaars and taxi stands that cater to the Kyrgyz who travel into town from surrounding villages to sell their farm products.

In both rural and urban areas, Kyrgyz social life centers on the family. Many Volunteers live with a host family at their sites throughout their service and find this to be one of the most rewarding aspects of their Peace Corps experience.

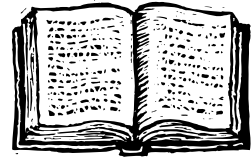
Environment

The country's rugged, snowcapped mountains define its landscape and weather. It can be cold in the winter, and there is usually snow in the northern plains and in the mountains to the south from December to February. The south is more temperate, and wild tulips bloom when mountain runoff and spring rains irrigate the land. Summers can be dusty.

The terrain provides many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, including white-water rafting, fishing, camping, horseback riding, hiking, winter skiing, hot springs, glaciers, mountain climbing (two peaks are higher than 21,000 feet), and visits to historic Silk Road sites. Your future site will likely facilitate at least some of these activities.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and the Kyrgyz Republic and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, be aware that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. Government. You may find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About the Kyrgyz Republic

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

The U.S. State Department's website with the up-to-date profile of the Kyrgyz Republic

<http://www.atlapedia.com/online/countries/kyrgyz.htm>

Visit this site to learn more about the Kyrgyz Republic.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107698.html>

Kyrgyzstan is highlighted here among other countries of the world (by Information Please LLC)

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/kyrgyzstan/>

Lonely Planet Destinations (by Lonely Planet Publications). Visit the Lonely Planet online guide for interactive resources on the Kyrgyz Republic, including photographs, discussion groups, tips from travelers, and a travel guide overview of the Kyrgyz Republic.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

The online CIA World Factbook site delivers a comprehensive profile of the Kyrgyz Republic. The website offers searchable features, including resource maps, flags of the World, and country profiles.

<http://www.kgembassy.org/>

The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the USA

<http://eng.president.kg/>

Official website of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic

<http://www.bartleby.com/65/ky/Kyrgyzst.html>

Review of the Kyrgyz Republic from the Columbia Encyclopedia (by Columbia University Press)

<http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/index.shtml>

EurasiaNet provides information and analysis about political, economic, environmental and social developments in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as in Russia, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia. The website offers additional features, including newsmaker interviews and book reviews.

http://hdr.undp.org/xmlsearch/reportSearch?y=*&c=n%3AKyrgyzstan&t=*&k=

Kyrgyz Republic - Human Development Report by United Nations Development Program

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Kyrgyzstan

Ethnologies in Kyrgyzstan: languages of the country (by Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc.)

<http://www.freenet.kg/db/>

The Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) is a program of the Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State, funded under the Freedom Support Act (FSA). IATP is administered by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).

<http://www.undp.kg>

The United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) links its policy-driven programs and projects with a powerful partnership with the government, civil society and other national and international partners in addressing strategic challenges of transition

You can also visit the following sites to get more information about the political, economic, and social situation in Kyrgyzstan.

<http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/home.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=179>

Founded as a Czech nonprofit, TOL was transformed into its current online format in 1999 with the help of the Open Society Institute to provide young journalists an opportunity to take advantage of the internet frontier in their reporting around the Former Soviet Union. Some articles require a paid subscription to view.

www.24.kg

The News Agency 24.kg is a new project on the mass media market of Kyrgyzstan and provides a wide spectrum of informational services to state, corporate, and private structures.

<http://registan.net/>

Registan.net covers Eurasian politics and news, seeking to draw more attention to issues and news rarely covered in much depth, if at all, by Western media

http://www.akipress.com/_en_index.php

Kyrgyzstan news agency website.

<http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/kyr.htm>

This web page presents information on Kyrgyzstan's political leaders (by Roberto Ortíz de Zárate)

<http://www.politicalresources.net/kyrgyzstan.htm>

Wide list of political resources on the Internet (by Roberto Cicciomessere)

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

www.rpcvwebring.org

This RPCV Web ring links numerous returned Peace Corps Volunteers' websites together.

www.peacegallery.org

The Peace Gallery currently has photos from Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of the people and places where they served. All photos are copyright free for educational use and searches can be conducted on key words.

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org/>

This is a web ring for returned and current Peace Corps Volunteers' websites about their Peace Corps experiences.

<http://kyrgyzstankid.blogspot.com/>

Larry Tweed is an RPCV who has his own blog, plus a list of numerous links to blogs of other Volunteers from Kyrgyzstan.

<http://www.friendsofkyrgyzstan.org/index.htm>

Founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Recommended Books

1. Anderson, John. *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?* NY: Routledge, 1999.
2. Copetas, A. Craig. *Bear Hunting With the Politburo: An American's Adventures in Russian Capitalism.* Lanham, MD: Madison Books, Updated edition, 2001.
3. Feshbach, Murray, and Alfred Friendly, Jr. *Ecocide in the USSR: Health and Nature Under Siege.* NY: Basic Books, 1993.
4. Giampaolo, Capisani R. *The Handbook of Central Asia: A Comprehensive Survey of the New Republics.* Clevedon, UK: I.B. Tauris, 2000.
5. Hopkirk, Kathleen. *A Traveller's Companion to Central Asia.* London: John Murray, 1994.

6. Hopkirk, Peter. *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*. NY: Kodansha International, 1992. (Note: this title may be out of print; readers may be able to get copies through their local library or Amazon.com.)
7. MacLean, Fitzroy. *Eastern Approaches*. NY: Penguin Putnam Reprint edition, 1999. (Originally published in 1949).
8. Mayhew, Bradley, Paul Clammer, and Michael Kohn. *Central Asia*. London: Lonely Planet, 3rd edition, 2004.
9. Olcott, Martha Brill. *Central Asia's New States: Independence, Foreign Policy, and Regional Security*. Herndon, Va.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997. (Note: this title may be out of print; readers may be able to get copies through their local library or Amazon.com.)
10. Peterson, D.J. *Troubled Lands: The Legacy of Soviet Environmental Destruction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993. (Note: this title may be out of print; readers may be able to get copies through their local library or Amazon.com.)
11. Richmond, Yale. *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 3rd edition, 2003.
12. Rosenberg, Robert. *This Is Not Civilization*. Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2005.
13. Stewart, Rowan, and Suzie Weldon. *Kyrgyz Republic: Kyrgyzstan, the Heartland of Central Asia*. NY: Odyssey Publications, 2nd edition, 2004. (Distributed in the U.S. by W.W. Norton.)
14. Rafis Abazov. *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan*. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. December, 2003.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Schwartz, Karen. *What You Can Do For Your Country: An Oral History Of The Peace Corps*. New York: W. Morrow, 1991.
4. Redmon, Coates. *Come As You Are: The Peace Corps Story*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1986.
5. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001.

5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).
7. Fischer, Fritz. *Making Them Like Us: Peace Corps Volunteers In The 1960s*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1998.
8. Banerjee, Dillon. *So, You Want To Join The Peace Corps... What To Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2000.

NOTES



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Dew developing countries in the world offer the level of service considered normal in the United States. During pre-service training, you will receive mail at a post office near the training site (you will be given this address before you depart for overseas). Once you have moved to your assigned site, you will use your residence or workplace as a permanent mailing address. The Peace Corps office cannot accept mail for Volunteers except in extraordinary circumstances.

Occasionally, letters may arrive with clipped edges because someone has tried to see if any money was inside. Also, some boxes may be opened by customs officials to ensure nothing illegal is being shipped. Check with your local post office for information on weight and size limitations for packages. Mail from the United States generally takes two to four weeks to arrive at Volunteer sites. Advise your family and friends to number their letters so you will be able to tell when a letter has gone astray. Also advise them to include “Airmail” and “Par Avion” on their envelopes.

Be aware that you may incur customs charges on your personal mail, especially packages. How packages are labeled in the United States can influence these charges. For example, if someone sends you a package containing both printed matter and “luxury” items, such as music cassettes, the customs charges calculated by the post office in the Kyrgyz Republic will generally be less if the printed matter is emphasized and the luxury items are not.

Telephones

International telephone service is generally available throughout the Kyrgyz Republic, but it is expensive. Calling cards make calling the United States much easier because you can call the AT&T operator in Moscow (095.155.5042) and place the call directly. The time in the Kyrgyz Republic is 11 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (10 hours during Daylight Savings Time). Phone service within the Kyrgyz Republic is improving, but it can be a difficult experience, depending on factors such as the time of day and weather conditions. The national telephone agency has offices in all major cities and in some smaller towns, but if you are calling from outside Bishkek, it is sometimes difficult to secure a line.

Most Volunteers take advantage of local Internet cafes to make international phone calls. This low-cost way of calling the United States is available in most urban areas throughout the country. Though the connection is not always the best, the service is, by far, the least expensive way of staying in touch with your family and friends.

There are several cellular phone companies in the Kyrgyz Republic, such as Bitel, Katel, Megacom, and Fonex. The capital, many towns, and even some villages have cell phone coverage and cell phones are more popular than landline phones.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

The Peace Corps office has several computers with Internet access in its resource center that may be used by Volunteers when they are in the office on official business.

Although computers can be bought locally, they generally do not come with virus protection software or system software backup disks. If you bring your own computer, remember

that LCD screens and electronic equipment may be damaged by power surges. You should also consider insuring your computer. Some host organizations provide limited access to computers, but they often contain contaminated files and may not have the necessary backup disks or software to fix a problem. Current Volunteers do recommend bringing a flash or thumb drive even if you don't bring a laptop.

In addition, Volunteers can access E-mail at Internet cafés in many of the small towns throughout the Kyrgyz Republic. Though connections can be unstable and frustratingly slow, and power outages occur, it is still nice to communicate so quickly with family and friends.

Housing and Site Location

Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic assigns Volunteers to the sites with the greatest need and to schools and organizations that demonstrate potential for making the best use of Volunteers' skills. Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic has a mandatory three-month homestay policy and asks the sponsoring agency to provide the Volunteer with adequate, safe housing, which is paid for by the Peace Corps. The housing varies from site to site and is typically with a family or within a family's compound.

The housing will have simple basic furniture, such as a bed, a table and chairs, a wardrobe or bureau for clothing, and access to a stove and a refrigerator. The Peace Corps will provide you with a water filter or distiller. In addition, because winters in the Kyrgyz Republic are cold and many heating systems are inadequate, the Peace Corps will provide you with an electric heater. Still, you will probably need long underwear and will definitely need a warm sleeping bag, as electricity is not always reliable.

You need to be very flexible in your housing expectations since there is no guarantee that there will be an indoor toilet or that running water or electricity will be available continuously at your assigned site.

Living Allowance and Money Management

The Kyrgyz Republic has a cash-based economy. There are now ATM machines in Bishkek, but few opportunities to use credit cards other than buying international plane tickets from a local travel agency or online. The rate of exchange between the dollar and the local currency, the som, has not been stable since last year, with the dollar losing value to the som.

As a Volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic, you will live at the same economic level as your neighbors and colleagues. You will receive a modest monthly living allowance (deposited in local currency into a bank account you will open at your site) to cover food, utilities, household supplies, hygiene products, clothing, recreation and entertainment, local transportation, telephone calls, reading materials, and other personal expenses. The amount of this allowance may not seem like a lot of money, but you will find yourself earning more than many of your colleagues and supervisors.

You will also receive a monthly allowance and a one-time settling-in allowance in local currency to purchase household items when you move to your permanent site. The settling-in allowance is intended to defray part of the costs of cooking utensils, dishes, towels, blankets, and similar items.

Finally, you will be given a quarterly program travel allowance to support regional exchanges with other Volunteers and to travel to Bishkek to visit international organizations or meet with your program manager. This allowance is designed to encourage Volunteers to exchange

knowledge, skills, and best practices about their primary and secondary projects with one another.

Food and Diet

Once a nation of nomadic herdsman, today's diets reflect this nomadic heritage; traditionally, herdsmen got everything they needed to survive from these animals. Today's diet still relies heavily on meat and vegetables (e.g., potatoes, tomatoes, cabbages, carrots, and onions), with much of the food fried or boiled. There is a wide range of fresh food for sale in markets throughout the republic during the spring, summer, and fall, including meat, vegetables, dried fruits, and nuts. Oranges, bananas, and apples can be found in some parts of the country, but are often expensive.

Fruits and vegetables are, of course, seasonal, but it is possible to be a vegetarian in the Kyrgyz Republic. A sufficient variety of food is available to maintain a healthy vegetarian diet, and previous Volunteers have been successful at doing so with a little advance planning. The markets have white, pinto, mung, and red beans; chickpeas and split peas; pasta; rice; and peanuts and other nuts. Cheese, eggs, and milk are available in many, but not all, markets, and potatoes, cabbages, carrots, and onions can be found almost everywhere. Tofu is available in larger towns. The most difficult aspect probably will be the social pressure to eat meat, but with a little patience, most vegetarians have served their two years with few problems.

Transportation

Most Volunteers travel in the country in commercial vans (called *marshrutkas*), but some choose to pay more and hire long-distance taxis. Although the vans often do not operate on

a set schedule, there is regular public transportation between cities. Travel by bus among cities is also available. Because of safety issues, Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic prohibits Volunteers from driving or riding on two- or three-wheeled motorized vehicles for any reason. Volunteers are not allowed to own or drive automobiles or tractors. Road travel between oblasts after dark is prohibited. Road travel after dark within oblasts is strongly discouraged. Violation of these policies may result in the termination of your Volunteer service.

Geography and Climate

The Kyrgyz Republic borders Kazakhstan in the north and northwest, Uzbekistan in the southwest, Tajikistan in the south, and China in the southeast. The Tien Shan mountain range covers approximately 95 percent of the country, which is about the size of Nebraska. The mountaintops are perennially covered with snow glaciers.

The Kyrgyz Republic has four seasons, including very cold winters and hot, dry summers. The duration of each season depends on the region of the country. In the mountains, the temperature can drop as low as minus-30 degrees Fahrenheit. In the rest of the country, winter is much like winters in the Midwestern United States, but with less snowfall. Northern Kyrgystan is much colder than the south, with normal winter temperatures in the mid-teens to low 20s.

Social Activities

Although the Kyrgyz Republic's traditionally nomadic herdsmen are now comfortable on both motorcycles and horses and many live in apartments, Kyrgyzstan has not lost its rich cultural heritage. The Kyrgyz people's hospitality endures, and most social life at Volunteer sites centers on

visiting friends' homes. Outside of Bishkek, there is little formal entertainment (e.g., the opera, theater, cinemas, etc). Therefore, both the Kyrgyz people and Volunteers, especially in small towns and villages, spend much of their leisure time "guesting." Guesting means being invited to a home for a meal; this could last up to five or six hours, depending on the time of day. As the only American, and often the only foreigner, present in a community, you will often be the guest of honor.

Being a guest in a Kyrgyz home can be simultaneously rewarding and stressful. The local people, whether ethnic Kyrgyz, Uzbek, or Russian, are hospitable, charismatic hosts. This means that you, as the guest, will be constantly encouraged to eat and drink more and more. Although it can be difficult to convey to people you do not know well that you have had enough to eat or drink and that you do not want any more or need to go home, Volunteers find that they are better able to manage such situations as their language skills develop.

Alcohol is prevalent in most social situations in the Kyrgyz Republic and can cause stress for Volunteers. Volunteers may regularly feel pressure to drink heavily when in new social surroundings, either with their new Kyrgyz friends or with other Volunteers. The pressure to drink often eases as a Volunteer becomes better known, and some Volunteers abstain from drinking at their sites. Program Managers and the safety and security and medical officers help Volunteers develop strategies to manage the pressure of alcohol consumption.

The Peace Corps has policies and strategies that will help Volunteers assess and manage their use of alcohol. Excessive use of alcohol may result in behavior that affects your performance, effectiveness, safety, and credibility.

Inappropriate behavior resulting from alcohol abuse or the inability to carry out your assignment due to alcohol use is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. Alcohol use has been a factor in injuries and assaults involving Volunteers in posts throughout the world, including the Kyrgyz Republic. The Kyrgyzstani judicial system considers use of alcohol as an aggravating factor in criminal cases. Individuals with a history or predisposition for alcohol abuse should seriously consider whether the Kyrgyz Republic is an appropriate assignment.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

In order to gain the trust, acceptance and, ultimately, integrate into your host community, it is essential that you dress appropriately and conduct yourself professionally. As in America, not only the first impression, but ongoing assumptions as to one's competence, dedication and professionalism are directly tied to one's appearance and attire. Living life in a fishbowl can at times be frustrating – by dressing appropriately in public, you can help yourself by ending speculation/gossip about you and your. Professionalism and maturity are qualities that our partners expect of Volunteers at all times – there will be much attention by officials, local authorities, ministries and other professionals, be they Kyrgyz or associated with an international organization, so there will be more peer pressure to dress and act professionally.

People in the Kyrgyz Republic take pride in their personal appearance and tend to dress up both for social occasions and for daily activities and generally dress more formally than many Americans are accustomed. While most people cannot afford a large wardrobe—it is not unusual to see co-workers wear the same outfit two or three days in a row—wearing clean and

ironed clothes is important. To gain the acceptance, respect, and confidence of Kyrgyz colleagues, therefore, it is essential that you dress and conduct yourself professionally. Professional dress is required in the workplace, which means mid-length or long skirts with blouses or dresses for women living in more rural or conservative areas of the country, and pressed chinos or dress slacks with jackets or sweaters for men.

Special Notes:

- Remember, it gets cold in the winter, so pack for any winter weather. Jeans, khakis and slacks offer very little value in terms of warmth, so men and women alike should bring a few pairs of thermal underwear.
- Bring clothes that do not require frequent and special care, i.e. dry-cleaning. Blazers, suits, sport coats, and sweaters should be in dark colors to disguise the toil of frequent use. Remember, too, that you will likely be laundering your clothes by hand – jeans, light-colored clothing and other fabrics can prove difficult to wash, dry and keep their color in these conditions.
- Dress shoes or boots are also essential, as it is the custom to take off your shoes before entering someone’s home. Volunteers might wish to bring with them shoes that easily slip on or off, rather than ones with laces.
- Facial piercings are also prohibited by Peace Corps in this country since working age people in Kyrgyz Republic do not wear them and they are not considered professional.

The Peace Corps expects Volunteers to behave in a way that will foster respect in their communities and reflect well upon the Peace Corps and the citizens of the United States. As a Volunteer, you have the status of an invited guest and must be sensitive to the habits, tastes, and taboos of your hosts. You will receive an orientation on appropriate behavior and

cultural sensitivity during pre-service training. If you are not willing to accept these limitations on how you dress, behave and express yourself, then Peace Corps will not be a good fit for you.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, being perceived as well-off, and alcohol abuse are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Some Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Kyrgyz Republic Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in the Kyrgyz Republic. At the same time, you are expected to take ultimate responsibility for your own safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction in the Kyrgyz Republic is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter frustrations. Because of financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support they

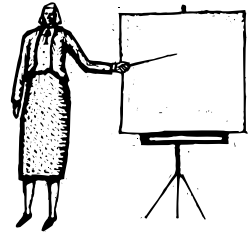
promised. In addition, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people you work with may be hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results. Peace Corps also has many rules to follow that limit your freedom to a certain degree and can seem restrictive to some people. These rules exist to help ensure the safety of all Volunteers and to enhance the quality of work they do in their communities. If you are not comfortable working within a bureaucracy or having limitations on what you can do as a Peace Corps Volunteer, then Peace Corps is not a good fit for you.

To overcome these difficulties and become a well-adjusted, healthy and successful Volunteer, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. The Kyrgyz are warm, friendly, and hospitable, and the Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge, as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave the Kyrgyz Republic feeling they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are willing to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential part of Peace Corps service. Our goal is to provide you with the information you need to live and work effectively in the Kyrgyz Republic. You will receive training and orientation in language, cross-cultural communication, area studies, health and personal safety and security, and technical skills relevant to your specific assignment. The skills you learn will serve as a foundation upon which you will build your experience as a Volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic. You will study either Kyrgyz or Russian, based on the language used most at your future site.

For your first three days in-country, you will stay at a training facility in Bishkek, after which you will move to the permanent training site located approximately an hour outside of the capital. Once there, you will live with a host family in a rural village or small town with a few other trainees. While you and your fellow trainees will meet as a group, you will also have a chance to experience Kyrgyz customs on your own with your host family and on technical field trips. These experiences will help bring to life the topics covered in training and will give you the chance to practice your new language skills and directly observe and participate in Kyrgyz culture.

At the beginning of training, the staff will outline the goals and competencies you will need to reach before swearing-in as a Volunteer and the criteria used to assess your progress. Evaluation of your performance during training is a continual process that is based on a dialogue between you and the programming and training staff. The training staff will assist you in achieving the goals by providing you with feedback

throughout the training process. After successfully completing training, you will be sworn in as a Volunteer and make final preparations for departure to your assigned site.

Peace Corps' Pre-Service Training (PST) is built on the Community-Based Training (CBT) model. The model was designed to immerse you in the Kyrgyz Republic in order to simulate your actual Volunteer experience. The community where you will live during training will become the classroom and your language trainer, host family, and other community members will be your teachers. The philosophy behind CBT is that "experience is the best teacher." Participating within the culture is better than talking about it in a classroom. Listening to a new language in authentic, or real situations, is better than memorizing vocabulary in a classroom. If you have to figure out a schedule, point to your watch, listen carefully to what the driver is saying, watch his body language, and repeat the entire process to be sure you've understood, then you are much better prepared to secure your own travel arrangements. In addition, this experiential learning is extremely important for your safety and security, your self-confidence when you no longer have staff to assist you, and your integration into the community where you will live and work.

During the training, you will learn either Kyrgyz or Russian as a second language depending on which language the Peace Corps staff assigns to you. PST is a very intense and exhausting three months of training and you should be prepared to have your time very strictly managed by Peace Corps. If you successfully complete the PST, you will swear-in and depart for your new site with a brand new set of responsibilities and opportunities as a full-fledged Peace Corps Volunteer.

PST Components

Core Training

The core training program encompasses aspects of community development, community service, Peace Corps agency initiatives and other cross cutting themes related to all trainees regardless of their technical sector. The core program is designed to provide all trainees with effective tools to use in their assignments with their Host Country Agencies and host communities in Kyrgyz Republic. The emphasis is on experiential learning, trainee-directed activities, and for each trainee to develop initiative and self-direction.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you to work in the Kyrgyz Republic by building upon the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, with the assistance of Kyrgyz experts and current Volunteers, will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in the Kyrgyz Republic and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review the goals and objectives of your project and meet with the Kyrgyz agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community. In addition to regular classroom sessions, you will be given assignments to work on with your community, school or organization. These activities will help you acquire many of the skills and experiences necessary to be an effective Volunteer.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance; they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. The initial period of language study will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to swearing in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

Although the prospect of learning a new language may seem daunting, Volunteers before you have been successful and many have learned to speak Kyrgyz or Russian fluently. Prior to leaving the United States, you will need to log onto *My Toolkit* on the Peace Corps website (www.peacecorps.gov) to download MP3s and corresponding language lesson manuals of both Kyrgyz and Russian to familiarize yourself with the sounds of the languages and give you a head start on some of the basics. Becoming familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet prior to your arrival can also help minimize some of the culture shock when you first step off the airplane.

The majority of trainees will train in Kyrgyz, while the minority will study some Russian during PST. In the majority of communities in Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz is spoken predominately, while in a few communities Russian is the main language (mostly in the north and east). Many Kyrgyz people who speak Kyrgyz also understand Russian, but Russian speakers don't always understand or speak Kyrgyz. In some regions, a mix these two languages is spoken.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of pre-service training, you will live with a Kyrgyz host family. This experience is designed to give you firsthand experience with the local culture and an opportunity for regular language practice, easing your transition to life at your site. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of PST and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in the Kyrgyz Republic. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their initial host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and non-formal and adult education strategies. You will also learn about Kyrgyz politics, history, and arts. The Kyrgyz people take great pride in their poets, writers, artists, and composers, so awareness of their cultural achievements is an important aspect of adapting to life in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all sessions. The topics include preventive healthcare measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in the Kyrgyz Republic. Nutrition, mental health, alcohol-related issues, safety and security, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted Infections (STIs) are also covered.

Safety & Security Training

Safety and security training will be provided throughout your Volunteer service and will be integrated into language, cross-cultural, health, and other training components. During safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and safety issues, and your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service. You will be expected to follow Peace Corps policies as well as country-specific safety and security policies and procedures throughout your service, and to report any safety and security issues to the relevant Peace Corps staff. You also will be trained to fulfill certain responsibilities that are part of Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic's emergency action plan.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually two training events:

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months. This will also be a time to revisit pre-service training competencies, measure your progress, and reinforce competencies.
- *Project design and management training*: Increases the ability of communities in Kyrgyzstan, in partnership with a Volunteer, to put their ideas into action, resulting in positive, lasting change.

- *Close-of-service training*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in the Kyrgyz Republic maintains a clinic with two full-time Medical Officers who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, and simple dental care are also available locally. If you become seriously ill or need some special medical evaluation, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in the Kyrgyz Republic

Healthcare at local hospitals and clinics is not at the same standard as provided by similar-size facilities in the United States. Because of this, there are risks associated with taking medication in local facilities. Needles are often used repeatedly and improperly sterilized. In addition, many pharmaceuticals are counterfeit and local manufacturing standards are often inadequate. Volunteers should not receive injections or take medications unless they are administered by the Peace Corps medical officer or a facility approved by the Peace Corps.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary immunizations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in the Kyrgyz Republic, you will receive a medical handbook and a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. However, during training, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem, the medical officer in the Kyrgyz Republic will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in the Kyrgyz Republic, you will be medically evacuated to another country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in the Kyrgyz Republic is to take preventive measures for the following:

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, parasitic infections, Hepatitis A, dysentery, pinworms, and typhoid fever. The

medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in the Kyrgyz Republic during pre-service training.

Tuberculosis is present in the region, so it is advisable to stay away from people who are coughing constantly or show other signs of TB infection and to regularly ventilate your home and office. A TB skin test is required for pre-service medical clearance prior to arrival in Kyrgyzstan and at the end of your service. Volunteers assigned to the southern region of the country will take malaria prophylaxis during a significant part of the first year.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. The medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer. It is critical that you promptly report to the medical office for scheduled immunizations and that you inform the medical officer immediately of significant illness and injuries.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same confidential manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention, but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps

is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. If the Volunteer decides to continue the pregnancy, then this also has programmatic ramifications. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

As is the case for other prescription medications, women who take birth control pills should bring an initial three-month supply with them. Please be prepared that your PCMO may issue you the same product but with a different brand name. Similarly, women should bring an initial supply of feminine hygiene products. Tampons and pads are available locally, but it may be difficult for you to obtain them during pre-service training.

The discrete disposal of feminine hygiene products is a dilemma here and may be a challenge for you. In an effort to make you comfortable while you are here and decrease your contribution to the solid waste problems in this country, we suggest you consider using an alternative product to tampons and napkins. There are a number of products on the market that are environmentally friendly alternatives. One is a natural gum rubber cup that is worn internally, holding (instead of absorbing) monthly menstrual flow. It can be worn up to 12 hours, and even overnight. It is available for about \$35 from a website called www.thekeeper.com.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
Adhesive tape
American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook
Emergency First Aid Book
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
Antifungal cream (Clotrimazole 1% Tinactin)
Aquatabs (Iodine water purification tablets)
Band-Aids, assorted sizes
Benadryl (Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg)
Insect repellent spray
Butterfly closures
Cepacol Sepathoose lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Electrol Plus, tablets
Gloves, non-sterile
Hibiclens liquid soap (Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner)
Hydrocortisone 1% cream
Ibuprofen
Lip moisturizer with sunscreen SPF15
Oral rehydration salts
Robitussin-DM lozenges (cough drops)
Pept Eez (Bismith Subsalicilate tabs / Pepto-Bismol)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Sudanyl (Pseudoephedrine HCL/ 30 mg - Sudafed)
Sunscreen lotion SPF 30+
Tetrahydrozaline eyedrops (Visine)
Thermometer (Oral in Fahrenheit)
Tweezers
Whistle

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health — physical, mental, or dental — since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services or the medical officer in country.

Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility for service.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or the Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

Upon arrival you will receive a comprehensive vaccination program, which will include immunization against Hepatitis A and B, Rabies, Typhoid, Poliomyelitis, Measles/Mumps/Rubella, Tick-borne encephalitis, Tetanus/Diphtheria, Meningococcal meningitis, flu vaccine and, for some individuals, HPV vaccine or Pneumococcal.

If you wish to avoid duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all of the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment shortly after you arrive in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment — which can take several months — you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps **will not** pay for herbal, homeopathic, cosmetic or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, antioxidant supplements, etc.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you — a pair and a spare (not including sunglasses). If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from wearing contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to post-service healthcare benefits. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey said they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk:

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5 p.m. and 2 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 1 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults, the Volunteer was unaccompanied, and in 55 percent of physical assaults, the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk:

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance and as learned from local counterparts and host families
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy
- Carry only the money you need
- Do not expose all your money and valuable belongings to the public

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a host family or in a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Integrate into your community, make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone reliable whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption/do not abuse alcohol
- Plan your activity properly: plan not to travel at night, or if you have to, then utilize a taxi service or your designated driver

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an associate director for safety and security who reports to the country director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s

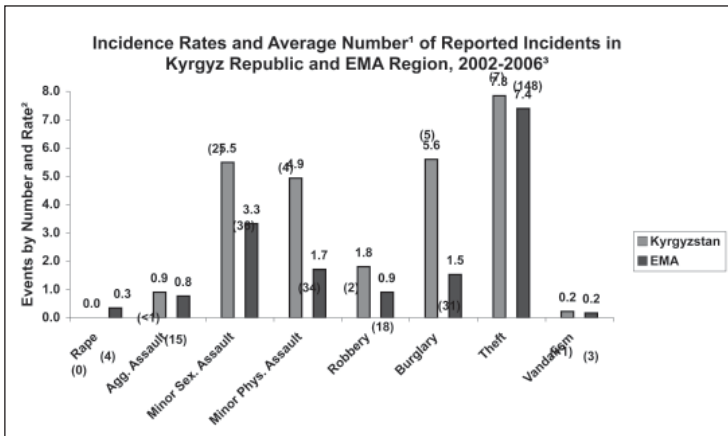
overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps' safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Kyrgyz Republic as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region programs as a whole, from 2001–2005. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps’ classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Kyrgyzstan began as of 2002.

Source data on incidents are drawn from the Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS); and the Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS). The information is accurate as of 4/18/08.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training on how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors, and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, under certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and, second, contact the country director, the Peace Corps medical officer or the safety and security coordinator. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. The country directors, medical officers and safety and security coordinator are required to report all violent crimes to the inspector general and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers, regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202-692-2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in the Kyrgyz Republic

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you must be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for becoming a target of crime. Crime exists in the Kyrgyz Republic, as it does everywhere in the world. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, especially in large towns, are favorite work sites for pickpockets.

While the Kyrgyz Republic is generally a safe country, poverty and alcoholism have taken their toll on the population, and street crime is on the increase. In addition, ethnic conflicts between the Uzbek and Kyrgyz populations in the south flair up from time to time, and the Kyrgyz Republic has played a major role in international efforts to fight terrorism. There is a Coalition military airbase outside Bishkek that has been a major staging ground for the international forces fighting in Afghanistan. While there have been no threats against Americans or overtly expressed anti-American sentiments, as a safety precaution, the Peace Corps does not place Volunteers to the south and west of the city of Osh or along the borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. You need to adopt a lifestyle sensitive to host-country cultural norms and exercise common sense and good judgment to

promote your own safety and reduce risks. In coming to the Kyrgyz Republic, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: Be cautious, vigilant, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense and street smarts, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in the Kyrgyz Republic may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in the Kyrgyz Republic

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two years of service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. The Kyrgyz Republic's in-country safety program is outlined below.

Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic staff will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates are provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network (Volunteer warden system).

Volunteer training will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in the Kyrgyz Republic. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety

training is offered throughout your two-year service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Specific **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; appropriate housing arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic's detailed **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you must complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your home and to the Peace Corps office. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in the Kyrgyz Republic will gather at predetermined locations (primary or secondary consolidation points) until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps staff. The Peace Corps has **established protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic has a very strict out-of-site policy. Peace Corps service is a 24/7 job. Therefore, Volunteers are expected to remain in their sites as much as possible in order to earn and keep the confidence and respect of their communities. The Peace Corps office must be informed of all out-of-site travel prior to your departure. For all out-of-site travel, you must provide the post with detailed contact information, routes, itineraries, schedules, dates of departure and arrival, and, if relevant, the name of your local escort. Violation of the out-of-site policy is grounds for administrative separation.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling its mandate to share the diversity of America with our host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In the Kyrgyz Republic, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from the people who live there. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Outside of Bishkek, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is viewed as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. African American Volunteers in Kyrgyz Republic, in particular, have faced challenges based on stereotypes that some local citizens have about African Americans. Members of the community in which you will live

may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in the Kyrgyz Republic, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions will need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will be available to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in the Kyrgyz Republic

The Peace Corps staff in the Kyrgyz Republic recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, Volunteers will be trained on diversity issues and learn coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, sexual orientations and ages and hope you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who support one another and take pride in demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Many female Volunteers find it difficult to adjust to the relatively conservative attitudes toward women in the Kyrgyz Republic. In many parts of the country, it is important to wear long skirts, cover one's head, and not be seen smoking

in public. The rules of dating and talking with men are throwbacks to the early 1900s in the United States, and what American women tend to think of as harassment may be an everyday occurrence in many places. Female Volunteers are constantly asked if they are married and, if they are over 22 and single, why they are not married when they are so “old.” Some individuals may want to arrange a marriage for you. If you are married, there will be the question "Do you have children?" and/or "Why not?" Some male volunteers have been advised as a joke to get a second wife since their current wife is "not providing you with children." Also, be prepared to be constantly reminded of your gender.

Volunteer Comments

“Since it is culturally acceptable for women to marry at a young age in the Kyrgyz Republic, it becomes frustrating to continually explain that it is normal to be a single woman in America. People are often confused and sometimes immediately try to find me a husband. When I share my personal experiences with other women, it makes them realize their independence and self-worth and gives them confidence and motivation, which is very beneficial to the Kyrgyz Republic. Be prepared to answer many personal questions if you’re a single woman. However, sometimes creativity can play an important role if you are tired of replying to the same questions constantly. When I’m tired of explaining why I’m still single, I use my imagination and usually receive a laughing response when I say, ‘Leonardo DeCaprio is my fiancé.’”

“The men in this country have different attitudes toward women. You won’t experience harassment every day, but it will definitely happen. The worst experience I had was in my village. I was stopped on the road by a man who asked

how I was. I didn't recognize him, but he seemed to know me, so I stopped about a meter and a half from him to talk. That was a mistake. He was a stranger, and when he figured out I couldn't understand him, he reached out and pinched my breast. I was so stunned that I could only cuss at him in English and walk away. The moral to this story is: Do not talk to men you do not know!"

"At my site, I live with a single mother, and the vast majority of teachers at my school are women. As a result, I have very few daily interactions with men. However, women definitely are treated differently here. It is especially noticeable to me when I am with male Volunteers. At these times, I do notice a difference in how we are treated. Often, I am not even acknowledged. The local men always go to the male Volunteer, and I have been treated as if I don't exist. It can be extremely annoying and frustrating at times. In many situations, I feel like waving my hands, jumping up and down, and yelling 'Hey!'"

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color face additional challenges inside and outside of the Peace Corps community. Within the Volunteer community, you may be the only person of color to serve as a minority trainee or Volunteer in a particular project. You may not receive, or be able to receive, the necessary personal support from other Volunteers and, in some cases, you may face prejudices from other Volunteers on account of ignorance and lack of experience with people of color. In addition, you may not find role models of color among the Peace Corps country staff.

Once you move to your site, you may work and live with individuals who have no experience with or understanding of non-Caucasian American culture. Because of ignorance,

stereotyped cultural perceptions, or the country's current or historical involvement with other countries, you may encounter varying degrees of harassment in your day-to-day life. Hispanic and Asian-American Volunteers, for example, may be identified more by their cultural heritage than by their American citizenship. Consider the possibility of using an ethnic-nationality indicator such as Costa Rican-American, Venezuelan-American, Chinese-American, Korean-American as a strategy for conveying your dual ethnic heritage and American citizenry. For the most part, the question of "Where are you from?" really is an attempt to understand where your "family's family" is from, given your physical features. Further, you may not be perceived as being American, or you may be evaluated as less professionally competent than a white Volunteer. In any community in which you are not known, you may be treated suspiciously. Finally, you should be prepared to hear racial terms that would be completely inappropriate in the United States today. The word for a black or dark-skinned person in Russian is "*negger*" and Volunteers have reported that the word has been used as a slur. It is very likely that you will encounter this word during your service. As a method of increasing local cultural competence, you can treat these encounters as teachable moments by making individuals aware of the more appropriate term *African Amerikanskaya* (this is the best term to refer to a black person, given the language limitations in both Kyrgyz and Russian).

Volunteer Comments

"The hardest part about being a minority within Peace Corps, at least for me, was that it changed my definition of what 'integrating' really meant. Many times I felt as if I was viewed in a much harsher and almost comedic light, as opposed to white Volunteers. I felt as if I would never

fit in here, and that, for me, was a real blow. In realizing that, I also had to come to terms with the reality that there are many different ways to be a good Volunteer. I find that it is true that there are Volunteers who speak wonderful Kyrgyz and start to fit in with locals as if it was completely natural, though I don't think that will ever be me, and that's OK. I've found many dear and wonderful friends here and have managed to integrate into smaller communities around my village and in Bishkek. I've focused on work and have accomplished a good amount of the things I set out to do. I suppose the thing I want to get across is that it is a bit rougher, but there are good people here and there are wonderful places to 'fit in' as a hard-working Volunteer and as a worthwhile person, even if you don't quite blend in."

"On the whole, the experiences of Asian American Volunteers does not appear to be much different from those of other Volunteers. We all have to get past a number of common hurdles. One difference, though, is the amount of attention you will receive. I don't get people staring at me as much as other Volunteers because I look like the Kyrgyz people. I haven't had any problems with the militia at all, but I think that has more to do with the way I carry myself than anything else."

"Kyrgyzstan is an incredibly picturesque country with magnificent weather and intriguing people. Unfortunately, my initial experience here was somewhat tainted by the daily instances of people stopping mid-sentence or mid-stride to blatantly point, laugh, and call me '*negger*.' To my dismay, these mocking sessions escalated once I moved from my training village to my permanent site in the city. Thankfully, positive self-talk, emotional support from my host family, and e-mail and text messages of encouragement

from home helped me to regain my footing. After much observation and persistent inquiry, I have finally come to understand that, while some of this attention is malicious in nature, most of the reaction that I get comes from lack of cultural exposure and interaction, combined with nervous behavior. On the other hand, I recognize that some of it is malicious in nature due, in part, to the discriminatory ways that the Kyrgyz themselves have been treated and the demeaning things they have been taught about Africans/Blacks in the past. Using discernment, I now stop and diplomatically yet firmly correct those — from university students to men hanging on the corner to those who touch my lochs on the martshutka to mothers pointing me out to their children to the kids at play in my neighborhood — that call me *negger*. I explain that the appropriate term to use is *Afrikan Amerikanskaya* and I find that they are usually recognizably ashamed and apologetic. I am now actually excited about working with my NGO to creatively address this broad-scale issue of cultural competence (internal and external) throughout Kyrgyzstan. Ultimately, personal success as a Volunteer is really all about having a support system and finding positive ways to take control of negative situations. I can honestly say that while many more challenges lay before me, the glide is back in my stride and I am thrilled to be here!

“Kyrgyz people have shown a lot of polite curiosity regarding my ethnicity, and discussion of it has often led to some in-depth conversations about cross-cultural issues in America and the Kyrgyz Republic. Being a Mexican-American Volunteer has been a positive experience for me. People have been very welcoming and interested in my family’s traditions and customs. I brought postcards and pictures of Mexico to show, and these have been a hit. By

the way, Latin *telenovelas* are popular here, so sometimes when I tell people I'm Mexican American, I get an excited reaction: 'Oh! Like Veronica Castro!'"

"I have found it very easy to fit into southern Kyrgyz-Uzbek communities because I look like them, and I can relate to certain cultural values because they are similar to my own. Plus, I speak Kyrgyz (as opposed to Russian), so it is usually easy to assimilate into my communities. Also, I am not originally from the United States, so people are accurate when they say that my nationality is Chinese. This may be a problem for other Asian Americans who consider themselves American and were not born in Asia. On the other hand, being Asian does not prevent me from being stared at and standing out. Everyone still knows that I'm the foreign Volunteer, and they are curious regarding everything about me — if they don't know already."

"Before coming to this country as a Volunteer, Black people should seriously think about the position they are about to undertake. Black people in the Kyrgyz Republic have suffered offenses from host country nationals and Volunteers alike that undermine their self-esteem and sense of well-being. Being stared at, laughed at, pointed at, and taunted with words like '*negger*' — which in many cases does have a derogatory meaning, and '*chournie*' — the Russian word for the color black — has made being a Volunteer in this country supremely difficult for all of us. Coupled with that, is the fact that some other Volunteers and staff may not understand and/or sympathize with the plight of African-Americans and other people of African descent in this country. However, after receiving such blunt prejudices, I can confidently say that I am beginning to develop strength, patience and wisdom previously unbeknownst to me. I have had the opportunity to meet

some wonderful people — both host country nationals and Volunteers — that I would have probably never met had I not come to this country. This country needs to experience African-Americans and people of African descent making positive strides in areas other than entertainment and sports. In my short time here, I have already simultaneously begun to positively change the way some people view African-Americans and have made a great impact on the education of my students."

"For the most part, I haven't had any major problems because I am an Asian-American. However, people will automatically talk to me in Kyrgyz and will ask where my parents came from. Sometimes it is a little annoying."

"Being an Asian-American Volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic has its benefits and disadvantages. Perhaps the most annoying thing is having people constantly ask me where I'm from and not accepting 'America' as a truthful answer. I have to explain myself all the time to people. Also, what's funny is that many people stare at me partially because I'm a foreigner, but also perhaps because they are trying to figure out exactly which nationality I am."

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Respect comes with age in the Kyrgyz Republic. Younger Volunteers may have to work harder than their older colleagues to be accepted as professionals. On the other hand, older Volunteers may face challenges solely due to age. Most of the individuals in the Peace Corps community with whom you will work and live with are in their 20s and may have little understanding of, or respect for, the lives and experiences of senior Americans. In addition, the Peace Corps staff may not be able to give you as much personal support as you need, and you may be reluctant to share your personal, sexual, or

health concerns with the staff. You may also find that younger Volunteers look to you for advice and support. While some seniors find this a very enjoyable part of their Volunteer experience, others choose not to fill this role. Training may present its own special challenges. Older trainees may encounter a lack of attention to their specific needs for an effective learning environment and may need to be assertive in developing an individual approach to language learning. Finally, dealing with family emergencies, maintaining lifelong relationships, and handling financial matters from afar may be more problematic for older Volunteers than younger ones.

Volunteer Comments

"I have come to love this country and the people of the Kyrgyz Republic, despite some of the challenges that are encountered here. Patience and flexibility are definitely attributes you will want to hone. Being an 'older' Volunteer has its advantages. I love it when I travel with some of the younger Volunteers and local people get up to give me their seat on the bus while my friends have to stand. Being around young people and their energy is contagious. After I retired from work in the states, I knew I still had more to offer and I have found the program and the country in which to do it. Being able to share ideas and help develop various projects in-country is extremely rewarding."

"I love it! In fact, when I went home for a vacation, I was suddenly confronted with age discrimination. Here in the Kyrgyz Republic, I was constantly being treated with respect, never hassled by men on the streets, almost always given a seat on the bus, and given an inordinate amount of respect by younger people. The other Volunteers

were great, and even though I am over 60, one of my best friends is 22. Oh, and my health has never been better. Walking everywhere brought down my cholesterol levels to below average, my body is almost in shape (I lost about 40 pounds), and I feel 20 years younger than I did when I joined the Peace Corps.”

“I have not experienced negative issues at my site from either Volunteers or work associates. I feel I have been accepted on all levels and included in local and Volunteer activities and social events. Training was a little uncomfortable. I felt generational differences at the time, but it may have been largely the tension of attending concentrated training with a sizable group such as ours. Personal support from the Volunteers at my site is always available and very warmly and sincerely offered.”

“As a woman of 53 and one of the older Volunteers, my experiences in the Kyrgyz Republic have been both challenging (especially learning the language) and rewarding. I am a business development Volunteer and am serving in a women’s nongovernmental organization in a small village. At first, the people approached and scrutinized me very cautiously because I am the first American to live in the village. As they realized that I was eager to learn about their culture, they included me in many activities. Some of the most fun times that I have experienced are the parties with the women — they drink, dance, sing, and have a wonderful time. I find the women truly remarkable. I continue to learn about the role of nongovernmental organizations in this country and the Kyrgyz culture, and I am enjoying the experience tremendously.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Although the Kyrgyz Republic decriminalized homosexual acts between adult men by presidential decree in 1998, homosexuality is usually considered immoral by local norms. Homosexuals certainly exist in the Kyrgyz Republic, but with a minimal level of acceptance. Civil liberties may be ignored, and homosexuals may be hassled in bars or in the street. The Kyrgyz people's view of homosexuality among nationals may be different from their view of homosexuality among foreigners. Certain hairstyles, clothing, and mannerisms, including earrings on men, which are considered acceptable in the United States, may be viewed with suspicion or derision in the Kyrgyz Republic. AIDS (SPID in Russian) is a critical public health issue in many countries, and gay American men have been blamed for bringing the disease to Central Asia.

Gay and bisexual Volunteers may serve for two years without meeting another gay or bisexual Volunteer. Fellow Volunteers may not be able to give the necessary support. Many Kyrgyz homosexuals have probably migrated to the larger cities, while most Volunteers are posted in rural sites. Although relationships with host country nationals can happen, as with all cross-cultural relationships, they are not likely to be easy. Lesbians, like all women, have to deal with constant questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex. One coping strategy some Volunteers have found effective is to wear a ring on the right finger, which can reduce questions and unwanted advances. However, maintaining a cover story to support the ring can become a burden and complicate relationships — Peace Corps staff and Volunteers are here to support you and to assisting you in developing the necessary coping strategies and skills. Peace Corps welcomes volunteers of all orientations. Being a Volunteer encompasses many aspects of a person's life and your talents and skills are needed here. Peace Corps staff will do all it can to support you so your time and service are rewarding.

For more information about this issue, you can contact a group of lesbian, gay and bisexual returned Volunteers at www.lgbrpcv.org.

Volunteer Comments

“Living a white lie is, unfortunately, a part of everyday life. In the beginning, the idea of not completely sharing my life with my Kyrgyz colleagues appeared to be something I could tolerate. However, as time passed, I have started to build close friendships and would like to share my life with friends on a more personal level. But to avoid rejection and social problems in my town, I have chosen to keep this aspect of my life to myself. Saying that a close Volunteer friend of mine is my girlfriend has put a stop to the uncomfortable questions about my love life.”

“It helps to know that there is a small community of homosexuals in Bishkek. Their lifestyle also is very secretive, and they keep to themselves. I’ve decided not to associate with them to avoid raising suspicion. Everyone seems to know one another, and gossip travels around quickly.”

“Has my experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer been austere? Absolutely not! The friendships I have made with fellow Volunteers are very special, and these are the people with whom I have built true, trusting, and supportive relationships.”

“Looking back, the toughest decision about joining the Peace Corps was the question of whether I would be able to cope with a society that regards homosexuality as taboo. I do not regret my decision to join. Your experience here will be everything you make it. Homosexuals, and minorities as a whole, need representation in the Peace Corps.”

“Living in the Kyrgyz Republic as a lesbian definitely has been one of the more challenging things I have ever done. I am someone who loves being around my friends and enjoys gay social life and community organizing in the United States. Essentially, within my community, I have had to give that up and pursue my passion for the community and the nongovernmental organization I work with. Of course, working for a group that organizes pensioners is not the same as community organizing with gay people. Despite this, I have found the experience extremely rewarding because I’m learning to work with a broader community of people and learning to appreciate the value of going directly to them and listening to their needs. The lack of a significant gay community is very hard. I have found one of the best ways to deal with this is to be out with my fellow Volunteers. This is essential because it gives me a forum in which to talk about parts of my life that I cannot speak of in my community. Furthermore, developing contacts with other gay Volunteers in Central Asia is very rewarding because we can share our experiences.”

“I consider the village where I live to be one of the more open-minded rural communities in Kyrgyzstan. Since my arrival two years ago, a villager will occasionally speculate that I might be homosexual because I am a single, middle-aged and – by all appearances – not a sexually active male in the community (and all males are expected to be sexually active). When I tell them that I’m heterosexual, a sense of relief is quite apparent in their responses. In rural areas, I’d say it’s probably best to expect virtually no acceptance of homosexuality on a societal level, though certain members of a community may tolerate it. Though the locals are certainly charming people, I have encountered a great deal of intolerance toward certain members of the community. Snap judgments are very common, though more often than not, intolerance is

masked and negative judgments are kept from the individuals being judged. Having said that, however, there are plenty of folks who don't hesitate to make their feelings open and public. Making one's homosexuality public in any community in Kyrgyzstan would probably be very risky for a variety of reasons. If I was homosexual, I'd limit that knowledge to my American peers (and Peace Corps staff)."

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Before committing to Peace Corps service, couples should consider how different degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical and cultural environment, and homesickness will affect their lives. Couples may have to deal with changed marital roles resulting from societal expectations in the Kyrgyz Republic. A husband may be encouraged to be the dominant member of the relationship, while a wife may find herself in a less independent role than she is accustomed to, which can create tension for a couple at work and at home. For example, a wife may be expected to perform traditional domestic chores instead of working, while a husband may be ridiculed for performing domestic tasks or for refusing to have extramarital affairs. Finally, a couple may need to cope with issues of competition if one spouse learns the language faster than the other or has a more satisfying assignment.

Volunteer Comments

"Everybody here expects you to be married if you're over 20, so I fit in well. The second question always is, 'Are you married?' Joining the Peace Corps as a married couple definitely has its advantages and disadvantages. As for advantages, there is always someone there to listen to you and to walk you home at night. However, always being around each other can be a disadvantage for some couples.

When you arrive in-country, remember that this is not a honeymoon. The experience will test your commitment, so the more experience you have together, the better off you will be. For those who are newlyweds, this can be a crash course in marriage.”

“Being married here poses some challenges but, in turn, offers some benefits. The gender gap in the Kyrgyz Republic is huge, and this will affect how married couples relate in Kyrgyz society. My advice to married couples is to be even more open than usual and to communicate about everyday frustrations and accomplishments. If you don’t let the daily stress of life in Kyrgyz society come between you, you will come back closer and stronger as a couple.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Although the Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Tajiks in the country are predominantly Muslim, the “Russification” of indigenous ethnic groups and cultures has been significant. While there has been a resurgence of Islam in some regions of Central Asia, religion does not seem to play a dominant role in the political or economic life of the Kyrgyz Republic except in the southern region of the country. Volunteers are frequently asked about their religious affiliation and may be invited to attend a community mosque. Those not in the practice of attending religious services may be challenged to explain their reluctance, but it is possible to politely decline if the religious services are not of one’s own faith. Most Volunteers have found effective ways to cope with these issues and have come to feel quite at home in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As a disabled Volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic, you may find that you face a special set of challenges. In the Kyrgyz Republic, as in other parts of the world, some people may hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. In addition, there is very little infrastructure in the country to accommodate individuals with disabilities compared with what has been developed in the United States.

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in the Kyrgyz Republic without unreasonable risk of harm. Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, job sites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



ТНА АДАМ БАЛАСЫНЫН КАТНАШЫНЫ
МАЛНАУУ КУРАЛЫ БОЛУП
САНАЛАТ.

ЭНЕ ТИЛИН БЛАДЕГЕН,
ЭСИ ИДЕГЕН АЙДАКТАН.
ЭНЕ ТИЛИН СУРОВАГЕН,
ЗАНИ СУГУУ ЖАРЫДАТ.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to the Kyrgyz Republic?

Your carry-on luggage should weigh no more than 11 pounds in total, and your checked luggage — a maximum of two pieces — should weigh no more than 100 pounds in total. The combined dimensions should not exceed 107 inches (length + width + height = 107) for checked pieces and 45 inches for carry-on bags. Adherence to these guidelines is necessary to minimize baggage-related problems during international travel. If you choose to ignore them, any charges for excess baggage will be solely your responsibility.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids, such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please remember to follow all Transportation Security Administration (TSA) regulations regarding liquids in your carry-on luggage. Please check the TSA website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

What is the electric current in the Kyrgyz Republic?

The Kyrgyz Republic uses 220 volts, 50 cycles, and if you plug a 110-volt (the U.S. standard) appliance or radio into a 220-volt socket, it will be damaged and possibly destroyed. All 110-volt electronics equipment must be plugged into a 220-volt to 110-volt wire-wound transformer. Transformers come in sizes from 50 to 2,000 watts and are rated for continuous

or intermittent use. Most audio equipment will work with a small 50-watt transformer, but an intermittent-rated transformer may not last a long time with a CD or tape player. For equipment with a heating element, such as a hair dryer, you can probably use a solid-state voltage reducer, which is small and lightweight and has a capacity of 1,600 watts. Some electronics equipment may also work with a voltage reducer. If in doubt, ask the equipment's manufacturer if you need a transformer or can use a voltage reducer.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in the Kyrgyz Republic. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. We discourage you from bringing a large amount of your own money; if you do, its safekeeping will be your responsibility.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. TEFL Volunteers are only able to take annual leave during school breaks and holidays. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Please remember that the annual leave restrictions during the first three months of service and the final three months of service will limit you and your travel with your friends and family members if they visit you during this time. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Additional information about insurance should be obtained by calling the insurance company directly. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable or irreplaceable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive electronics or appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in the Kyrgyz Republic do not need an international driver's license. Peace Corps Volunteers are not permitted to drive cars or drive or ride on motorcycles while in the country. Any Volunteer who chooses to own or ride a bicycle or a horse must wear a Peace Corps-issued helmet while riding.

What should I bring as gifts for Kyrgyz friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Please remember that you may live with a host family when you arrive at your permanent site, as well as during PST, so you may wish to plan to bring enough to share with various people – even if you don't end up living with a host family in your site, you can use those gifts to share with your counterparts, friends and others once at site. On balance, though, you don't want to be perceived as having a lot of treats and have members of the community assume you are

a source of expensive trinkets or have your benevolence taken for granted. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your state or region; a deflated soccer/basketball to start a game with local youth; spices and recipes to share your favorite meal with your host family and colleagues, or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

The Peace Corps' priority is to place you where there is the most need and where you can use your skills to the utmost and be effective and productive in your work. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour of another Volunteer. Most sites are located several hours from the regional capital. Peace Corps trainees are not notified of their assigned individual sites until the last few weeks of pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites and to finalize site selections with their community partners. You will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is

800-424-8580 or 202-692.1470. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800-424-8580 and asking for the Mongolia Desk.

Can I call home from the Kyrgyz Republic?

International phone service to and from the Kyrgyz Republic is good relative to that of other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Telekom, the Kyrgyz telephone company, has offices in towns and cities throughout the country. However, international calls are very expensive (about \$2 per minute), so some Volunteers make collect calls via an international operator. Many of the host families have telephones in their homes. If not, there is access to phones at post offices in the training town and in some of the training communities. International calling is also available from local Internet cafes at very reasonable prices, though the connection is sometimes spotty and calling hours awkward.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

The Kyrgyz Republic has cellular phone service, and key Peace Corps staff members have cell phones to attend to emergency calls. But because of the mountainous terrain, cellular service can be spotty. In addition, differences in technology make most U.S. cell phones incompatible with the Kyrgyz system. Local communication methods are reliable enough and are more compatible with the Peace Corps' belief that Volunteers should live modestly at the level of their local colleagues.

Will there be e-mail and Internet access?

Should I bring my computer?

Most Volunteers are at sites that do not have Internet access. However, many businesses and individuals in the capital and in some larger cities and towns have Internet access, and there are a growing number of Internet cafés. Due to the

weaker telephone and electrical infrastructure in outlying areas, Volunteers in rural sites may be limited to sending and receiving e-mail on their occasional visits to the capital or regional hubs. Before leaving the United States, many Volunteers establish free e-mail accounts, which they can access worldwide. If you are using a university email account as your primary email address contact, we recommend that you ensure that this account will not shut down once you are out of school. If you do sign up for a new email account, please also update the *My Toolkit* feature to ensure we have the most accurate contact information in our system.

Some Volunteers bring laptop computers with them and are happy they did so. Laptops can serve as a valuable resource in successfully meeting the needs of your Volunteer assignment and provide a means of watching movies and listening to music; many Volunteers maintain their exercise routine by working out with videos played on their laptops. However, the Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring a computer to get personal property insurance. Because of the high value of laptops, owners significantly increase their risk of becoming victims of crime. Moreover, you probably will not find the same level of technical assistance and service in the Kyrgyz Republic that you would in the United States and any replacement parts could take months to arrive. Also note that gaining Internet access via your laptop is only a remote possibility — very few Volunteers have adequate telephone lines in their home or workplace. If you bring a laptop, be sure to buy a high-quality surge protector, as electrical lapses and surges are common. The Peace Corps is not obligated to provide you a site with Internet connection. Current Volunteers strongly recommend bringing a flash or thumb drive even if you don't bring a laptop.

NOTES



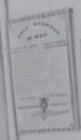
Күтестик БУРЫ

Schedule
Activities
① Fall about
② Reading
③ Spending
Friday group
Presentations

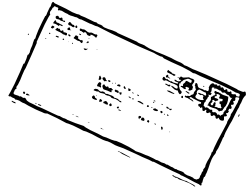
Greetings
Reading
Writing
Listening
Speaking
Thinking
Playing
Drawing
Painting

Here are professions
What are you doing
What is going on

Table with columns and rows of text, possibly a schedule or list.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM KYRGYZ REPUBLIC VOLUNTEERS



Congratulations on your acceptance into the Peace Corps Kyrgyzstan program. Though you may not know much about Kyrgyzstan, I can assure you that you are very lucky in your placement. The country is one of the most beautiful in the world, and though it is only the size of Nebraska, it contains a wide array of geographical features and ethnic cultures. From the forests and Uzbek enclaves of Arslonbob to the mix of Kyrgyz, Kazak, and Russian culture on Lake Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan is a country unlike any other.

Your work should be rewarding regardless of your program sector. Kyrgyz people are surprisingly well educated for being in a developing country and have a strong drive to improve themselves. Whether you work at an NGO or in a school, your time here will be well spent. In addition to your work, you will get to experience a unique culture. Due to its Soviet past, Kyrgyzstan is only now being reached by western popular culture and still retains much of the qualities it did hundreds of years ago. You will be treated to games of polo involving a dead goat, concerts with musical instruments unlike anything found in American music, and a pastoral way of life far removed from anything of which you are accustomed. On behalf of the other Volunteers, we look forward to working with you.

— Matthew L. Grandmason

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At the risk of being repetitive, congratulations on your invitation to Peace Corps – Kyrgyzstan! No doubt there are plenty of questions and concerns keeping you occupied right now, but that's all part of the excitement. The best piece of advice I can offer you as you get ready to begin the adventure that is service in the Peace Corps is to keep your sense of humor. You are coming to Kyrgyzstan to do serious work, but

I guarantee it will not be possible without the ability to laugh at yourself. Your daily routines will change so much from what you know at home in the States, from how you wash your socks to the language you will be speaking. Expect to make mistakes, but remember that so many Volunteers have made those mistakes before you, and many will after you. It's pretty relieving to know that you're not alone when you struggle to form a grammatically-correct sentence and end up sounding like a 3-year-old. That said, you're in for a lot of incredible experiences that will shape both your time here and you as a person. Again, congratulations and good luck!

— Katherine Haggans

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Welcome to the Kyrgyz Republic. You are about to embark on an incredible journey to a country known for its mountains, nature and people. The snow-capped mountains are spectacular by any measure. I don't know if there is anywhere in the Kyrgyz Republic where they are not a backdrop. The people here are proud of their "nature" as they call it. Bring a camera, as you will want to take many photos. The Issyk-Kul Lake is a huge lake located in the northern part of the Kyrgyz Republic; I believe the color of it changes daily, if not hourly — beautiful! And then the people, you will find them to be a proud, hospitable and gentle. They invite you into their homes and want to feed you lots of food. You need to be prepared to be adventuresome in some of your eating habits, as you may be served dishes you wouldn't have thought about eating in the states.

For the next two-plus years, you will meet a lot of different people. Getting to know volunteers from around the states is fun and you will have many stories to share with the people back home. Your fellow Volunteers will be a valuable support system during your time here. You will meet different nationalities of people in the Kyrgyz Republic, including Kyrgyz, Russians, Uzbeks and Turkish, to name a few. Depending on your home stays and site placements, your experience here may be totally different from another Volunteer placed at the same time and same oblast (region).

Be prepared to work hard. You will be learning a new language, a new culture, how to get around in a new country and just how to live life in general. Probably a lot of you have already traveled abroad before this experience, but it may be a little different living the life here. Many homes don't have indoor plumbing, cooking may take place outside and you may eat sitting on the floor, but all this adds to the ambience. You will want to do a good job at whatever your placement is, but it will be hard to learn everything you need to know as fast as you want to know it. Be prepared to learn patience and flexibility (if you don't already have those traits).

Peace Corps staff and other Volunteers are here to help you learn about all the things you need to know, so don't worry if you aren't really sure what to expect once you get here. Just come on over, it's great! We can't wait to meet you and share in the experience.

— Kathleen Petersen

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Congratulations on your invitation to serve in the Kyrgyz Republic. I've served with my wife in Talas for just over a year now. I think my wife and I can both say that the last year has been the most exciting year of our lives. It has come with its fair share of challenges and frustrations, but also the most intimate rewards. Serving here will forever change your life. You'll learn a lot about this beautiful country, its people and their culture.

You will also learn a lot about yourself — your likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, values and ideas. As all of these things become more clear to you, so too will your place in your community and the ways in which you can make a real difference.

Of course, you don't have to go halfway around the world to make a difference, but that's what we've done, and every minute has been an adventure. We hope you'll join us here and help us bring a little old-fashioned American hospitality to a warm, embracing people eager to meet you.

— Joe Kittle

T OF VIEW

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RE A... CHAIR, TABLE ETC.

LIKE ME? WHY?

A DIFFERENT ? WHY?

WHETHER ?

THE ROOM ?

LIKE OR DISLIKE ?

IN ME? WHY?

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POETRY SLAM

WWW.POETRYSLAM.COM

WHOEVER WRITES MUST RECITE.

TIME LIMIT (FIVE MINUTES?)

SCORING ?

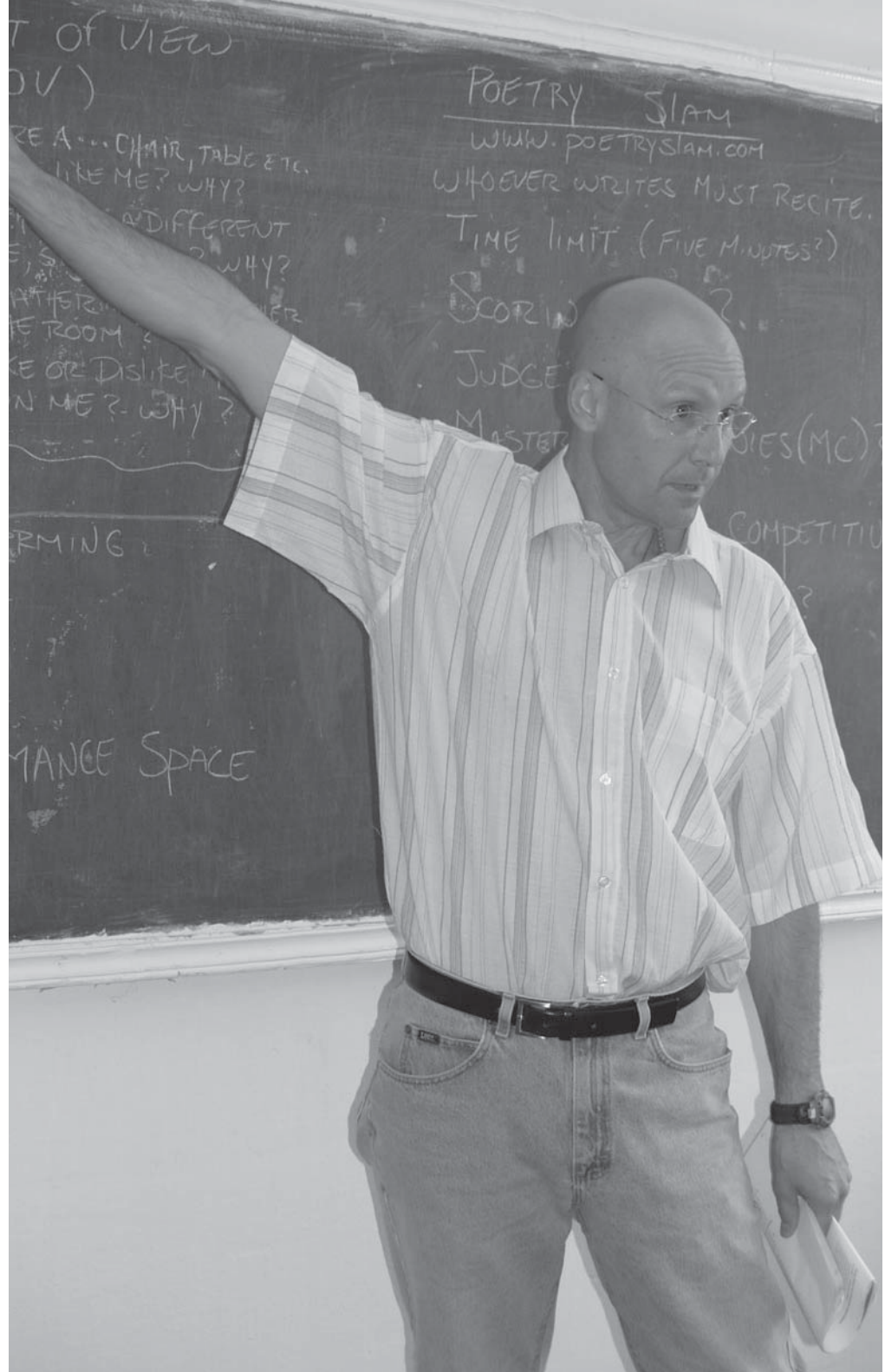
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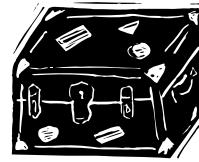
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COMPETITION

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PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in the Kyrgyz Republic and is based upon their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each Volunteer's experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. The most important things to bring are yourself, a sense of humor, and a sense of adventure!

You can find almost anything you need in Bishkek and many basics can be purchased in provincial capitals and larger cities. Depending upon your site, you may have limited time to shop until your first in-service training, which is usually held in the spring. So think carefully about those essential winter items you will need during the first few months at your site.

Before you move to your site, the Peace Corps will provide you with a space heater, water filter or distiller, fire extinguisher, smoke detector, many technical resources and language manuals, medical kit (described in an earlier section of this book), and a subscription to *Newsweek's* international edition.

Your living allowance should not be considered a source of funding for major clothing purchases, although replacement clothing is factored into the living allowance. The Peace Corps does not provide reimbursement for winter clothing purchased in the United States. However, Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic does provide a settling-in/winterization

allowance that covers the purchase of some winter clothing and supplies in-country. The hard water and strong detergent, not to mention hand-washing, will be harsh on your clothing, so make sure that whatever you bring can stand up to this treatment. Most Volunteers wear their clothes for several days before washing them, so dark colors are a good idea. It gets cold in the winter, so pack for any winter weather. Jeans, khakis and slacks offer very little value in terms of warmth, so men and women alike should bring a few pair of thermal underwear. Bring clothes that do not require frequent and special care, i.e. dry cleaning. Blazers, suits, sport coats, and sweaters should be in dark colors to disguise the toil of frequent use. Remember, too, that you will likely be laundering your clothes by hand – jeans, light-colored clothing and other fabrics can prove difficult to wash, dry and keep their color in these conditions.

A wide variety of clothes is available here (many of them made in China), but quality can be lacking. If you have a hard time finding your size in the United States, you won't find it here, and genuine "high-tech" fibers are not readily available. Very warm, locally-made winter clothes can be purchased in-country. Walking will be your main mode of transportation around town, and the terrain here is rather rugged, so you need footwear that can take a lot of abuse.

Dress is very important in the Kyrgyz Republic. The popular image of a Peace Corps Volunteer in sandals and a T-shirt with a university logo is not appropriate in this country (nor is military-style clothing or accessories). Fair or not, people are judged by the way they dress in the Kyrgyz Republic, more so than in the United States. Your colleagues will dress as professionals and for you to do otherwise will be considered disrespectful. If you come to work inappropriately dressed, your colleagues, students, and others in the community will probably not say

anything to you directly but may talk unfavorably about you to others. Following the lead of your co-workers will help you gain acceptance and respect in your community. This does not mean that you need to spend a lot of money on new clothing. Rather, be selective in what you bring, and consider buying some of your professional clothing in Bishkek. The quality and style may not be equal to that found in America, but they are the same clothes your local colleagues will be wearing. Luggage should be lightweight, durable, lockable, and easy to carry. Duffel bags and backpacks without frames are best because you will be hauling your luggage by foot — there are no redcaps or luggage carts in this part of the world.

General Clothing

- Warm winter jacket (with down or Hollofil)
- Lightweight jacket
- Mix-or-match clothes for layering, such as solid-color turtlenecks
- Cold weather gloves and hat
- Long underwear — silk is lightweight, easy to clean, and warm
- T-shirts (without wording or pictures about controversial issues such as politics, drugs, and sex)
- One or two pairs of jeans
- Sports and fitness clothing, such as jogging pants (shorts are inappropriate in most places, but can be worn in a gym or when running in a stadium)
- Hat or baseball cap for protection from the sun
- Underwear and socks for two years (locally available products tend to be of poor quality)
- Bandannas or handkerchiefs
- stocking cap/ski cap
- wool socks (at least six pairs)

Note: Avoid bringing white or light-colored clothing, as dust and mud are ubiquitous. Additionally, the largest size of clothing available typically is Large. Extra-Large or larger is not to be found here

For Men

- Sport jacket or suit
- Several pairs of nice slacks
- Several shirts with collars
- A few nice sweaters
- Ties

For Women

- Several skirts or dresses with hems below the knee, for summer and winter
- Several nice blouses and shirts (short-sleeved tops are fine if modest)
- A couple of pairs of nice slacks (which can be worn as professional clothing in some places)
- A shorter skirt or dress for evenings out in Bishkek
- Nylons or tights (thicker ones are great for cold weather)

Shoes

- Dress shoes — for men, loafers are practical because they can be slipped off easily when entering a home; for women, comfortable, low-heeled pumps are recommended; Volunteers who will be on their feet a lot might consider black sneakers that look like shoes
- Sneakers
- Sandals and/or flip-flops (for both dress and use as shower shoes)
- Hiking boots or warm boots (either/or because they are heavy)

- One or two pairs of warm, waterproof winter boots, which both men and women often wear to work in the winter (great boots in smaller sizes are available locally for around \$20)
- Extra shoelaces

Note: Shoes smaller than size 10 (men) or size 9 (women) are available locally, but larger shoes are not.

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Enough deodorant, soap, and other toiletries to last you through pre-service training (many of the brands available in Bishkek will be familiar to you, but if you require specific brands, you may want to bring more); feminine hygiene supplies are available in local markets
- Soap carrier
- Makeup
- Fragrant powders, body lotions, or perfume (for when showers are scarce)
- Contact lens solutions, which the Peace Corps does not provide (if you wear contact lenses)
- Lip balm — although this is an item in the medical kit, you might want to bring your own brand
- A three-month supply of any medications you take, to last you until the Peace Corps can order refills for you
- Two pairs of eyeglasses, if you wear them (replacements can take a long time to arrive from the United States); consider bringing a repair kit
- Hand sanitizer — a large bottle and a smaller one to refill
- Antibacterial gel or baby wipes
- Spot remover or Woolite (for clothes that need special care)
- Fabric refreshener or odor remover (e.g., Febreze)

- Favorite vitamins or nutrition supplements
- Tweezers, items for nail care, pumice stone, callus removers, etc.

Kitchen

You can buy most kitchen supplies in-country, but there are a few items that Volunteers recommend bringing:

- Lots of sealable plastic storage bags (you can pack stuff in them for the trip to the Kyrgyz Republic)
- Aluminum foil
- Basic cookbook, such as *The Joy of Cooking*
- French coffee press
- Packaged mixes for sauces, salad dressings, and soft drinks
- Your favorite spices
- Artificial sweetener, if you use it
- Peanut butter
- Popcorn

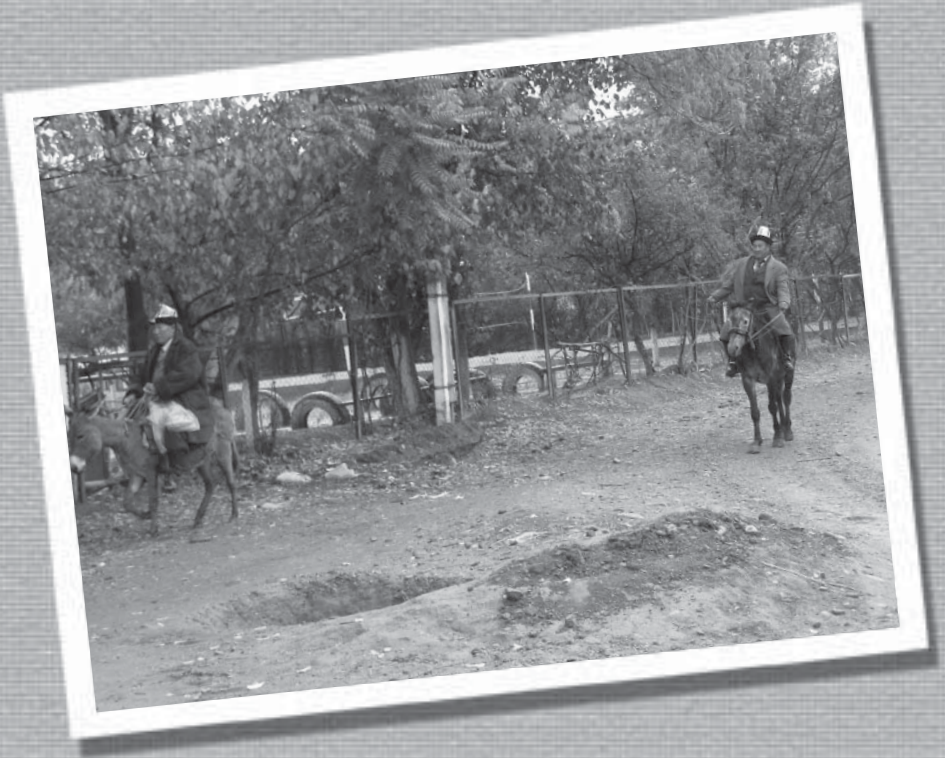
Miscellaneous

- Four passport-size photographs, which will be used by the Peace Corps and the Kyrgyz government for ID cards and visas
- Internal frame backpack or small overnight bag
- Luggage straps
- Bungee cords
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Small tool kit (wire strippers and phone repair tools are also useful)
- Swiss army knife or Leatherman tool

- Watch (durable, water resistant, and inexpensive) with extra batteries
- Battery-operated alarm clock
- Your favorite music (inexpensive cassette tapes of many popular recording artists are available locally)
- Laptop
- Your favorite DVDs (including workout videos) if you are bringing a laptop.
- Camcorder
- Camera — 35 mm compacts are best because they are more inconspicuous during travel (note that Advantix film processing and replacement batteries are not available locally)
- Batteries or rechargeable batteries and a re-charger with a converter for electronics (local batteries are expensive and not always of good quality)
- Key chain with flashlight
- A money holder that looks like a household item (such as a shaving cream can)
- Small, reliable flashlight
- Sewing kit
- Sleeping bag with stuff sack for traveling in cold weather
- Fleece throw/lap blanket for cold nights
- One bath towel and two washcloths
- Pillowcase (sheets and wool blankets are available locally)
- Laundry bag
- Duct tape
- American gifts
- Photos from home (picture sharing is important in the Kyrgyz Republic)

- Maps of the world and the United States
- Games such as playing cards, Uno, Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, chess, and Frisbee
- Envelopes of various sizes, including padded ones (American-style envelopes are not available), stationary and pens
- U.S. postage stamps for mail carried by people traveling back home
- A two-year planner
- Musical instruments (if you play)
- MP3 or other portable music player
- Subscriptions to your favorite magazines
- A few books by your favorite authors
- Appliances — buying them locally may eliminate the need to bring a voltage converter; items such as irons, blow dryers, and "boomboxes" are available at reasonable prices
- Teaching materials (for education Volunteers), such as markers, chalk, erasers, magazines, simple children's books and American music; you can also pack items for someone to ship to you later
- Interesting wall decorations (maps, posters, etc.)
- If you have a laptop, bring it (great for pictures, movies, entertainment)
- Thumb or flash drive
- Bring copies of all financial and personal documents, such as a Power of Attorney, birth certificates, passport and credit cards
- Graduate study materials (e.g., GRE, LSAT)
- A copy of the *Peace Corps Handbook* (provided in your Invitation Kit)

NOTES



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800-424-8580, extension 1470 or 202.692.1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for your passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain four passport-size photographs to bring with you to training.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any necessary dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.

- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.
- Obtain and bring copies of school transcripts, diplomas, professional licenses, resume and letters of reference in case you decide to apply for employment or graduate school while you are overseas.
- Arrange to keep professional licenses from expiring during your service.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many states consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and bring it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service (these forms will be completed and signed by a member of the Peace Corps staff at staging prior to your departure).
- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 1-800-424-8580, extension 1770.
- Place all your important papers — mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds — in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



ВНИМАНИЕ
Пользователи, не пользующиеся компьютером, должны покинуть рабочее место.
Пользователи, не пользующиеся компьютером, должны выключить компьютер и выключить свет.
Если вы используете компьютер, пожалуйста, не оставляйте его без присмотра.
Если вы используете компьютер, пожалуйста, не оставляйте его без присмотра.
Если вы используете компьютер, пожалуйста, не оставляйте его без присмотра.
Если вы используете компьютер, пожалуйста, не оставляйте его без присмотра.

WARNING
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ПРЕДУПРЕЖДЕНИЕ
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ATTENTION
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CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

Please use the following list of numbers to help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia	Ext. 1835	202.692.1835
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: kyrgyzrepublic@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2427	202.692.2427

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · www.peacecorps.gov · 1-800-424-8580