



Peru, the Amazing Land



Every place on the planet has something of interest, but Peru is undoubtedly a privileged country for its great natural, historical and human legacy.

Here, nature lovers will feel gratified by the diversity of environments and scenery. They will be amazed by the sharp contrast between forests and deserts on the coast; deep ravines and towering snow-capped mountains in the Andean highlands; densely forested slopes and huge plains of thick vegetation in the Amazon jungle; and they will be surprised at the wide variety of animal and plant life, unique in the world, that is characteristic to each of these regions.

Those who admire the remains of the past will find magnificent testimonies to an ancient civilization that dates back six thousand years, with an unmistakable cultural identity that created wonders such as the Royal Tombs of Sipan, the Nazca Lines, Chan-Chan and Machu Picchu. And they will be able to see the best examples -in painting, sculpture and architecture- of the fusion of Hispanic and American cultures. Adventure travelers will be able to ride tall waves and go looking for underwater life along the long stretches of natural beaches; climb high mountain ranges, explore deep caves, run the longest and biggest rivers on the continent, trek along ancient paths that wind through different eco-systems; and observe endangered species up close in natural reserves of indescribable beauty.

Because it is a racial melting pot, Peru is home to a wide variety of expressions of its peoples through their ancient, creative and colorful folk art. Visitors can join in age-old celebrations; each music and dance retelling its own history. They are welcome to share in the customs and tasks of villagers and witness how farmers have been able to master the difficult terrain of the coast, highlands and jungle. There also will be no lack of opportunities for the most demanding of palates to savor the variety and quality of Peruvian cuisine, which offers the visitor the best seasoning in the Americas.

This manual presents the most important tourist offers now available, and together with the activities manual will allow you to easily design and promote programs that will give travelers the opportunity to explore, discover and sense this mysterious and dynamic country called Peru.



TERRITORY

Peru occupies the west central area of South America, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. It is the third largest country on the continent, covering 1'285,215.6 km² (496,221.51m²) a surface greater than the combined territories of Spain, France and Germany. Peru is divided into three geographic regions:

- **Coast** (12% of the territory): a warm climate along the coastline that includes superb natural beaches, mysterious deserts, fertile river valleys and exotic dry woodlands.
- **Highlands** (28% of the territory): a region of varied terrain and temperate climate, dominated by the snow-capped peaks of the Andes rising above 6,000 masl, the highest of which is Mount Huascarán, at 6,768 masl (22,206 ft). It includes deep canyons such as the Colca and Cotahuasi, the two deepest on the planet; and high plains like the plateau of Collao, on the shores of the world's highest navigable lake, Titicaca, at 3,810 masl (12,500 ft)
- **Jungle or Amazonia** (60% of the territory): a region of tropical climate, lush vegetation and abundant fauna that is part of one of the planet's largest natural reserves. It is here that the confluence of the Marañón and Ucayali rivers forms the Amazon River, the largest in the world.

CLIMATE

Temperatures and atmospheric cycles vary from one region to another.

- **Coast:** There are two clearly-defined seasons on the coast: summer (December-March), when temperatures can reach 27°C (80°F); and winter (April-November), which is very damp and chilly, with temperatures falling to 12°C (53°F). Although it rarely rains on the coast, mist and drizzle are common during the winter. The far north coast enjoys sunshine all year round, with temperatures reaching 35°C (95°F) in the summer.
- **Highlands:** The climate is dry and temperate, with two clearly-defined seasons: the dry season (April-October), with sunny days, very cold nights and scant rainfall -the ideal time to visit the Andes- and the rainy season (December-March). There is a sharp contrast in temperature between sun and shade, and temperatures can often vary widely during the same day, from 20°C (68°F) to 2°C (35°F).
- **Jungle:** The climate is tropical and humid. There are two well-defined seasons: the summer or dry season (April to October) with sunny days and temperatures above 30°C (86°F), and the rainy season (November to March), with frequent heavy showers and high river levels.

Information on weather conditions in Peru is available on Internet:

<http://www.senamhi.gob.pe>

<http://www.weather.com>

POPULATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

Peru has a population of approximately 27 million people. The coast is home to 52% of the total population, while 36% live in the highlands and 12% in the jungle. The population is predominantly mestizo or racially mixed, and most speak Spanish, although there are two important minorities: the Quechua and Aymara, and the native population of Amazonia, which is subdivided into 14 linguistic families and 42 ethnic groups.

Peru is politically divided into 25 regions (Amazonas, Ancash, Apurímac, Arequipa, Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Callao, Cusco, Huancavelica, Huanuco, Ica, Junín, Lambayeque, La Libertad, Lima-Provinces, Loreto, Madre de Dios, Moquegua, Pasco, Piura, Puno, San Martín, Tacna, Tumbes and Ucayali) as well as the capital, Metropolitan Lima, which has no regional status. Peru is a democracy whose public powers are the Executive, headed by the President of the Republic; the Legislature, which is a one-chamber congress; and the Judiciary. General elections, to elect a President of the Republic and the representatives to Congress, are held every five years. Regional and municipal elections are held every four years, the most recent held in 2002. Currently, the Constitutional President of the Republic is Dr. Alan García Pérez, whose mandate concludes on July 28, 2010.

BRIEF HISTORY

Peru is one of the great original centers of ancient culture, along with Mexico, Mesopotamia, India and China. Paleolithic man left his first traces here and began to develop villages of hunter-gatherers around 6000 B.C. as seen in Lauricocha, Huanuco. Farming settlements began to form around 2500 B.C., planting manioc, broad beans, quinoa, potatoes, cotton and maize.

Prior to the arrival of the Conquistadors from Europe, Peruvian history is divided into five stages or horizons:

- **Early Horizon** (1200 B.C. - 200 B.C.): Small states were formed, with the elite holding economic and religious power. Chavín de Huántar (Ancash) belongs to this stage, with its temple of underground passages that include monochromatic pottery and megalithic art. Other key remains are those of Caral (Lima) and Sechin (Ancash).
- **Intermediate Early Horizon** (200 B.C. - A.D. 600): This is the era of the great centers of regional development. The important cultures are those of Tiahuanaco (Puno), Mochica and Lambayeque (Lambayeque and La Libertad), Nasca and Paracas (Ica). Tiahuanaco is known for its Chullpas or funeral towers at Sillustani (Puno); the Mochica are famous for the Royal Tombs of the Lord of Sipán; the Lambayeque built the pyramids of Tucumé; the Nazcas made remarkable pottery and drew the mysterious Lines in the desert; and the Paracas wove wonderful textiles.
- **Middle Horizon** (A.D. 600 - A.D. 900): The epoch when the Wari culture spread throughout the Andean region. Evidence lies in the citadels of Wari (Ayacucho), Pikillacta (Cuzco) and Marca Huamachuco (La Libertad).

- **Late Intermediate Horizon** (A.D. 900 - A.D. 1400): This period is marked by a group of regional states with well defined cultural features. The important cultures are those of Chimu and Chinchu on the coast; Cajamarca and Huanta in the highlands; and Chachapoyas in the north jungle. The structures representative of this period are the Chimu citadel of Chan Chan (La Libertad), the funeral center of the Windows of Otuzco in Cajamarca, and the Chachapoyan citadel of Kuelap (in Amazonas).

- **Late Horizon** (A.D. 1400 - A.D. 1532): This is the period predominated by the Incas, native to Cuzco, who built an imperial form of government throughout the entire Andean world. Their main legacy is their architecture in Cuzco. This period concludes in 1532 with the Spanish Conquest.

The Colonial period developed between 1532 and 1821, from which there is a magnificent artistic heritage. Examples include paintings such as those of the so-called Cuzco School; architecture as in the Santo Domingo convent in Cuzco (built on the ancient Inca temple of Koricancha) and the convent of Santa Catalina in Arequipa. Independence was declared on July 28, 1821 and later consolidated with the victory of the Battle of Ayacucho on December 9, 1824.

LANGUAGE AND CURRENCY

The official language is Spanish, although the State also recognizes all other native languages and dialects. The Roman Catholic Church enjoys a favored status but the State guarantees full religious freedom. Basic English is taught at most schools. English is generally spoken by people who work in the travel industry, such as tour guides and personnel at travel agencies and hotels. The Peruvian currency is the Nuevo Sol (S/.); circulation is in coins of 5, 10, 20 and 50 céntimos, and 1, 2 and 5 Nuevos Soles; and banknotes for 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 Nuevos Soles. Most shops, restaurants and gasoline stations accept US dollars and euros at the daily exchange rate.

Most hotels and commercial establishments in cities throughout the country accept major credit cards: Visa, Master Card, Diners and American Express. Travelers checks are not widely used. Check with the establishment whether they are accepted.

To find out the latest exchange rate, check out:
<http://www.editoraperu.com>
<http://www.expedia.msn.com>

TIME AND SERVICES

Peruvian time is 5 hours behind or less than Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and coincides with Eastern Standard Time (EST) in the United States. Peru is on the same time as New York; Santiago de Chile and Caracas are an hour ahead; Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires are 2 hours ahead; and Tokyo is 15 hours ahead.

Electric current is 220 volts. The telephone system operates with direct dialing for local and international calls; telephone directories provide the code numbers for each city. There are public Internet booths almost everywhere in the country

HOW TO GET THERE

- **By air:** Peru is linked by direct flights and connections to the main cities of Europe, Asia and the Americas. The main port of entry is Jorge Chavez International Airport (Callao, Lima). The airports of Arequipa, Cuzco, Chiclayo, Iquitos, Pisco, Pucallpa, Tacna and Trujillo are also equipped to receive international flights.

- **Overland:** One can enter Peru via the Pan-American Highway through the city of Tacna in the south, or through the city of Tumbes in the north. Access is also possible from the city of Loja (Ecuador) which is connected by road to the city of Piura. There are two entry routes from Bolivia: Copacabana - Yunguyo - Puno; and La Paz - Desaguadero - Puno.

- **By river:** The only point of entry by river is along the Amazon, with private rivercraft services coming from the cities of Leticia (Colombia) and Tabatinga (Brazil) to the port of Iquitos (Peru).

- **By lake:** Lake Titicaca links Peru to neighbouring Bolivia, with which Peru enjoys bustling trade and tourism links.

- **By sea:** Cruise liners call at Callao, Peru's main port. Some cruises also call at the ports of Salaverry (Trujillo) and Chimbote (Ancash), in northern Peru; and at San Martin (Ica) and Matarani (Arequipa) in the south.

Peru operates a travel information and assistance service called iperu, which provides objective information on tourist services, as well as assistance for travelers who have not received the service they paid for. The service can be contacted 24 hours a day, nationwide:



Tel: (01) 574-8000

e-mail: iperu@promperu.gob.pe

LIMA, CITY OF VICEROYS

gastronomy and conventions



Lima, the traditional City of Kings, was founded in 1535 by the Conquistador Francisco Pizarro. Today it is the capital of the country and the gateway to the rest of Peru. In 1991, UNESCO declared it a World Cultural Heritage site for its colonial architecture.

Travelers can visit everything from pre-Hispanic temples such as Pachacamac -which was the center of oracles and religious pilgrimages over different periods-- to old colonial mansions and churches rich in history, such as the Cathedral, the convent of San Francisco, the church and convent of the Nazarenes, and Torre Tagle palace, which today is headquarters of the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Lima is a modern metropolis, ideal for conventions and international or world meetings, with all the appropriate infrastructure and fully-equipped five-star hotels.

The city has a number of districts that are very different from each other and worth a visit: Miraflores, a quarter with modern infrastructure that includes leading hotels, restaurants of every specialty, shopping areas and nightspots. Its beaches offer good surfing conditions and the shoreline cliffs are the ideal height for hang-gliding and paragliding take-offs. San Isidro is known for its parks and residential areas, and is a modern business and financial district. Barranco, a bohemian neighbourhood and the home of artists, teems with a nightlife of pubs and music. Santiago de Surco, a district known for its shopping malls and century-old wine cellars.

Altitude, 154 masl (505 ft).

How to Get There

- By air: Lima is linked to the world's major cities and is the hub for connections to cities around Peru.

- By land: Lima is the main hub for the road network linking cities all over the country, via the Pan-American Highway and the Central Highway.

Lodging

The city offers a wide selection of lodgings ranging from basic services to the luxurious.

Tourist Services

A wide variety of restaurants and all kinds of transport and services.

Minimum Length of Stay

Three days is ideal to tour the city and environs.

Historical Center Attractions

Plaza Mayor: the main square, designed when the city was founded, has a beautiful bronze fountain made in 1650.

Cathedral of Lima: The cornerstone was placed by Francisco Pizarro in 1535.

Church and Convent of San Francisco: complex famous for its catacombs.

Sanctuary of Saint Rose of Lima: located where Isabel

Flores de Oliva, Saint Rose of Lima, lived.

Season / Climate

Lima has two marked seasons: summer between October and April, with strong sunshine and no rain; and winter between May and September, with high humidity and drizzles.

Festivals

Lord of Miracles Month (October): Lima's most important festivity. It is celebrated around the image of a crucified Christ that is a replica of a mural painted in the 18th century in the slaves' quarter of Pachacamilla. The old Acho bullring is the scene of an important bullfight season in October, when the best of the world's bullfighters come to vie for the Gold Scapular of the Lord of Miracles.

Gastronomy

There are excellent restaurants in Lima for national and international cuisine and local varieties of many Italian, French and Chinese dishes.

First Courses:

Cebiche: bite-size pieces of raw fish marinated in lemon juice, onion and hot chili pepper, garnished with corn on the cob and sweet potato.

Escabeche: a cold dish of fried fish or chicken marinated in vinegar and then steamed with generous servings of onion.

Causa limeña rellena: a cold dish of thickly mashed yellow potatoes seasoned with hot chili pepper and lemon, and then stuffed with tunafish, chicken or vegetables.

Soups:

Parihuela: a concentrated broth of fish and shellfish.

Main dishes:

Lomo Saltado: sliced beef sautéed with onion and tomato, mixed in with fried potatoes, and served with rice.

Ají de Gallina: diced chicken in a thick sauce of milk, cheese, ají chili pepper and nuts, also served with white rice.

Desserts:

Mazamorra Morada: sweet purple maize jelly stewed with fresh and dried fruits.

Suspiro a la Limeña: rich milk and vanilla cream topped with meringue.

Arts & Crafts

Excellent quality folk art and crafts can be purchased in Lima. The main handicraft markets are located at Av. Petit Thouars in Miraflores; at Av. La Marina in Pueblo Libre; and the center of Lima at Jr. Conde de Superunda and Jr. Carabaya.

THE MYSTERIOUS NAZCA LINES and the Paracas National Reserve



To the south of the city of Ica, the Pan-American Highway cuts through the desert of sand dunes to Km 420, just 25 km (15 miles) before the town of Nazca. There, on the plains of San Jose, lies a collection of mysterious geoglyphs and straight lines that were etched into the desert around A.D. 600.

These Nazca Lines consist of furrows some 20 centimeters deep (8 inches) drawn in the shape of animals such as a hummingbird, a monkey or a fish, that are almost 500 meters (1,640 ft) long.

The Lines were studied by Max Uhle in 1901, by Toribio Mejia Xesspe in 1926, and it was Paul Kosok who made them known to the world in 1939. The German mathematician and student of Kosok, Maria Reiche, dedicated her life between 1940 and 1998 to protect these geoglyphs, which were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1994.

The Ica region also holds the Paracas National Reserve (22 km south of the city of Pisco, at Km 261 on the South Pan-American Highway). This rich coastal eco-system covers an area of 335,000 hectares (827,450 acres), that includes desert, beaches, islands, cliffsides and ocean. This natural habitat is a haven for flamingoes, pelicans, penguins, dolphins, sea lions, and an infinite variety of fish and crustaceans. An hour away by boat to the northwest lie the captivating Ballestas Islands, a protected area of cormorants and sea lions.

Altitude, Chincha, Pisco and Paracas, sea level; Ica, 406 masl (1,332 ft), Nazca 588 masl (1,929 ft), Palpa, 347 masl (1,138 ft).

How to Get There

By air: Flights to Ica from Lima take 1 hour.

Overland: South Pan-American Highway from Lima to Paracas takes 3 hours; to Ica, 4 hours; to Nazca, 6 hours.

Lodging

There are comfortable hotels and hostels in the towns of Chincha, Pisco, Ica, Paracas and Nazca.

Activities

Archaeology, nature-watching, water sports such as windsurfing and waterski, boat rides, trekking, cycling excursions, sandboarding, horseback-riding.

Tourist Services

Guided tours; flights over the lines at Nazca and Palpa from Ica and Nazca (45-minute flights); complete trekking and camping services; dune-buggy rides through the desert; boat rides to the Ballestas Islands from Paracas.

Minimum Length of Stay

Three days to fly over the lines and visit part of the reserve and the Ballestas Islands as well as enjoy desert tours and adventure sports.

Recommendations

Fly over the Nazca Lines in the morning, depending on the weather. Boat rides to the Ballestas Islands should

be in the mornings, also depending on the weather.

Some of the beaches within the Paracas Reserve are not appropriate for children because of the banks of large seaweed and the muddy ocean floor.

Nearby Attractions

There are a number of pre-Hispanic attractions, such as the Cantayoc aqueduct (5 km east of Nazca); the ceremonial center of Cahuachi (17 km north of Nazca); and the Inca ruins of Tambo Colorado in the Pisco valley.

Ica is also an attractive travel destination for its festivities and wine-growing tradition, as it is the birthplace of pisco, Peru's grape brandy. There is also the attractive Huacachina, a small and long-traditional resort in an oasis close to the city of Ica, with comfortable hotels.

Seasons / Climate

The weather is hot and dry all year round, with no rain.

Festivals

International Wine Harvest Festival (first half of March):

In Ica, celebrates the grape harvest and includes wine and pisco tastings, a food festival, parades, the election of a festival queen and music concerts.

Religious celebration of the Lord of Luren (first Thursday and third Monday of October): In Ica, where large crowds attend a procession of this patron saint of the city, complemented by fairs, games and other events.

Gastronomy

Sopa seca: noodles with shredded chicken, seasoned with annatto, parsley and basil. Served as an accompaniment to carapulcra.

Carapulcra: stew made of diced, freeze-dried potato and pork, with annatto, dried hot chili pepper and ground peanuts.

Guiso de pallares verdes: a spicy stew of green lima beans with milk, egg and cheese.

Tejas: a sweet made of pecans, sweet black bean paste, chirimoya paste and other seasonal fruits.

HUASCARAN NATIONAL PARK

Chavin and the cordillera Huayhuash



The Huascarán National Park, in the Cordillera Blanca mountain range, covers an area of 340,000 hectares (840 hectares) that includes 296 lakes and 663 glaciers - as well as the highest peaks in Peru, including Huascarán at 6,768 masl (22,206 ft), Huandoy and Alpamayo. It includes protected areas for Andean plant species such as the Puya Raimondi and the queñual tree, and wildlife such as the Andean condor and the vicuña.

The Huascarán National Park was listed by UNESCO in 1977 as a nucleus of the Biosphere Reserve and in 1985 was declared a World Natural Heritage Site. Popular sites include the Pastoruri glacier (70 km/42 miles south of Huaraz); Lake Llanganuco (at the foot of Huascarán) and the thermal springs of Monterrey (5km north of Huaraz).

In the Callejón de Conchucos, to the southeast of Huaraz, is the Archaeological Complex of Chavin de Huantar (3,810 masl / 12,500 ft), which consists of temples, tunnels, stone buildings and plazas. This site was the most important ceremonial center of the ancient Chavin culture and in one of its tunnels is the Lanzón, an impressive and fierce-looking mythical figure 4.53 meters tall (over 14 ft) and carved in the shape of a giant arrowhead.

The Cordillera Huayhuash lies at the extreme south of the Cordillera Blanca, on the border with the Huanuco region. Lake Conococha is the source of the Santa River, and the range includes Mt. Yerupaja (6,634 masl/21,766 ft), the country's second highest peak and the most difficult to climb. The area's most impressive and demanding trekking route (8 days) begins at the town of Chiquian (3,200 masl / 10,499 ft).

Altitude

Huaraz: 3,100 masl (10,170 ft); Caraz: 2,250 masl (7,380 ft); trekking routes run from 3,800-4,000 masl (12,467 - 13,123 ft).

How to Get There

Overland: there are daily buses from Lima to Huaraz (400 km - 248 miles) that take 8 hours; from Trujillo (570 km - 354 miles) the journey takes 10 hours.

Lodging

Three-star hotels in Huaraz; three-star hostels in Carhuaz and Caraz; basic lodging in Chiquian and other towns and shelters within the park.

Activities

Archaeological tourism in Chavin (Huari), Recuay and Willkawayin (Callejón de Huaylas), Yayno (Conchucos) and Sechin (Casma). Conventional camping and trekking, llama treks, mountain climbing, eco-tourism, wildlife watching, river-rafting down the Santa River, snow skiing, and cycling trips. Arts and crafts at Chacas (Conchucos), famous for wood carvings.

Tourist Services

Tourist transport and auxiliary and specialized personnel

for trekking and longer trips to the mountains. Full equipment available for climbs and excursions. Mountain and conventional tour guides available for the main trekking routes, muleteers, packhorses and mountain cooks.

Minimum Length of Stay

Five days (including the round trip); trekking routes from 2-14 days. The Chavin archaeological complex can be visited in a single day from Huaraz.

Recommendations

A day for getting used to the altitude is essential before any demanding physical activity. Eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea. Activities in the Cordillera Blanca are subject to National Park regulations.

Season / Climate

The best time of year is from May to September, when skies are clear. The snowline starts at 4,600 masl / 15,088 ft. Nights are cold at high altitude and cool in Huaraz and other towns.

Festivals

Huaraz Carnival (February).

Mountain Sports Week (May/June), throughout the Callejón de Huaylas, with international competitions.

Feast of San Pedro de Corongo (June 29): Religious and popular celebration famous for its Las Pallas dance.

Anniversary of Huaraz (July 25).

Gastronomy

Picante de Cuy: stewed guinea pig in a peanut and hot chili pepper sauce.

Cuchikanca: tender suckling pig marinated in vinegar and roasted.

Pecan Caldo: sheepshead soup with tripe.

Pachamanca: various kinds of meat, potatoes and tender corn cooked underground over hot stones.

Arts & Crafts

The area is known for making traditional costumes and colorfully-embroidered petticoats. Local craftsmen also make candles that are widely used in various religious processions in the region. Other items include lambswool blankets from Chavin, Tarica pottery, wrought iron objects, embossed leather, baskets, and blankets and ponchos woven in llama wool.

CUZCO and the Sacred Valley of the Incas



The city of Cuzco is located in the southeastern Andes. Its name in Quechua means "center of the world", from when it was the capital of the empire or Tahuantinsuyo (four regions). Legend has it that the city was founded by Manco Capac and Mama Occllo, who rose out of Lake Titicaca.

The Incan architectural legacy of Cuzco dates back to the 15th century and is attributed to the Inca Pachacutec (1438-1471), who built the city's most remarkable constructions, including fine stone carving, the perfect locking between stone blocks, and the trapezoidal design of entryways. These buildings include Sacsayhuaman, in the upper part of the city; the Korikancha (temple of the sun) on top of which the Spanish built the Santo Domingo convent; and on the street called Hatun Rumiyoc (two blocks from the main square), the wall that includes the famous 12-sided stone.

Following the arrival of the Spaniards, Cuzco became a mestizo and colonial city featuring splendid colonial constructions, built on top of Inca foundations, and which developed its own mestizo style of architecture and painting that can be seen in the Cathedral and the Compañía de Jesús church.

The city is known as the Archaeological Capital of the Americas. UNESCO declared Cuzco a World Heritage Site in 1983.

Altitude. Cuzco: 3,360 masl (11,020 ft); Sacred Valley: 2,900 masl (9,512 ft)

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima (55 minutes), Arequipa (35 minutes), Puerto Maldonado (30 minutes) and La Paz, Bolivia (1 hour, flights every other day).

By rail: from Puno, 384 km (238 miles) in 10 hours.

Overland: by bus, from Lima via Nazca and Abancay, 1,131 km (701 miles) in 19 hours; from the city of Puno, 389 km (241 miles) in 6 hours; and from Arequipa, 528 km (327 miles) in 10 hours via Juliaca.

Lodging. Cuzco offers all categories of lodging, including five-star hotels with central heating and very good restaurants.

Activities. Visits to archaeological sites, museums and churches, arts and crafts markets, experiential tourism, ecotourism, trekking, cycling excursions, river-rafting, mountain climbing, balloon rides, bungee jumping and horse-riding. Other features are the gastronomy, variety of popular fiestas and the traditional markets of Chincheros and Pisac.

Tourist Services. Several categories of restaurants, rental of equipment for trekking, camping and rafting. Transport (car, bus), guided tours.

Minimum Length of Stay. Three to four days for the main attractions in the city of Cuzco, Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu.

Recommendations. Visitors need to get used to the high altitude. Avoid any over-exertion for the first few hours; eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea to ward off high-altitude sickness (soroche).

Attractions. The Cathedral, the Compañía Church and Santo Domingo Convent, San Blas artists' quarter, Sacsayhuaman Archaeological Park which includes Kenko, Puca Pucará and Tambomachay.

The Sacred Valley includes the remarkable archaeological areas of Pisac and Ollantaytambo. The archaeological complex of Choquequirao is 185 km (114 miles) from Cuzco, with a main square, storage buildings, terracing systems and ceremonial platforms.

Season / Climate. There are two clearly-defined seasons: The dry season, from May to August, when the nights and early mornings are extremely cold (frosty); and the rainy season, which is from December to March.

Festivals

Easter Week (March / April, movable feast): Holy Monday, procession and blessing of the Lord of Earthquakes, patron of Cuzco.

Corpus Christi (May / June, movable feast): procession of images of saints and virgins, patrons of the different parish churches.

Qoyllur Riti (May / June, movable feast): its name means Bright Star of Snow and is a blend of the ancient worship of the Apus or mountain gods with Catholic traditions. More than 50,000 people participate, dressed in the clothing typical of each of the different regions in the south, to the Sinacara Sanctuary. The pilgrims carry stones of different sizes up the mountainside to place them at the apacheta or rock pile, and return downhill carrying blocks of ice on their backs.

Inti Raymi (June 24): the staging of the feast of the Sun God, the supreme Inca deity, with folk dances and costumes on a grand scale.

Nuestra Señora del Carmen (July 16): folk dances in the town of Paucartambo.

Gastronomy

Lawa: fresh maize and bean soup.

Queso Kapchi: a cold dish of fresh cheese, lima beans, potatoes and onions, seasoned with milk and hot chili pepper.

Chicharrón con Mote: pork fritters and fresh maize.

Chiriuchu: roast chicken or guinea pig, served with an omelette of toasted corn flour, cheese, salt-dried meat, rocoto chili pepper and algae.

Arts & Crafts. The most important crafts include textiles woven on hand looms, pottery, silver jewelry, replicas of Cuzco School paintings, furs, carved and gilded wood, religious imagery (the Magi, Virgins, Christ Childs, and Archangels), and masks. The artists' quarter of San Blas is the center of most workshops, including of leading craftsmen such as the Edilberto Mérida, Antonio Olave, Jesus La Torre and the Mendivil family.

THE INCA TRAIL

the highway of the great empire



The Incas built a vast network of roads to communicate with the four regions of their vast empire. The network was called Qapaq Ñan (the sovereign's highway) or Inca Road, and was made up of stone paths suitable for two or three people with trains of llamas. Rivers were crossed by hanging bridges and the steep slopes were mastered with steps and ramps. There are remains of the Qapaq Ñan throughout Peru that are still used to this day by local villagers and farmers. One of the most impressive and best preserved roads is the trail that links Cuzco and Machu Picchu.

Today, hiking the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu allows the visitor to step back in time and walk through a variety of eco-systems and dazzling scenery. The length of the 39 kilometers (24 miles) includes unforgettable views, archaeological remains; 400 different species of orchids and begonias, exotic trees like the pisonay, the queñual and innumerable species of fauna in their natural habitat, such as the cock-of-the-rocks, llamas and vicuñas, the white-tailed deer, the vizcacha and, if visitors are lucky, the endangered and vegetarian spectacled bear. The Inca Trail is one of the world's leading trekking and camping routes.

Altitude

Minimum: 2,600 masl - 8,528 ft; Maximum: 4,200 masl - 13,776 ft.

How to Get There

There are two options:

- Four days / 3 nights. The trek starts at Kilometer 88 on the railway line, known as Qorihuayrachina. Archaeological sites along the way include Patallacta, Willkarakay, Patawasi, Runkurakay, Sayacmarca, Conchamarca, Phuyupatamarca -the highest site at 3,650 masl (11,972 ft)-- Intipata, Wiñayhuayna -an Inca site surrounded by impressive terraces and an exuberance of wild orchids-- and Machu Picchu. An interesting feature on this route is the crossing of the Urubamba River via a hanging bridge and the climb - optional-up to Warmiwaskuña pass ('where the woman died') at 4,200 masl (13,776 ft) which offers spectacular scenery.

- Two days/ 1 night. This route is known as the Sacred Trail and the trek begins at Km 104 (Chachabamba), which can be reached by train. Archaeological sites along the way include Chachabamba, Wiñayhuayna and Machu Picchu. The train ride from the city of Cuzco as far as Km 104 takes around 3 hours.

There are alternative, shorter trails that are considered part of the circuit of the Inca Roads network and which join up with the last stage of the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. These are the Royal Trail, a 6-hour trek, and the Road of Purification which takes 4 or 5 hours. Trekkers must make arrangements through accredited travel agencies to take these routes.

Activities

Archaeology, trekking (moderately difficult), wildlife watching.

Tourist Services

There are camping areas along the route clearly designated by the Machu Picchu Management Unit (UGM). There is an inn with basic facilities for 39 people and a restaurant for about 100 people at Wiñaywayna. Travel agencies that are licensed to operate the route are responsible for providing each visitor with the essentials, including food, tents, sleeping bags, etc.

Minimum Length of Stay

Depending on the route chosen, visitors should plan for two to three additional days for connections to the city of Cuzco and their next destinations.

Recommendations

Acclimatization is necessary. Refrain from any over-exertion during the first few hours. Eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea to ward off high-altitude sickness. Trekkers will need to be in good physical condition to be able to tackle the longer Inca Trails. Follow the regulations for conservation of the trail.

Nearby Attractions

Along the trail one can find a great variety of archaeological sites such as Machu Q'ente, Huayna Q'ente, Pulpituyoc, Kusichaca, Patallacta, Torontoy, and the snow-capped peaks of Mount Veronica and Salcantay.

Season / Climate

The Inca Trail runs through a variety of eco-systems and altitudes, which makes for a wide-ranging climate.

There are two seasons: the dry season, from April-October, and the rainy season, with heavy cloud cover, from November to March.

Regulations / Observations

According to the regulations established by the Machu Picchu Management Unit (UGM), there are two ways to walk the Inca Trail: One is via a duly registered travel agency authorized by the UGM to operate the circuit, and the other is to hire the services of a guide who is also registered and authorized. Hikers are permitted to hire their own porters for the trek

MACHU PICCHU

lost city of the Incas



Enveloped in a magical silence, 120 km (74 miles) northwest of Cuzco on the slopes above the Urubabamba River, lies one of the most beautiful archaeological sites on the planet. Some also consider it to be a mystical place that exudes vital energy. Machu Picchu is remarkable for its solid construction, its well-balanced use of space and the harmony of the design with its natural surroundings. Its name comes from the ancient Quechua word meaning old mountain. It is strategically located to elude enemies and is surrounded by deep canyons and impressive mountains, which the Incas called Apus or guardian gods. The whole area is covered in thick vegetation.

The site was built entirely of stone, using every space in harmony with function. There are two main sections: the urban area, which includes temples, palaces, plazas, storage rooms, workshops, stairways, and fountains; and the agricultural area made up of various types of terraces for cultivation.

The local people knew of the ruins long ago. In 1911, the guide Melchor Arteaga led professor Hiram Bingham to Machu Picchu. Bingham returned in 1914 with the support of Yale University and the National Geographic Society and since then, Machu Picchu has been known as the 'Lost City of the Incas', initially confused with Old Vilcabamba, where Manco Inca sought refuge from the Spanish.

The citadel is believed to have been fundamentally for religious purposes. Bingham found a cemetery exclusively of women, which led him to believe it was an immense monastery of acllas (young women) and a retreat and resting place for the Cuzco sovereign. Its construction possibly dates to the times of Tupac Inca Yupanqui, the final era of the Inca empire.

The Machu Picchu Historical Sanctuary (32,592 hectares - 80,536 acres) is a natural reserve, which UNESCO declared a World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site in 1983.

Altitude

Machu Picchu 2,400 masl (7,872 ft)

How to Get There

By land: The only access to the citadel is by rail from Cuzco, 110 km (68.3 miles) to the Machu Picchu Pueblo station. Travel time is between 3 to 4 hours, depending on the type of train service. The bus ride from the Machu Picchu town (formerly Aguas Calientes) up to the archaeological site takes 20 minutes.

Lodging

The town of Machu Picchu offers budget and three-star hotels. At the entrance to the sanctuary, there are rest rooms, telephone booths, a fast food restaurant and a hotel.

Activities

Archaeology, trekking, photography, mysticism, animal

and plant spotting (excellent area for orchid lovers), thermal springs, and shopping for arts and crafts.

Minimum Length of Stay

At least one day to visit Machu Picchu and five to seven days to visit other attractions between Machu Picchu and the Inca Trail.

The Inca Trail requires three to four days to walk its 39 kilometers, and a total four to five days to include transport and visit to Machu Picchu.

Recommendations

An overnight stay in the area is suggested. Wear a poncho or raincoat during the rainy season, and in the dry season bring a hat, insect repellent and sunscreen. Visitors must heed the conservation regulations of the Machu Picchu Historical Sanctuary.

Nearby Attractions

The thermal springs at Aguas Calientes, located 800 meters (half a mile) from the town of Machu Picchu. Also interesting is the climb up to Huayna Picchu, or 'young mountain' (2,667 masl - 8,748 ft), which is the steep mountain that stands behind the citadel in the classic photographs of Machu Picchu. The ascent takes an hour along a narrow, steep path and at the top stands a set of terraces apparently built for ceremonial purposes, and the remains of a partially built temple. Visitors who wish to climb Huayna Picchu must register at the control post located in the Sacred Stone section. Visitors are recommended to use walking shoes and carry water with them.

Season / Climate

Machu Picchu can be visited all year round, although the best months are from April to October.

The seasons are clearly defined: summer runs from November to March, with rains and high humidity; the winter or dry season runs from April to October.

MANU NATIONAL PARK

the last natural haven



The Manu National Park, covering an area of 1,716,295 hectares (4.3 million acres), is Peru's largest protected natural area and one of the largest on the planet, with a biological megadiversity that is unparalleled. It includes the entire Manu River basin, across territory that straddles the regions of Cuzco and Madre de Dios. It was created on May 29, 1973 to protect the rich biodiversity of the area from irrational use and development. In 1977, UNESCO established the Manu Biosphere Reserve and in 1987 declared it a World Natural Heritage. The area includes three forms of protection: a nucleus area that is intangible, to protect the wildlife; a reserved area, where a programmed use is permitted for resources, research and tourism; and a cultural area, where villages and farming are allowed. Manu is home to more than 800 species of birds, including the harpy eagle, jabiru, and cock-of-the-rocks; over 200 species of mammals such as the black maquisapa monkey, giant river otter, black cayman, jaguar, ocelot, spectacled bear, and huemal deer. There are many varieties of insects and reptiles yet to be classified. Among more than 2,000 species and unique varieties of plants there are giant orchids and trees that tower up to 45 meters high and 3 meters in diameter (147 ft tall and 10 ft in diameter).

A number of native communities also live in this area, with their own traditions, language and culture: the Matsiguenga, Amahuaca, Yaminahua, Piro, Amarakaeri, Huachipaire and Nahua.

Altitude

The park stretches from the eastern slopes of the Andes (4,000 masl / 13,124 ft) down to the Amazon plains (at 250 masl / 820 ft). The reserved area and the cultural area of the Biosphere Reserve are on the Amazon plains. The high Andean area includes one visiting zone, the Tres Cruces lookout point, at Acjanaco.

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima to Cuzco (55 minutes); flights every other day from La Paz (Bolivia) to Cuzco (1 hour). Small aircraft can be chartered for flights from Cuzco to Boca Manu (where the Manu River flows into the Madre de Dios) to then continue the rest of the journey by boat (4 hours).

Overland: from Lima to Cuzco (1,105 km / 687 miles) via Nazca, in about 19 hours. From there, tourist transport can be hired to Atalaya (8 hours) or Shintuya (11 hours), and then by boat to Boca Manu (8 hours) and on to the Tourism and Recreation Zone of the Park (another 8 hours).

Tourist Services

A visit to the tourism and recreation zone of the Manu National Park (MNP) in the Manu basin can be made only through authorized travel agencies that process entry permits and pay the visitor's fee.

Lodging in the Tourism and Recreation Zone of the MNP includes accommodation in lodges and camps. Basic accommodations available en route to the park at Salvacion, Pilcopata and Boca Manu.

Activities

Tours with gear included and guided by naturalists and specialized guides. Eco-tourism, wildlife watching, trekking through the jungle. It is also possible to go river-rafting in designated areas and visit native communities.

Minimum Length of Stay

Because of the travel difficulties and the size of the park, a minimum of five days is recommended.

Recommendations

Visit only authorized areas.

Do not interfere with research activities.

Do not establish contact with native communities.

Do not collect species of animal and plant life.

Heed the regulations given by the Park Authority and the park guards.

Season / Climate

The ideal time to visit is between May and October; days are very hot, nights are cool, and it rains frequently. It is the Amazon jungle and conditions can be difficult.

Arts & Crafts

Handicrafts of the native communities are made from plants, fibers, seeds or roots from the jungle. Peruvian law prohibits and penalizes the extraction, transport, trade and export of any kind of flora or fauna, live or dead. The prohibition includes any object made from parts of animals and plants.

LAKE TITICACA

the world's highest navigable lake



On a vast highland plain in the Puno region between Peru and Bolivia, Titicaca is the world's highest navigable lake, at 3,820 masl (12,500 ft). It covers an area of over 8,300 square kilometers (3,205 square miles), of which 4,700 km² (1,815mi²) are in Peru. The ancient Andean civilizations of the Quechua and Aymara, the two most important ethnic groups of ancient Peru, believed the lake was sacred and legend has it that the founders of the Inca Empire, Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo, emerged from its waters.

The lake is very popular among tourists and scientists alike, who are amazed at the richness of its waters. It is a National Reserve and is home to numerous species of birds and water fowl, a dozen species of fish, a variety of mammals and seven amphibians, including a unique species of giant frog.

The lake is also home to the floating islands made of reeds that are populated by the Uros, descendants of an ancient people. Also attractive are the islands that maintain their ancient social and farming systems: Taquile, Amantani and Suasi.

The city of Puno includes colonial architecture, as does the town of Juli, famous for its four 16th and 17th century churches.

Altitude

City of Puno: 3,827 masl (12,552 ft), Lake Titicaca: 3,810 masl (12,500 ft).

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima (90 minutes), and from Arequipa (30 minutes), landing at Juliaca airport. The overland trip to the city of Puno takes 50 minutes.

By train: from Cuzco (10 hours).

Overland: from Cuzco (paved road, 6 hours); from Arequipa (paved road, 5 hours); from La Paz, Bolivia (5 hours by bus and shared taxi services).

Lodging

Puno has hotels and hostels of every category. Taquile Island offers family-run lodgings, and Suasi Island has an eco-lodge. On Anapia, the local inhabitants provide lodging in their homes.

Activities

Archaeology, eco-tourism, experiential tourism on the islands, wildlife watching (endemic bird species), boat and balsa raft rides, and arts and crafts shopping.

Tourist Services

Guided tours in the city, the outskirts and the islands on the lake with boat services to Taquile, Amantani, Uros, Anapia and Suasi.

Recommendations

Wear a hat and sunscreen. Acclimatization is necessary, to avoid high-altitude sickness. Avoid over-exertion the first day, eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea.

Nearby Attractions

Visits are suggested to the towns along the lakeshore:

Chucuito, Juli and Pomata; also to the Sillustani chullpas or burial towers and the towns of Lampa, Pucara and Ayaviri (Tinajani rock forest). The visit to the islands of Taquile, Suasi, Amantani and Anapia and to the floating islands of the Uros, are unforgettable.

Season / Climate

The ideal months are from April to December; the rainy season is January to March; strong sun during the day and cold at night.

Festivals

Festival of the Virgen de la Candelaria (February 2).

The most important festival in the region. Celebrated for a full week with continuous folk dancing of hundreds of different dances, including the Diablada, Morenada and Llamera.

Festival of Alacitas and Las Cruces (May 3-4). This marks a special occasion when local inhabitants sell miniature arts and crafts in street market fairs.

Anniversary of the founding of the city of Puno (November 4). Civic events and dancing in the streets of the city by school students, as well as the staging of the legend of the founders of Cuzco and the Inca dynasty, Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo.

Gastronomy

Sopa chairo: beef and lamb soup, with potatoes, broad beans, squash, freeze-dried potatoes, cabbage and hot chili pepper.

Pesque de Quinoa: quinoa stew with milk and fresh cheese, accompanied by meat.

Huarjata: pork stew with freeze-dried potatoes, vegetables and hot chili pepper.

Alpaca fillet: tasty meat with high protein value and low fat.

Cancacho: roast pork or lamb marinated in chili pepper and oil

Arts & Crafts

The art of weaving alpaca and sheeps wool has been kept alive by the people of the highland plains. They also make musical instruments such as the siku and pan pipes. The best-known crafts include Pucara bulls and the Ekeko, a character who carries a variety of objects and products for good luck

AREQUIPA

the white city and the Majestic Misti



Arequipa, Peru's second-largest city, was listed as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in 2000. It is also known as 'the White City' because many of its churches and colonial mansions are built from the white ashlar volcanic stone. Three volcanoes rise above Arequipa, including the majestic Misti (5,821 masl - 19,092 ft) that can be seen from anywhere in the city. One of the city's main attractions is the Santa Catalina Convent, considered 'a small city within a city', founded in 1580 for cloistered nuns and which opened to the public in 1970. There are also fine colonial homes such as the Casa del Moral and the Casa Goyeneche, which still feature Baroque-style ashlar carvings in their doorways. Another of the city's impressive attractions is the Lady of Ampato or the Juanita Mummy, the mummy of an Inca adolescent who was offered as a sacrifice to the gods and which today can be seen at the Andean Sanctuaries Museum of the Santa Maria Catholic University (UCSM). The city is surrounded by broad countryside that includes the picturesque stone mill at Sabandia and the Yura hot springs. Today, the city of Arequipa is a key trade hub for southern Peru, famous for its export quality textiles woven from alpaca and vicuña wool. It offers a delicious cuisine, and its excellent hotel infrastructure is appropriate for international events.

Altitude

Arequipa: 2,335 masl (7,659 ft)

How to Get There

By air: from Lima (1 hour 25 minutes), from Cuzco (50 minutes), from Juliaca (30 minutes).

Overland: South Pan-American Highway from Lima (15 hours approximately), from Nasca (9 hours), from Puno (4 hours), from Cuzco (8 hours).

Lodging

Up to five-star hotels.

Activities

City tours, visits to colonial homes and churches, tours of the countryside, trekking.

Tourist Services

Transport, restaurants and other tourist services available in the city of Arequipa.

Recommendations

Avoid over-exertion during the first hours after arrival. Eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea to ward off high-altitude sickness.

Nearby Attractions

Colca Valley and Canyon, Cotahuasi Canyon, the climb up to the Misti and Chachani volcanoes, the petroglyphs of Toro Muerto, the Salinas and Aguada Blanca National Reserve.

Minimum Length of Stay

Two days for tours in the city of Arequipa, another three days to explore the Colca Canyon. Exploring the

Cotahuasi Canyon requires 6 days.

Season / Climate

Dry and temperate climate; afternoons and evenings are cool.

Festivals

Festival of the Virgen de Chapi (May). Traditional pilgrimage to the Chapi shrine 90 km (56 miles) from the city of Arequipa.

Anniversary of the city of Arequipa (August 15): The city stages an International Fair (at Cerro Juli), arts and crafts exhibitions at the Fundo del Fierro, the Festidanza dance festival, and the International Ascent of Misti Competition.

Festival of Santa Ursula (October 21). A very popular festival among the local population and which is celebrated with the entrance of "Capos", with fireworks displays, Mass and processions.

Gastronomy

Arequipa boasts some of the most varied and succulent dishes to be found in Peru.

Chupe de Camarones: sweetwater shrimp chowder cooked with milk, eggs and oregano.

Rocoto Relleno: hot rocoto chili pepper stuffed with minced meat, cheese and potato.

Soltero: salad of fresh cheese, beans, onion, olives and rocoto chili pepper.

Adobo Arequipeño: pork braised in maize beer and spices.

Ocopa: boiled potato covered in a fresh cheese and peanut sauce.

Escribano: potato salad.

Pebre: a hearty soup of lamb, beef and dried jerky.

Sango: a dessert made from wheat, raisins, honey and milk.

Arts & Crafts

Arequipa craftsmen emboss leather to make belts, desk accessories and furniture; ashlar stone is used to make decorative items; while lamps, railings and furniture are made from wrought iron.

COLCA AND COTAHUASI

the deepest canyons in the world



The region of Arequipa features Peru's deepest canyons, the Colca (3,400 meters / 11,154 ft) and Cotahuasi (3,535 meters / 11,598 ft). The Colca Valley has become a paradise for adventure travelers since it is ideal for river running, trekking and mountain biking as well as other sports. The length of the valley is studded with 14 towns rich in tradition and which have preserved their religious festivities and folk art and music. The surrounding landscape includes the Hualca-Hualca, Ampato and Sabancaya volcanoes. Cotahuasi Canyon is located in an inter-Andean valley that also has its traditional villages, more than 100 thermal springs, waterfalls, geological faults and beautiful vistas of the snow-capped Coropuna and Solimana mountains.

The area is ideal for hiking, river running, rock climbing, paragliding and mountain biking, and there is also a rich variety of animal and plant life. There are picturesque villages such as Pampamarca, whose people are skilled in working with alpaca wool to knit sweaters and weave rugs and other items; Callata is the most attractive town in the area, and noted for its cemeteries posted on the hillsides and known as the Cliffs of Tenajaja.

Colca Canyon (depth 3400 meters-11,154 ft). Colca is the Quechua word for 'granary'. The canyon is formed by the Colca River and its length is covered in hundreds of pre-Hispanic terraces, which are still used today and are proof of the high degree of farming expertise of the ancient Peruvians. The towns along this valley preserve their colonial churches, ancient customs and traditional festivities. Vistas include the volcanoes of Coropuna, Ampato and Sabancaya. The highest point is the lookout point of Cruz del Condor, which offers the unforgettable experience of seeing condors in their natural habitat. Two days are recommended for this excursion, staying overnight at Chivay.

Cotahuasi Canyon (depth 3,535 meters - 11,598 ft). Located in an inter-Andean valley with traditional towns such as Cotahuasi (2,683 meters / 8,802 ft); hot medicinal springs such as those at Luicho; waterfalls such as those at Sipia, with a drop of 250 meters / 820 ft; and vistas of snow-capped peaks of Coropuna and Solimana. It is home to a wide variety of animal and plant life. The area is ideal for hiking, river running and rock climbing.

How to Get There

Overland, from Arequipa to the Colca Canyon, 164 kms (102 miles) in 3 1/2 hours. Access is also possible from Puno.

Overland, from Arequipa to the Cotahuasi Canyon: 375 km/233 miles in 9 hours..

Lodging

Up to three-star hotels in the towns along the Colca Valley.

Activities

Condor watching, trekking, horseback riding, river running, eco-tourism, llama treks, wildlife watching.

Tourist Services

Transport (car, bus), full trekking and river running services provided. Cotahuasi should be visited through a specialized travel firm.

Recommendations

Avoid over-exertion for a few hours on arrival, eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea to ward off high-altitude sickness.

Other Attractions

Valley of the Volcanoes in Andagua; ascent of the Misti and Chachani volcanoes; National Reserve of Salinas and Aguada Blanca.

Minimum Length of Stay

Colca Canyon: three days from Arequipa to take in the canyon and other attractions, four to seven days for trekking down to the bottom of the canyon.

Cotahuasi Canyon: a minimum of six to seven days is required.

Season / Climate

The Colca and Cotahuasi Canyons can be visited year-round, although the best time of year for trekking and river running is between April and November. A temperate climate, with cool afternoons and cold nights.

THE SOURCE OF THE AMAZON

Iquitos, Nauta, Pacaya-Samiria



Looking down from the Andes to the east, one gazes out over a vast sea of green that stretches out into the horizon with no visible end. It is the richest and most varied tropical jungle on earth, a jungle that the 16th century Conquistadors believed hid the treasures of El Dorado. But the region's greatest treasure is its marvellous biodiversity. It includes the Pacaya-Samiria and Allpahuayo-Mishana natural reserves, the reserved zones of Gueppi and Santiago-Comainas and the Rio Abiseo National Park, remarkable to nature lovers worldwide.

Iquitos is Peru's most important city on the banks of the Amazon River, and much of the architectural pomp of the 19th century rubber baron years remains standing. Trips can be made from Iquitos to a number of typical jungle inns, with visits to native communities such as the Bora and the Yagua.

Only 20 km (12 miles) from Iquitos, on a paved road, stands the entry to the National Allpahuayo-Mishana Reserve, which holds the greatest number of species of trees per hectare (close to 300); the largest number of reptiles (140 species); as well as 28 endangered species such as the otter, the harpy eagle, the red uakari and the giant armadillo.

South of Iquitos, 84 km away (52 miles) by paved road, is the port of Nauta: nearby, the confluence of two great rivers, the Marañon and the Ucayali, give birth to the majestic Amazon, the world's largest river, which runs for more than 6,788 km (4,217 miles) before reaching the Atlantic Ocean.

Opposite Nauta lies the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve, with two million hectares (five million acres) of lakes, lagoons, swamps and wetlands. This is the territory of the manatee or sea cow, the pink dolphin, the charapa turtle, and the anaconda. It is the largest flood forest in Amazonia. It is also called the Mirror Jungle because of perfect reflections of the jungle and skies in its rivers and lagoons.

Altitude

122 masl (400 ft) in Iquitos.

How to Get There

The city of Iquitos can be reached by air or river.

By air: daily flights from Lima (90 minutes), from Pucallpa (50 minutes) and from Leticia, in Colombia (55 minutes).

By river: from Pucallpa (6 days).

Overland: Nauta lies 96 km (60 miles) from Iquitos (3 hours by car).

Lodging

Iquitos offers one five-star hotel, comfortable three-star hotels, and jungle lodges with full services on the outskirts of the city. Basic lodging and B&B are available in Nauta. There is no lodging at Pacaya-Samiria, but camping is allowed in certain areas with prior

authorization from the park authority.

Activities

Eco-tourism, wildlife watching (pink river dolphin), anthropology, river exploration, angling, water skiing.

Tourist Services

Overland and river transport, guided tours, with complete services to visit the jungle, river cruises and visits to native communities. There are no services within the Pacaya-Samiria Reserve, and all transport of equipment and material must be coordinated beforehand with the travel agency organizing the trip.

Minimum Length of Stay

Three days in the city of Iquitos; seven days for Pacaya-Samiria.

Recommendations

Special requirements: Visitors need to be prepared for difficult and changing conditions (heat, rain, insects, etc). Visitors are recommended to get a yellow fever shot ten days before the trip.

Nearby Attractions

The city of Iquitos: native communities near the city, lakes and lagoons.

Season / Climate

The best months to visit are between April and October, to avoid the rainy season. High heat and humidity during the day, cool nights, and heavy rain at any time of year.

Festivals

Festival of San Juan (June); the feast of St. John the Baptist is an important event throughout the Amazon because it is linked to water as a vital element.

Iquitos Tourist Week (June 21-27). Celebrations centered around the central feast day of San Juan every June 24.

Gastronomy

Ensalada de Chonta o Palmito: a tasty palm-heart salad. Tacacho con Cecina: roast or fried plantain mashed with lard and salt-dried meat.

Inchicapi: chicken soup with peanuts, fresh cilantro and manioc.

Cecina: salt-dried beef or pork.

Patarashca: fish wrapped in banana leaves and roasted over the fire.

Juane: seasoned rice and chunks of chicken wrapped in corn husks.

Arts & Crafts

A wide variety of arts and crafts are available, including pottery decorated with geometric motifs, hand-painted cloth and a series of decorative and utilitarian objects made from local materials.

KUELAP

city in the clouds



Located in northeastern Peru in the Amazonas region, 72 km (44 miles) from the city of Chachapoyas, the regional capital, Kuelap is an ancient stone fortress built strategically on a ridge looking out over the Utcubamba Valley. It is one of the most important archaeological monuments of the Americas.

Kuelap was discovered in 1843. It was built around the 9th century by the pre-Inca culture of Chachapoyas, in a difficult terrain of the cloud forest. The citadel covers an area of around 6 hectares (over 14 acres) with some 420 circular buildings that include a watchtower and a castle. The defense walls are very impressive, reaching 25 meters (82 ft) in height, with three points of access shaped like funnels, so that only one person can enter at a time. Kuelap includes an area for camping that provides spectacular views.

The region's attractions include Leymebamba, where there is a community museum that exhibits valuable remains of the Chachapoyas culture. There is also a fascinating trail (15 hours by mule) to the mysterious Lake of the Condors (also called Lake of the Mummies), where a series of pre-Inca mausoleums stand high above the shore. Some 48km (5 hours by mule) northwest of Chachapoyas is the village of Shipata (2,760 masl / 9,055 ft) and the impressive vertical tombs of Karajia perched on the rockface facing the valley of Juscubamba. There are also remains of the ancient Chachapoyas and varied folk arts at Jalca Grande (2,890 masl / 9,482 ft).

Altitude

Chachapoyas: 2,336 masl (7,664 ft); Kuelap: 3,000 masl (9,842 ft); Leymebamba: 2,135 masl (7,004 ft).

How to Get There

By air: flights from Lima with a stopover in Tarapoto (90 minutes).

Overland: from Tarapoto, 359 km / 223 miles (8 hours in private transport); from Cajamarca, 336 km / 209 miles (14 hours); from Lima via Trujillo and Chiclayo to Chachapoyas, 1,350 km / 839 miles (20 hours); from Chiclayo to Chachapoyas, 570 km / 354 miles (9 hours).

There is no regular public transport to Kuelap and other towns. Visitors will need to join organized expeditions.

Lodging

Up to three-star hotels in Chachapoyas. Basic accommodations in other towns, with areas ideal for camping.

Activities

Archaeology, eco-tourism, trekking, wildlife watching, angling.

Tourist Services

Basic restaurants in Chachapoyas. Overland transport to Kuelap (organized tours), guided tours, full services for visiting other towns.

Minimum Length of Stay

One day to visit Kuelap, four days to visit Lake of the

Condors.

Recommendations

Acclimatization is necessary for the first few hours on arrival. Eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea to ward off high-altitude sickness.

Season / Climate

The best time of year to visit is between June and October as rains are rare. Temperatures are temperate to cold.

Festivals

Chachapoyas Tourist Week (June 1-7): major festivities include the My Neighborhood festival and the Raymillacta of the Chachapoyas.

Festival of the Virgen de Asunta (August 7-15): the statue of the Virgin is carried through the streets of Chachapoyas, which have been carpeted with brightly-colored flower petals.

Festival of the Señor de Gualamita (September 10-15): legend has it that the statue of Christ originally came from Cuzco, from where it was brought to Lamud.

Gastronomy

Purtumute: black beans cooked with kernels of sweetcorn and cilantro.

Cuy con Papas: potatoes and fried guinea pig.

Juanes de Yuca: grated and boiled manioc mixed with rice and chicken and/or beef jerky wrapped in corn husks.

Enrollado: Beef or pork roll stuffed with raisins, carrots and hard-boiled eggs.

CAJAMARCA

the spa of the Incas



Cajamarca, capital of the Cajamarca region, is the most important city in Peru's northern highlands. It was the place of origin for the pre-Inca culture of Cajamarca - which includes the famous Windows of Otuzco - and was a great administrative and relaxation center for the sovereign during the Inca empire. It was here in 1532 that the future of the empire was decided, when the Inca Atahualpa was visiting the hot springs of what is known today as the Inca Baths or Baños del Inca. The Spanish imprisoned the Inca in Cajamarca and later executed him there.

Besides the Inca Baths nearby, whose waters feature a wide variety of minerals with healing properties, the city has a variety of archaeological buildings that include the Ransom Room, where Atahualpa was held prisoner; beautiful colonial architecture, seen in the Cathedral and in the San Francisco church; and a rich variety of folk arts. Cajamarca is called Peru's carnival capital because of the brightly colorful dance groups and bands that perform during the carnival days between February and March.

Many of the tourist attractions are only a few minutes away by road from the city. To the south (30 minutes) lies the picturesque village of Llacanora, and there are hikes to Granja Porcon, a farm with agro-tourism programs and a unique arts and crafts tradition.

To the northeast of the city (15 minutes) are the Ventanillas de Otuzco, a citadel of funeral 'windows' of the ancient Cajamarcas. Further along (45 minutes) are the 'windows' of Combayo, in better condition than those of Otuzco. To the southwest (40 minutes) is the archaeological site of Cumbemayo, of Chavin origin.

The Cutervo National Park includes orchids and different palms, and endangered species of wildlife (guacharos, cock-of-the-rocks, and spectacled bears).

Altitude

Cajamarca: 2,720 masl (8,923 ft).

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima (1 hour).

Overland: from Trujillo, 295 km /183 miles (6 hours); from Chiclayo, 265 km / 164 miles (6 hours).

Lodging

Up to four-star hotels in the city of Cajamarca, basic accommodation in other towns. Tourist and eco-lodge in the farming community of Granja Porcon.

Activities

Archaeology, eco-tourism, agro-tourism, wildlife watching, hot springs, trekking.

Tourist Services

Restaurants throughout the city of Cajamarca. Overland transport, guided tours, full services for visiting attractions in the area and nearby towns.

Minimum Length of Stay

Three days to tour the city and environs.

Recommendations

Avoid over-exertion in first hours after arrival. Eat easily-digestible food and drink coca tea to ward off high-altitude sickness.

Nearby Attractions

Archaeological sites of Cumbemayo, Ventanillas de Otuzco, agro-tourism at Granja Porcon.

Season / Climate

The best time to visit is between April and October, to avoid the rainy season. Warm during the day and cold at night.

Festivals

Cajamarca Carnival (February). Carnival is one of the city's most important celebrations.

Fiesta de las Cruces (March/April, movable). A procession of over 50 heavily decorated crosses to celebrate Palm Sunday.

Festival of St. John the Baptist (June 24). Religious and social activities, arts and crafts exhibitions.

Cajamarca FONGAL Fair (July 24-31). Regional agricultural, livestock and industrial fair.

Señor de Huamantanga (September 23-25). Regional trade fair.

Gastronomy

Picante de Papa con Cuy Frito: guinea pig stew in peanut and hot chili pepper sauce.

Chicharrón con Mote: pork fritters served with steamed corn.

Humitas: sweet cornmash dessert stuffed with cinnamon and raisins.

Caldo Verde: potato soup with locally-grown aromatic herbs.

Arts & Crafts

Cajamarca artisans work with a variety of materials: wool, leather, wood, cactus thread, clay and stone, which they use to portray their customs and traditions.

TUCUME

the valley of the pyramids



On the north coast, 33km/20 miles north of the city of Chiclayo along the Leche River, lies the Valley of the Pyramids of Tucume, an architectural complex made up of 26 adobe pyramids or 'huacas' (temples) almost 40 meters/ 130 ft tall. They are spread out over 220 hectares/ 543 acres surrounding a large hill called Purgatory, which offers a spectacular view. Studies show that the first pyramids were built around A.D.700, as the center of the fledgling Lambayeque culture. The center later became very important as regional power spread under the successive rule of the Chimu (A.D.1375- 1470) and the Incas (A.D.1470 - 1532).

The structures are from different periods and show that they were used for a number of political, administrative, social, religious and workshop purposes. They include temples, storage rooms, patios, living quarters and areas with walls decorated in haute-relief. The thousands of adobe bricks used in their construction are marked with dots or ticks, which could be the signs of a labor tax from the different communities that made the adobe. The most outstanding pyramid is Huaca Larga, the largest in South America, that measures approximately 700 meters long (2,296 ft), 280 meters thick (918 ft) and 30 meters high (98 ft).

Other attractions are: the Pomac Forest Historical Sanctuary, in Ferreñafe (35 km / 21 miles) southeast of Chiclayo, which covers an expanse of invaluable dry woodlands with their own species of wildlife, and the archaeological zone of Batán Grande where the tomb of the Lord of Sican was found (Sican means House of the Moon in the ancient Muchik language). This culture is also known as Lambayeque and developed between the 8th and 12th centuries. The complex includes 20 pyramids or 'huacas' which functioned as temples, housing, cemeteries for the elite, and craft workshops.

Altitude

Sea level

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima (50 minutes); from Trujillo (15 minutes).

Overland: Buses on the Pan-American Highway from Lima, (775 km / 481 miles -10 hours). from Trujillo, (210 km / 130 miles -3 hours). From Chiclayo there is public transport to Túcume, (35 km / 22 miles -30 minutes); to the town of Lambayeque, (12 km / 7 miles -10 minutes); to Ferreñafe, (18 km / 11 miles - 20 minutes). There are also special buses for hire to take these tours, especially to Chaparri.

Lodging

Up to four-star hotels in Chiclayo; Lambayeque features three-star hostels; basic accommodation in Tucume and Ferreñafe.

Activities

Archaeology, bird-watching, surfing, angling and riding

on balsa rafts at Pimentel, horseback-riding through the woods at Pomac.

Tourist Services

Full service restaurants in Chiclayo and Lambayeque. Transport (car, van, bus), guided tours and hired transport from Chiclayo.

Minimum Length of Stay

Two days to visit the Sican and Tucume museums; two additional days to visit other attractions in the area.

Recommendations

Bring sunscreen and comfortable walking shoes.

Nearby Attractions

National Sican Museum, in Ferreñafe, 18 km / 11 miles from Chiclayo. Good exhibits of the Sican or Lambayeque culture, including unique objects in pottery and gold and silver, plus the recreation of the tombs. Pomac Forest Historical Sanctuary, and the Sican culture archaeological complex within the sanctuary. Unique wildlife and abundant carob trees (prosopis juli flora).

Season/Climate

Sunshine all year round. Particularly hot from December to April.

Festivals

Santísima Cruz de Chalpon (August 5): very popular religious festival throughout northern Peru.

Señor Cautivo de Monsefu (September 14): feast of the town of Monsefu's patron, with a procession of the Christ image.

Gastronomy

Cebiche: raw fish marinated in lime juice, onion and hot chili pepper.

Tortilla de raya: an omelette with salt-dried ray fish
Chinguirito: shredded salt-dried fish in lime juice, onion and hot chili pepper

Seco de cabrito con frejoles: tender goat stew in a sauce of cilantro and maize beer, served with beans.

Arroz con pato a la chiclayana: tender duck with rice in a dark malt beer and cilantro sauce.

Chirimpico: a spicy stew of marinated goat offal.

THE LORD OF SIPAN

the golden tomb



The archaeological complex of Huaca Rajada, where the splendid Tomb of the Lord of Sipan was found, is on Peru's north coast, 35 km (21 miles) southeast of the city of Chiclayo, which in turn is 770 km (478 miles) from the capital city of Lima.

In 1987, a small group of Peruvian archaeologists led by Dr. Walter Alva discovered at Huaca Rajada the tomb of an important Moche governor who had been buried with riches and all the symbols of his station in life. The discovery was world news and is considered as important as the discovery of the tomb of the Tutankhamen.

The Lord of Sipan died some 1770 years ago. As sovereign, he was considered a semi-god. He lived for about 40 years and was 1.67 meters tall (5.5 ft). His rich attire included necklaces, breastplates, ear spools, nose rings, helmets, bracelets and sceptres, mostly in a combination of gold and silver. There were also objects in copper, spondyllus shells and semi-precious stones. Most of the pieces have symbolic designs.

Shortly after the discovery of the Lord of Sipan's tomb, Alva and his team found two more tombs, of a Priest and of the Old Lord of Sipan.

The importance of this discovery, and the need to provide an appropriate place to house the remains of the Lord of Sipan and his treasures, led to the building of the Royal Tombs of Sipan Museum, designed by architect Celso Prado, which opened in 2002 in the city of Lambayeque (15 km / 9 miles from Chiclayo).

This museum is one of the most important in the Americas, considered the "Museum of the 21st century". The building is comprised of three levels, starting at the third, highest level with access via a ramp 74 meters long (242 ft), similar to those used at the ancient Moche temples.

Altitude

46 masl (150 ft)

How to get there

By air: daily flights to Chiclayo from Lima (1 hour) and from Trujillo (15 minutes).

Overland: on the Pan-American Highway several bus companies offer daily services between Chiclayo and other cities on the coast. From Lima, 770 km / 478 miles (12 hours); from Trujillo, 216 km / 134 miles (3 hours), or from Tumbes, 483 km / 300 miles (7 1/2 hours).

From Chiclayo to Huaca Rajada, travel southeast for 35 km (22 miles), and then bear north for 15 km (9 miles) to reach Lambayeque and the Royal Tombs of Sipan Museum.

Minimum Length of Stay

Two days are required.

Recommendations

Sunscreen is required, light clothing (T-shirts, shorts), comfortable shoes, a hat and sunglasses.

Nearby Attractions

The 'ghost town' of Zaña, and the colonial remains of its main church, the San Agustín convent, the churches of San Francisco and La Merced.

Season / Climate

Sun all year round, very hot between December and April.

Festivals

Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo (April 27): Province of Chiclayo, district of Zaña. Fair celebrated in honor of their patron saint.

Gastronomy

Seco de cabrito con frijoles: stew of tender goat in maize beer and cilantro sauce, served with beans.

Arroz con pato a la chichlayana: duck and rice in a dark beer and cilantro sauce.

Chinguirito: shredded salt-dried fish tossed in lime juice and onions.

Tortilla de raya: an omelette with salt-dried ray fish

TRUJILLO

capital of eternal spring



Trujillo, capital of the region of La Libertad, is the third largest city in Peru. It lies on the north coast, 561 km/ 349 miles from Lima, in the Moche River valley where the Moche and Chimu civilizations developed between 200 B.C. and A.D. 700. Both cultures were remarkable for their pottery and work in gold and silver.

Eight kilometers (5 miles) south of the city of Trujillo stand the ceremonial centers or huacas known as the Temples of the Sun and the Moon of the Moche civilization. It is believed that they were, respectively, an administrative center and a center of worship. The Temple of the Sun is a graded pyramid 43 meters high (141 ft), while the Temple of the Moon, only 500 meters away (545 yards), is made up of superimposed temples built at different times during the Moche civilization. Some of the walls have dramatic polychromed murals, with clear details that show the face of the fire god Aia-Paec.

Its year-round pleasant climate has earned it the title of 'Capital of Eternal Spring'. Its large, main square is surrounded by beautiful colonial churches and homes. It has wonderful beaches such as Delicias, Salaverry, Huanchaco and Chicama, gathering points for international surfing competitions and where local fishermen still use 'caballitos de totora', reed canoes made the same way for thousands of years.

The typical dance of the coast is the 'marinera' and Trujillo is where the most important competitions are held, earning the name of Capital of the Peruvian Marinera. Trujillo is also an important breeding and competition center for Peruvian pacer horses.

Altitude

34 masl (100 ft)

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima to Trujillo (50 minutes).
Overland: Buses to Trujillo on the Pan-American Highway due north from Lima (561 km/348 miles - 8 hours); from Chiclayo (210 km/ 130 miles - 3 hours); from Piura (410 km/255 miles - 6 hours); and from Tumbes 759 km/472 miles.

Public transport from Trujillo to Chan Chan (5 km/3 miles - 15 minutes) and the Huanchaco resort (13 km/8 miles - 25 minutes). Public transport to the Temples of the Sun and the Moon (8 km/4.9 miles - 20 minutes).

Lodging

Up to five-star hotels and hostels in Trujillo. Up to three-star hotels and hostels in Huanchaco.

Activities

Archaeology, bird watching, angling and surfing (Huanchaco and Chicama).

Tourist Services

Restaurants in Trujillo offer local and international dishes. Transport services and travel agencies.

Minimum Length of Stay

Three days to see the historical center and archeological sites.

Recommendations

Sunscreen, light clothing (T-shirts, shorts), comfortable shoes, hat.

Nearby Attractions

Trujillo historical center: houses and churches. Other archaeological sites: Huaca El Dragon, El Brujo, etc. Seaside towns of Huanchaco, Puerto Malabrigo and Pacasmayo.

Season / Climate

Sunshine all year round; temperate and warm, particularly hot during the summer months (December-March).

Festivals

National Marinera Contest (January/February): opportunity to take in the full splendor of the marinera, a typical coastal dance.

The Huanchaco Carnival (February): the Carnival dates back to the late 19th century, inspired by the Venetian Carnival.

Surfing Championship (March): held at Chicama, the championship draws surfers from all over the world

International Spring Festival (September /October).

National Peruvian Pacer Horse Competition (September 29): organized by the Trujillo pacer horse breeders and owners' association during the Spring Festival.

Gastronomy

Seco de Cabrito con Frijoles: tender goat stew with cilantro and maize beer, served with beans.

Shambar: thick wheat soup with pork and beans.

Sopa Teologa: chicken broth with pieces of bread.

Frijoles a la Trujillana: black beans with sesame seeds and hot chili pepper.

Pepian de Pava: turkey stew with rice and corn.

CHAN CHAN

the adobe metropolis



The remains of Chan Chan lie in the Moche Valley, 5 km (3 miles) northwest of the city of Trujillo. The largest mud-brick citadel built by a pre-Hispanic civilization in the Americas, Chan Chan (which means Sun-Sun) was the religious and administrative capital of the Chimu kingdom until the conquest by the Incas. UNESCO listed it as a World Cultural Heritage in 1986.

The archaeological site covers an area of 20 square kilometers (7.7 square miles) that once was inhabited by around 100,000 people -- three types of buildings show there was housing for several different social classes, from low-income and intermediate levels to the palaces where the Chimu-Capac lords lived.

The citadel was built between the 12th and 15th centuries A.D., and was comprised of nine walled structures between some 200 meters to 400 meters long (up to 1,312 ft), made up of flat-topped pyramids, plazas, houses, storage areas, factories and a labyrinthine network of streets. The hydraulic system included remarkable irrigation canals and reservoirs as well as expertly-built underground aqueducts and ditches, used to carry water across enormous distances. One of Chan Chan's features is its walls heavily-decorated with haute-relief geometric, animal and mythological figures. Originally, the walls were once a little more than 12 m (39 ft) tall.

A number of well-known archaeologists and scientists have carried out research in the area, including the Swiss national Juan Diego De Tschudi, whose name has been given to one of the sections in the complex.

Finds indicate that the Grand Chimu kingdom reached a peak in which its people developed very sophisticated architecture and agriculture to overcome the desert, and expressed their arts through creative pottery and metallurgy, including exquisitely delicate filigree, for which they are known as the finest jewelers of ancient Peru.

Chan Chan is also known for its legends, which tell of the existence of treasures found within the complex. Among these is one of a chair of gold and pearls which, they say, was discovered in 1535 by Martin De Estete, founder of Trujillo; and there is the story of a foreigner called Ephraim George Squier who in 1864 found silver goblets which he had melted down.

Today, the archaeological complex has a site museum and tourist facilities.

Altitude

34 masl (100 ft)

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima to Trujillo (50 minutes).
Overland: Buses to Trujillo on the Pan-American Highway due north from Lima (561 km/348 miles - 8 hours); from Chiclayo (210 km/ 130 miles - 3 hours); and from Piura (410 km/255 miles - 6 hours).

Public transport from Trujillo to Chan Chan (5 km/3 miles - 15 minutes) and the Huanchaco resort (13 km/8 miles - 25 minutes). Public transport to the Temples of the Sun and the Moon (8 km/4.9 miles - 20 minutes).

Lodging

Up to five-star hotels and hostels in Trujillo.

Activities

Archaeology and trekking.

Tourist Services

Transport services. Travel agencies offer a variety of programs.

Minimum Length of Stay

Two days to see the archaeological sites, an additional day to include a tour of Trujillo's historical quarter.

Recommendations

Sunscreen, light clothing, hat.

Season / Climate

Can be visited all year round. The region is temperate and warm, particularly hot during the summer months (December-March).

AYACUCHO

the city of churches



The city of Ayacucho, capital of the region of Ayacucho, is in the southern central Andes, 583 km / 362 miles from Lima; 560 km / 348 miles from Huancayo, and 582 km / 362 miles from Cusco. The area was the capital of the first Andean empire, the Wari Empire, which reached its peak towards the 6th century A.D. The Incas dominated this region in 1438, and the Spanish conquistadors founded the Christian city in 1539.

Although there are a number of archaeological remains, Ayacucho is best known for its beautiful colonial architecture represented in over 30 churches, each with their richly decorated altars.

On the plains of Quinua, the Battle of Ayacucho was fought on December 9, 1824 as the final seal to the independence of South America.

Besides its attractive buildings and beautiful countryside, Ayacucho is known as the Capital of Peruvian Arts and Crafts for the number of families of artisans that have continued generation after generation to craft unique pieces such as the delicate retablos, full of tiny carved figures. Its folk music and dances are also popular, particularly the famous Scissors Dance.

Altitude

2,746 masl (9,006 ft)

How to Get There

By air: there are daily flights from Lima to Ayacucho (35 minutes).

Overland: from Lima, the drive takes 8 hours on the Los Libertadores highway, via Pisco.

Attractions

The main churches include the Cathedral (1612); Jesuit church of the Compañía (17th century); San Cristobal (1540), which is the oldest; San Francisco de Asis (1552); church and convent of Santa Clara (1568); Santa Teresa (1688); church and convent of Santo Domingo (1548); and La Merced (1541).

The colonial homes have large patios, elaborate stone doorways and walls with animal motifs, particularly pumas and serpents. The most important houses are the Casona Vivanco (17th century); Casona Ruiz de Ochoa (17th century); Casona Boza y Solis (1740); and Casona de Castilla y Zamora (1677), which is the headquarters of the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga.

Lodging

The city has up to three-star hotels and hostels.

Tourist Services

Full restaurant services in several categories and of local, national and international dishes. Transport and guided tours offered by travel agencies.

Minimum Length of Stay

One to two days for the main attractions in Huamanga, two to three days to take in nearby archaeological sites and other attractions.

Recommendations

Acclimatization is necessary. Avoid over-exertion on arrival, eat easily-digestible food, and drink coca tea to ward off high-altitude sickness.

Season / Climate

Sunny and dry between April and October; the rainy season is November-March.

Nearby Attractions

The Santa Ana quarter: 10 minutes from the city center, is traditionally inhabited by potters and weavers.

Wari: archaeological complex 22 km / 13 miles northeast of Ayacucho. The ancient capital of the pre-Inca Wari empire covers an area of 2,000 hectares.

Quinua: 37 km northeast of Ayacucho. Town of potters, descendants of the Wari.

Pampas de Ayacucho Historical Sanctuary: 38 km / 23 miles northeast of Ayacucho. The scene of the Battle of Ayacucho (1824) with a commemorative obelisk. Horseback riding can be organized.

Vilcashuaman: archaeological site 120 km / 74 miles southeast of Ayacucho. Altitude: 3,470 masl / 11,385 ft.

Festivals

Easter Week (March / April, movable): Ayacucho's Roman Catholic faith is shown throughout the week, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, following the sequence of the Passion of Christ with daily processions through streets carpeted in flower petals.

International Prickly Pear and Cochineal Festival (fourth week of January).

Ayacucho Carnival (February).

Yaku Raymi Water Festival (August).

Gastronomy

Patachi: soup with wheat, peas, cabbage, broad beans, bacon, fresh and salt-dried meat and mint.

Qapchi: potato and fresh cheese salad.

Puca Picante: pork fritters in peanut sauce.

Caldo de Mondongo: soup of beef, bacon and tripe seasoned with mint leaves.

Arts & Crafts

Local craftsmen are famous for their 'retablo' boxes, in which they represent religious and traditional scenes.

They use age-old techniques such as natural dyes to produce colorful rugs and blankets. They are also known for their figurines in alabaster stone from Huamanga quarries, and for their silver filigree work.

THE NORTHERN BEACHES

a warm blue paradise



Peru's far north coast, between Tumbes and Piura, features superb beaches of white sand and deep blue sea that stretch along a number of bays uninterrupted by bars, points or islands. They are ideal for watersports such as windsurfing, water skiing and scuba diving. The area also has adequate and comfortable hotel infrastructure.

Some of the most popular beaches include Punta Sal, 84 km (52 miles) from the city of Tumbes, where the sea is gentle and warm; and Zorritos, 27 km (16 miles) from Tumbes, where the water temperature averages 26°C (78° F).

Piura offers visitors a wide variety of beaches, including: Cabo Blanco, 40 km (25 miles) north of Talara and 100 km (62 miles) south of the city of Tumbes. The beach is a one-kilometer stretch (less than a mile) of sand and regular waves. The area is a deep-sea fisherman's paradise, with black marlin as the prize catch. Mancora, 68 km (42 miles) from Talara, spreads along some 20 km (12 miles) of sandy beaches with powerful breakers. It is one of the most beautiful and frequently-visited beaches along the Peruvian coastline.

Altitude

Sea level.

How to Get There

By air: daily flights from Lima to Piura (90 minutes); from Lima to Tumbes (90 minutes); from Trujillo to Tumbes (40 minutes).

Overland: from Lima to Piura, 990 km / 615 miles (13 hours); Lima to Tumbes, 1270 km / 789 miles (18 hours); from Tujillo to Tumbes, 694 km / 431 miles (10 hours).

Lodging

Up to three-star hotels in Piura, Mancora, Tumbes and Punta Sal; there is also basic lodging in areas near the beach.

Activities

Surfing, deep-sea fishing, water skiing, scuba diving.

Tourist Services

Restaurants in Tumbes, Piura and Mancora.

Public transport in all the towns, rental of gear for watersports at some hotels and specialized firms.

Minimum Length of Stay

Five days to visit the different beaches.

Recommendations

There are mosquitoes in the area, and it is extremely hot in the summer. Visitors should pack plenty of sunscreen, insect repellent and a hat.

Nearby Attractions

Easily accessible from the city of Tumbes are the Tumbes National Mangrove Sanctuary, the Cerros de Amotape National Park and the Tumbes Reserved Zone, with protected wildlife. The mysterious mangrove swamps of

Puerto Pizarro are also accessible.

Near Piura are the Colan beach resort, the town of Catacaos known for its arts and crafts and gold and silver jewelry, and the town of Chulucanas, famous for its pottery.

Season / Climate

Sunshine all year-round, hot during the day and cool at night.

Festivals

Anniversary of Mancora (September 11).

Tumbes Tourism Week (last week in June).

Regional Fair 8th December Fair (December 1 -15).

Gastronomy

Cebiche de Conchas Negras: black scallops from the mangrove swamps marinated in lime juice, onion and hot chili pepper.

Ají de Langostinos: prawns in a cream sauce of breadcrumbs with hot chili pepper.

Majarisco: plantain cooked in a shellfish sauce.

Cebiche: raw fish marinated in lime juice, onion and hot chili pepper.

Chifles: deep-fried banana chips.

Arts & Crafts

A variety of craftsmen's traditions come together in Piura. Catacaos is known for its goldsmiths and silver filigree work; Chulucanas is famous for its pottery; Santo Domingo for its straw hats; in Huancabamba, craftsmen make floral arrangements with seashells, and weave baskets, blankets and ponchos on traditional waist-high looms; and Tumbes is known for its wood carvings.

PERUVIAN ICONS

Peru: a country with every kind of tourist resource
Peru is one of very few countries whose inventory of tourism resources includes every type recognized by the world tourism specialists: 1) natural locations, with a variety of eco-systems and a high degree of biodiversity in world terms; it is one of the few countries in the world that can offer the traveler sun and beaches, snow sports, and adventure in the tropical jungle at any time of year; 2) historical structures that show the signs of civilization from paleolithic times through various stages of Andean cultures until they reached their prime in the grand buildings of the Incas; 3) folklore, with expressions of dance, music, gastronomy and crafts that are unique to each one of the regions; 4) remarkable human achievements such as the temples and fortresses built at high altitudes (Chavin, Kuelap, Machu Picchu), the mysterious Nazca Lines, and colonial churches; 5) programmed events in which visitors can participate, such as the case of many popular festivals - Corpus Christi in Cuzco or the Virgen de la Candelaria in Puno which are held at different times throughout the year.

NATURAL BIODIVERSITY

Peru has a wide variety of climates, eco-systems and production zones. Of the 117 life zones known in the world, 84 are found in Peru. Of the 32 types of climate on earth, 28 are found in Peru.

Thirteen per cent of the Amazon tropical forests are in Peru, and Peru ranks eighth in the world for total forest area. The Colca and Cotahuasi canyons, in Arequipa, vie for first place as the deepest on earth. The largest river in the world, the Amazon, begins in Peru and much of the world's highest navigable lake, Titicaca, is within Peruvian territory.

Peru is one of only 12 countries in the world that rank as areas of biological megadiversity. There are almost 25,000 species of plants (10% of the world total), of which 30% are found only in Peru.

In wildlife, it ranks top in diversity of fish (2,000 species, equal to 10% of the world's species), first in birds (1,816 species, including the condor), third in amphibians (379 species, including the black cayman), third in mammals (462 species, including the ocelot and the black spectacled bear), and first in butterflies. It ranks second in the world for its variety of primates, with 35 species, including the unique woolly yellow-tailed monkey.

There are 460 species of mammals that are catalogued as original to Peru, 1,745 species of birds, 297 species of reptiles, 332 amphibians, 1,800 ocean and fresh water fish, and thousands of species of mollusks, spiders and insects.

The following crops are some of the species original to Peru: achira, achote, a variety of hot peppers including ají and rocoto, cotton, caigua, caimito, sweet potato, camu camu, cañihua, cantuta, custard apple, coca, cocona, eucaris lily, passionflower fruit, guanabana,

guarana, guava, heliotrope, huacatay, kiwicha, lucuma, maca, passion fruit, mashua, oca, olluco, pacaes, turmeric, lima beans, potato, papaya, sweet cucumber, quinine bark, quinoa, tarwi, tumbo, prickly pear, manioc, squash.

Besides being home to such a great number of unique species, biologists consider Peru to be "the Noah's Ark of modern times" because it also has a great variety of species that are regional, continental and universal, and in exceptionally large numbers. Some 800 species of birds can be observed within one square kilometer of forest (less than a square mile) in the Madre de Dios jungle, double that of all Europe and North America. The offshore islands, known as the guano islands, are home to the greatest density of marine fowl on the planet, and can be counted in the millions. Additionally, the ocean of Peru is one of the world's seven major fish habitats, with the largest biomass and diversity of fish resources available.

A CENTER OF CULTURAL DISSEMINATION

The ancient inhabitants of this territory began domesticating animals around 6,000 B.C., and to develop farming even earlier around 8,500 B.C. This process was simultaneous on the coast, in the Andes and in Amazonia. In fact, the Andean area which we call ancient Peru - where the cultures of Chavin, Tiahuanaco, Cajamarca, Recuay, Moche, Chimu, Lambayeque, Paracas, Chincha, Nazca and Wari developed and were later joined under the Inca Empire- is one of the world's first and greatest agricultural centers and one of the major areas from which universal culture spread, together with Mesopotamia, China, India and Mesoamerica.

Peru has contributed the potato and corn to world nutrition, which together with wheat and rice are mankind's four basic foods.

As a result of its rich heritage, Peru is today one of the world's most culturally diverse countries. There are 14 linguistic groups and at least 44 different ethnic groups, each with clearly defined traditions and cultural traits, 42 of which are in Amazonia. These ethnic groups possess important knowledge on the uses and properties of plants and animals and know how to use a great variety of agricultural genetic resources.

MUSIC & DANCE

Recent archaeological discoveries of musical instruments show that music in Peru dates back at least 6,000 years. This long-running tradition has given rise to native instruments such as flutes, pan pipes, pututos (a conch-like trumpet) and a wide variety of other wind instruments made from cane, clay, bone, animal horns and precious metals, plus a host of percussion instruments.

Contact with the Western world added an even wider variety of instruments, many of which have been creatively adapted to the rhythmic and tonal needs of each region around the country. The clearest example of this can be seen in the countless transformations to be

found of the harp, violin and guitar in the Peruvian highlands.

The fusion of Andean and Western traditions in Peru has given birth to over 1,300 musical rhythms. Two of these rhythms, however, have spread beyond their regional confines and have become veritable symbols of Peru's identity: the huayno and the marinera. A blend of joy and nostalgia, the huayno has become the basis of contemporary musical rhythms because of its simple yet flexible musical structure. The marinera, on the other hand, is not the basis of any other genres like the huayno is, but it has clearly marked variations on the coast and in the highlands, and its pretty melodies and stirring choreography have made it enormously popular all over the country.

The festive strength of African immigrants has also contributed to enriching the local musical scene, as creators of the cajón (a box-shaped drum) and the use of the donkey jawbone as a percussion instrument.

The jungle is also home to a wide variety of rhythms, dances and instruments linked to local festivals and rituals. One example is the use of the semiotic trunk-shaped drum called manguaré, which serves to send messages over vast distances in the jungle.

Today, Peru continues to assimilate new instruments - synthesizers, electric guitars, drums and harmonicas - and this creates new musical genres such as the Andean cumbia and the chicha. It also allows Peruvian music to absorb new influences and spread beyond the limits reserved traditionally for folk music to the wider boundaries of national and international sounds.

This capacity for musical fusion and innovation is the living expression of the integrating force and dynamic character of Peruvian culture.

GASTRONOMY

In Peru one can try a different dish every day of the year. The encounter of European and Andean foods, and African and Asian as well, has created a unique blend that is the essence of Peruvian cooking and a part of its folklore.

Each of the 25 regions has dishes with its own characteristics and ingredients : fish cebiche from Lima, potato in Huancayo sauce, Chiclayo duck with rice, shrimp chowder of Arequipa, Chincha's dry soup; the Amazon's chicken juane and the incomparable Andean three-meat pachamanca, are just a sampling of the variety of dishes that make Peruvian cuisine one of the world's finest.

There are also many international dishes that have been adapted to Peruvian seasoning to make new variations, such as minestrone, Italian-style tripe, and Chinese fried rice.

There are also a number of regional liquors, of which the most important is pisco, a white grape brandy distilled from fresh local grapes. Pisco is part of Peru's history and has helped to forge the nation's identity. It was declared a National Heritage and Appellation Controllee in 1995. It is the basis for pisco sour, Peru's signature cocktail.

FESTIVALS

Peru celebrates over 1,000 festivals in the year. Most are organized to render homage to a patron saint and are part of the Christian calendar imposed during the Spanish vice-regency, although they have been carefully adapted to the mystical beliefs prevalent in every region.

Apart from the religious festivals, there are other pagan festivities such as those linked to ancient myths in native jungle communities and the dozens of festivals created over the centuries and even more recently. A traditional fiesta in Peru is an opportunity for sacred and profane elements to come together in a single show of pride, vitality and happiness.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Peru features some of the most varied handicrafts in the world, as can be seen from the growing network of exporters who exhibit the best of Peru's arts and crafts in markets in Europe, Asia and North America. The diversity, colorful and creative aspects and multiple uses of Peru's handicrafts have made it fundamental not just to

build Peru's cultural identity but also as a vital source of income for thousands of families and even entire towns on the coast and in the highlands and jungle. The high standards of Peruvian craftsmen can be found in the harmonious geometric designs in textiles, the detailed portraits of farming life in the carved gourds (mates burilados) and the colorful cultural mix of the retablo boxed scenes. But there is also the unusual cosmic vision of Shipibo designs, the fine alabaster stone carvings of Huamanga, the beauty found in gold and silver jewelry and the multiple creations formed in pottery. These art forms are just some of the manifestations of a people who communicate mainly through their art, using a language whose fundamental expressions