Huacachina

Located near Ica, Huacachina is a tiny oasis town surrounding a small natural lake and itself surrounded by towering sand dunes. Once a playground for the Peruvian elite, these days Huacachina mostly attracts international tourists. The big draw here is the opportunity to sand board and taking dune buggy rides on the sand dunes.

Mancora

Located on the northern coast, Máncora is a small town featuring Peru’s best sandy beach, stretching for several kilometers along the Pacific. The town also boasts a large proportion of beach resorts, luxury restaurants and nightclubs for such a small town where the Pan-American Highway serves as the town’s main street. The consistently good waves makes Mancora a popular surfing destination while a raucous nightlife keeps visitors busy after the sun disappears.

Iquitos (Amazon River)

According to some, the Peruvian Amazon jungle is a better adventure holiday destination than its Brazilian counterpart around Manaus, with basically the same wildlife but less spoilt and better value. Starting point to an Amazon boat tour in Peru is Iquitos, the world’s largest city that cannot be reached by road. That leaves planes and boats as the primary means of entrance and exit for both people and supplies.

Nazca Lines

The Nazca Lines are located between the towns of Nazca and Palpa along the northern Pacific coast. Created between 200 BC and 700 AD the figures range from simple lines to stylized spiders, monkeys, fish, llamas, lizards and human figures. The lines were created on such a large scale that it wasn’t until the 1920′s, when Peruvian airlines started to fly from Lima to Arequipa, that they were recognized as figures. Hotels and tour agents in Nazca offer round flights in a Cessna to view the lines. There is also an observation tower along the Pan-American highway with a view of three of the figures.

Santa Catalina Monastery

Founded on October 2, 1580, the Santa Catalina Monastery in Arequipa covers a walled area of 20,000 square meters with walls, streets, walkways, stairways and small squares. The monastery is predominantly of the Mudéjar style, and is characterized by the vividly painted walls. It is one of the most important monasteries of colonial Peru and Latin America.

Uros Islands

Made of dried totora reeds, the artificial islands of the Uros are Lake Titicaca’s top tourist attraction. The lives of the Uros, a pre-Incan people, are interwoven with these reeds, which is a primary source of food and are also used to make their homes, their boats and even a reed flower tea. Reeds are added to the top of the islands constantly, about every three months, as they rot from the bottom, so the ground is always soft and springy.

Plaza de Armas

The Plaza de Armas has always been the heart of Cuzco, from the time of the Inca Empire when the square was called Huacaypata or Aucaypata, to modern day. The plaza is carefully landscaped with plenty of benches and walls for sitting, making it a popular outdoor lunch destination. Located in the city center, the plaza is lined with restaurants and shops as well as two Spanish churches; the Cathedral and the Church of La Compañía.

Colca Canyon

Travelers who think the U.S. Grand Canyon is deep are likely to change their minds after visiting Colca Canyon in southern Peru. At 4,160 meters (13,650 feet), Colca Canyon is twice as deep as the Grand Canyon, though the canyon’s walls are less steep. The big attraction here, in addition to the awesome sights, are the Andean condors. The condors can be seen at fairly close range as they float on the rising thermals.

Inca Trail

The Inca Trail is one of the most famous hikes in the world, running 42 km (26 miles) through the Andes Mountains to connect the small town of Aguas Caliente and Machu Picchu. The trail also goes through cloud forests, jungles and Inca ruins. This is a high-altitude trek; hikers may experience altitude sickness. May to September are the best months to make the multi-day hike. Hikers should be prepared for cold nights on the trail.

Machu Picchu

One of the most beautiful and impressive ancient sites in the world, Machu Picchu is the undisputable nr 1 among the top tourist attractions in Peru. The “Lost City of the Incas” is invisible from the Urubamba Valley below and completely self-contained, surrounded by agricultural terraces and watered by natural springs. Although known locally, Machu Picchu was largely unknown to the outside world before being rediscovered in 1911 by historian Hiram.