**PERU**

**DESCRIPTION**

Peru, a South American country, is a popular tourist destination known for its rich history, diverse landscapes, and vibrant culture. It offers a range of experiences, from ancient ruins like Machu Picchu to bustling cities and natural wonders like Colca Canyon.

A sizzling strip of coastal desert. Endless snow-capped Andean summits. A humid expanse of rainforest mazed by mighty rivers. These three types of terrain form a triumvirate of completely different climates, ensuring there is no bad time of year to visit Peru.

This is a tradition-entrenched, festival-focused land, with at least one vibrant celebration a week to add color to your trip. Whether you're a city lover stopping in the famous foodie capital of Lima or an adventurer heading for the Inca Trail.

3. Transportation:

* Peru offers various transportation options, including domestic flights, long-distance buses, and local transportation.

4. Getting Around:

* **Air:** Peru has several international and domestic airports, making it easy to travel between cities.
* **Bus:** A cost-effective and reliable way to travel long distances within Peru.
* **Train:** The Peruvian train system offers scenic routes, especially to Machu Picchu.

5. Accommodation:

* Peru offers a wide range of accommodation options, from budget-friendly hostels to luxury hotels.

6. Safety:

* Peru is generally safe for tourists, but it's essential to be aware of potential safety concerns like petty theft, especially in popular tourist areas.
* It's advisable to stay aware of your surroundings and take precautions against scams and theft.

7. Food and Drink:

* Peruvian cuisine is famous for its diverse flavors, from traditional dishes like ceviche to modern fusion dishes.
* Try local delicacies like "Cuy" (guinea pig), "Lomo Saltado" (stir-fried beef), and "Pisco Sour" (the national cocktail).

8. Culture:

* Peru is a country with a rich cultural heritage, with a blend of indigenous traditions and colonial influences.
* Visit local markets, explore museums, and immerse yourself in the vibrant culture of Peru.

**BEST TIME TO VISIT**

**June to August is the best time for Andean and Amazonian adventures**

Most Northern hemisphere travelers prefer Peruvian winter (that's summer in the North). This isn't only because it coincides with their main long holiday period, but because the crystal-clear weather casts the [Andes](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/argentina/mendoza-the-central-andes), where the country’s most popular tourist sights beckon, in sharp sunlight.

Fascinating festivals also occur, and the tantalizing trekking ground is dry underfoot. [Adventure season](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/top-things-to-do-peru) is in full swing.

The ancient Incan capital of [Cuzco](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco) grabs the most attention, along with the nearby [Sacred Valley](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco-and-the-sacred-valley/the-sacred-valley), where picturesque, Inca-ruin-dotted gorges invitingly thread through to the greatest site of them all: [Machu Picchu](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/machu-picchu).

The big treks – especially the [Inca Trail](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/the-inca-trail), but others in Sacred Valley and those in snow-bedaubed Cordilleras Huayhuash and Blanca – are also irresistibly beautiful in the brilliant sunshine, but it's peak hiking season and they do get very busy.

June brings an array of fabulous fiestas that enliven thoroughfares in Cuzco and other regional towns on a near-daily basis, the most notable being Inti Raymi, an Inca celebration of the winter solstice.

Further south down the Andes, [Lake Titicaca](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/lake-titicaca) glitters like a blue jewel, with tempting tradition-rich islands. The Selvámonos festival kicks off in Oxapampa at the end of the month and its live music and cultural celebrations are a wonderful way to spend a week in the valley.

It's dry season in the [Amazon Basin](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/amazon-basin) too – July is as dry as it gets in the Amazon, even though it's never truly dry there! The sunnier weather in the cloud forest lures birdlife out into the open, including the bright orange-red Andean cock-of-the-rock, Peru’s national bird, which mates at this time.

**September to November is best for quiet hikes and surfing without crowds**

It's shoulder season everywhere, particularly in the Andes, where clear sunny days linger through September. For trekkers who prefer to have the mountains to themselves, this is the best time to go – utter solitude beckons on [many hiking routes](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/best-hikes-in-peru).

The Inca Trail is always well-trodden, but alternatives such as the Salkantay Trek, where you traverse a 4630m (15,190ft) pass (loftier than any point on the Inca Trail), allow you to lose the crowds.

September also marks the end of the jungle’s dry season, so it's a good time to try rainforest trekking or wildlife-watching on a boat trip from [Iquitos](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/amazon-basin/iquitos) or Puerto Maldonado before the spring rains descend and make travel trickier.

As the action in the interior decreases, it's pre-peak season on the coast. Toward late spring, the thick *garúa* (coastal fog) that's been enveloping Lima since July begins to lift, but it's still worth visiting Peru’s dynamic gastronomic capital earlier.

Temperatures are rising along the country’s sandy beaches, but the masses have not yet checked in. By November, waves at Peru’s best surfing spots – including the home of the planet’s longest left wave at Puerto Chicama – are approaching their cresting best.

Día de los Muertos is celebrated all over the country at the start of the month. Though this occasion is about loved ones who have passed away, the atmosphere is anything but somber – it's a celebration of love and life.

**December to February is the best time for beach lovers**

This is the season to see Peru’s [magnificent beaches](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/best-beaches-in-peru) at their best. Sunbathing on the searingly warm northern beaches is delightful – temperatures routinely hover in the realm of 30°C to 40°C (86°F to 104°F), and crowds flock to see-and-be-seen resorts like trendy [Máncora](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/north-coast/mancora).

Cuzco hosts the biggest celebrations for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 – a national holiday in Peru.

It's peak surfing season too. But for a different coastal experience, take a boat trip to the rarely glimpsed mangrove forests near Tumbes, or to the rocky sealife sanctuary of [Islas Ballestas](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/paracas-el-chaco/attractions/islas-ballestas/a/poi-sig/1513120/1336696) near Paracas, where sea lion pups are born in January.

From Paracas, it's a straight shot inland to Peru’s most colossal dunes at [Huacachina](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/south-coast/huacachina) – sandboarding down is the coastal region’s greatest adrenalin rush. Lima is largely fog-free, so capitalize and try activities like paragliding over the city.

Inland, the wet season is at its height, and the Inca Trail is closed through February. Carnaval kicks off at the end of February and Latin America's biggest party is celebrated in style across the entire country.

**March to May is best for budget travelers and festival fanatics**

With the exception of the riotous pre-Easter revelry of Semana Santa (Holy Week), this is a wallet-friendly time to visit Peru. Summer’s manic crush of visitors is over, the coast retains pleasant weather through March and deals can be struck as popular spots try to eke out their custom.

Carnaval season in Peru continues from February into March with an explosion of color and celebrations everywhere.

It's not yet high season in the Andes or the Amazon, despite increasingly sun-kissed weather and bursts of bewitching greenery tinting the slopes, so accommodation and tours will be well below high-season tariffs.

The coastal strip entices as grapes ripen to the picking point, erupting in Ica’s wine-harvesting celebration, Fiesta de la Vendimia, in the second week of March.

Up in the mountains, against a canvas of steadily improving dry, bright weather, May can rival high season in terms of eye-popping festivals. Marvel at the spectacle of [El Señor de Muruhua](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/central-highlands/tarma/attractions/el-senor-de-muruhuay/a/poi-sig/1602960/363397)y, one of South America’s biggest pilgrimages held near Tarma, or the intriguing religious celebration of Fiesta de las Cruces, in cities like Cuzco, Ayacucho, and Lima.

**BEST PLACES TO VISIT:**

**1. Machu Picchu**

**Best for trekking**

One of the New Seven Wonders of the World and Peru’s greatest claim to tourism fame, [Machu Picchu](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/machu-picchu) lives up to its hype as a mystical and awe-inspiring 15th-century archaeological site. Built with incredible precision, attention to detail and at the great height of 2430m (7972ft) above sea level, Machu Picchu includes temples, private quarters and ceremonial platforms that continue to radiate sacred energy.

Machu Picchu, meaning “old peak” in the Indigenous Quechua language of the Andes, can be reached by a two-hour train ride from the Sacred Valley town of Ollantaytambo, or the truly intrepid can walk in the footsteps of the Incas along the classic Inca Trail, a four- to five-day trek that traverses 42km (26 miles).

Local tip: The weather at Machu Picchu seems to have only two settings: heavy rain or bright, burning sunlight. Don’t forget rain gear and sunblock.

**2. Caral**

**Best for desert explorers**

It is mind-boggling how few tourists make it to the ancient city of [Caral](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/barranca/attractions/caral/a/poi-sig/1347461/1317710), built around 5000 years ago and still  impressively conserved. Located in the high desert of the Supe Valley, a 3.5-hour car ride from the capital city of [Lima](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/lima), the UNESCO World Heritage Site predates ceramic pottery and the Incas.

It is the key to understanding the beginning of Andean culture, a visible shift from separate tribes to a shared urban community. With a guide, visitors can stroll through what was once a complex city of the Norte Chico culture, consisting of mud-brick amphitheaters, ceremonial rooms, circular plazas and the remains of six pyramids: remnants of urban planning and agricultural practices that would greatly influence subsequent cultures in Peru.

**3. Kuelap**

**Best for archaeology enthusiasts**

In the Amazonas region of northern Peru, a walled settlement known as [Kuélap](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/kuelap/attractions/kuelap/a/poi-sig/1408541/1317747) has stood among the clouds since the 7th century. Built by the Chachapoyas culture (referred to as “Cloud Warriors”), the fortress is often called the Machu Picchu of the North, despite its higher elevation of 3000m (9842ft) above sea level and the fact that it predates the Inca citadel by at least 500 years. Hundreds of circular structures are spread across the site, making it one of the largest sites of stone ruins in the Americas.

**Planning tip:** Getting to Kuélap is now easy in a day trip from Chachapoyas. Cable cars drop off visitors at the top.

**4. The Sacred Valley**

**Best for handicrafts**

The heart of the Inca Empire, the [Sacred Valley](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco-and-the-sacred-valley/the-sacred-valley) (Valle Sagrado) is indeed the gateway to Machu Picchu, but what rushed travelers often overlook are the villages cradled within the valley that are home to lesser-known archaeological sites, first-rate artisan workshops and living cultures of the Peruvian highlands.

An hour's drive from [Cuzco](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco), the bohemian town of Pisac boasts its own [hilltop Inca citadel](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco-and-the-sacred-valley/pisac/attractions/pisac-ruins/a/poi-sig/1168264/363405) and one of the best handicraft markets in the region. To the northwest is Urubamba, a hub for adventure tourism, including rock climbing, trekking and downhill biking. The neighboring village of [Ollantaytambo](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco-and-the-sacred-valley/ollantaytambo) is home to the eponymous Inca fortress.

**Local tip:** Recent years have seen an influx of expats and New Agers to Pisac in search of an Andean Shangri-la. The local tourism industry has responded with everything from yoga retreats and cleanses to guided hallucinogenic trips.

**5. Huaraz**

**Best for mountaineering**

Defined by Cordillera Blanca, one of the most impressive mountain ranges in the world, [Huaraz](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/huaraz-and-the-cordilleras/huaraz) is Peru’s capital of mountaineering. The town itself is rather low-key, but it is home base for a number of outdoor excursions, which makes Huaraz a must-visit destination.

Verdant valleys give way to the snowy summits of the Cordillera, accessorized with jade lakes and pristine springs. Experienced trekkers set their sights high to reach the 6768m (22,205ft) summit of Huascarán, a three-week journey. Meanwhile, day trips to sites like Laguna Churup are satiating for beginners or time-constrained adventurers.

**6. Arequipa**

**Best for colonial-era architecture**

Known as Peru’s White City for its unique colonial-era architecture crafted from volcanic rock (sillar), [Arequipa](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/arequipa-and-canyon-country/arequipa) is one of the most visually stunning cities in the country. Just beyond the chalky structures of the main plaza are deep-hued testaments to the city’s past, such as the blue and red [Monasterio de Santa Catalina](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/arequipa-and-canyon-country/arequipa/attractions/monasterio-de-santa-catalina/a/poi-sig/436942/363389), built in 1579 and vibrant picanterías (traditional lunchtime restaurants).

On the outskirts of the volcano-framed city is the Ruta del Sillar (Volcanic Rock Route), showcasing the material’s extraction, production and the lives of the workers. Witness the breathtaking flight of the giant Andean condor from the brink of [Cañón Del Colca](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/arequipa-and-canyon-country/canon-del-colca) (Colca Canyon), one of the world’s deepest canyons and a [top trekking destination](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/best-hikes-in-peru) in Peru.

**7. Lake Titicaca**

**Best for getting out on the water**

Separating Bolivia and Peru, [Lake Titicaca](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/lake-titicaca) was a sacred body of water to the Incas. In fact, Andean mythology often points to the high-altitude lake as the place of origin of the first Inca, Manco Capac, and his wife, Mama Ocllo.

A geological wonder, Lake Titicaca lies at 3812m (12,506ft) above sea level, making it the highest navigable body of water in the world. Glide out to the floating reed islands that dot the lake to meet the Uros people, who live a fascinating life committed to the preservation of Indigenous handicrafts and fishing. Tourism is incredibly important for this community and some families offer homestays.

**Local tip:** Bring warm layers if you plan to stay out on deck. Three types of boats ply these waters. Veloz (high-speed speedboats), lancha rápida (speedboats) and embarcaciones artesanales (traditional boats), which take twice as long as the speedboats.

**8. Choquequirao**

**Best for intrepid hikers**

Can you imagine having Machu Picchu to yourself? Full of history, challenging hikes and privileged views, [Choquequirao](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/choquequirao) is often described as a mini Machu Picchu, but not for its size. At least twice as large as the famed Inca citadel and similar in structure, Choquequirao can only be considered diminutive in terms of visitor numbers.

A minimum four-day round-trip of steep climbs filters out many potential visitors, leaving only the most intrepid of hikers. At an elevation of 3050m (10,006ft), much of Choquequirao remains buried by thick jungle foliage. To reach this high-elevation gem with few other visitors is like stumbling upon hidden treasure, or as its name means in Quechua, a “cradle of gold.”

**Planning tip:** Bring a water filter – the water found along the way is not potable. Fill up when you can as water sources are infrequent.

**9. Oxapampa**

**Best for the unexpected**

A jungle town founded by Austrian and German colonists in the 19th century, Oxapampa is a unique visit with unexpected architecture and local food. Just beyond the main plaza and the Tyrolean architecture are lush mountainsides ideally explored by foot or bike.

A bit farther away is [Yanachaga-Chemillén National Park](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/oxapampa/attractions/parque-nacional-yanachaga-chemillen/a/poi-sig/1518794/1317757). A new wave of residents, largely from Lima, arrived in the past decade, resulting in new sustainable tourism ventures and greater impulse to continue [Selvámonos](https://prime.joinnus.com/landing/selvamonos), an annual music and culture festival.

**Planning tip:** An 80km (50-mile) bus ride away lies Pozuzo, Oxapampa’s smaller yet older neighboring town, which hosts its own version of Oktoberfest, called [Pozuzofest](https://www.instagram.com/pozuzofest/).

**10. Puerto Maldonado**

**Best for wildlife**

Capital of the southern Amazon rainforest, [Puerto Maldonado](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/amazon-basin/puerto-maldonado) offers easy access to prime, wildlife-rich jungles in Peru. From here, visitors can venture into the [Tambopata National Reserve](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/rio-tambopata/attractions/reserva-nacional-tambopata/a/poi-sig/1168491/1337277), one of the last few pristine areas in the rainforest. Spread over 2745 sq km (1060 sq miles) and marked by lakes, rivers and forest, the protected area is one of the most biodiverse destinations on the planet, boasting thousands of butterfly species as well as hundreds of varieties of birds, mammals and plants.

Located in the Madre de Dios region, Puerto Maldonado is a 1.5-hour flight from Lima. Popular with travelers of all ages, the city is far more laidback than its bustling cousin up north, [Iquitos](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/amazon-basin/iquitos), making it more attractive for families and an extended stay.

**11. Ica**

**Best for sandboarding adventures**

In the vast [Ica](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/south-coast/ica) desert lies the surreal desert oasis, [Huacachina](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/south-coast/huacachina). Rest your eyes upon the sparkling body of water (inhabited by mermaids, according to local legends) before plunging down the dunes upon a sandboard or in a dune buggy for an absolute adrenaline rush.

Escape from the harsh desert sun at midday by looking around the impressive [Regional Museum of Ica](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/south-coast/ica/attractions/museo-regional-de-ica/a/poi-sig/470638/363426) or on a tasting tour of Peru’s national spirit, pisco. With year-round sunshine and just four hours from Lima by car or bus, Ica can provide entertainment for days. If that's not enough, the famed [Nazca Lines](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/south-coast/nazca/attractions/nazca-lines/a/poi-sig/465868/363428) and [Islas Ballestas](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/paracas-el-chaco/attractions/islas-ballestas/a/poi-sig/1513120/1336696), the so-called “poor man’s Galapagos,” are just 1.5 hours away.

**12. Cajamarca**

**Best for Inca history and local food**

The northern Andean town of Cajamarca was the fateful capture site of the last Inca, Atahualpa, by the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. Remnants of the area’s Inca history abound, including the [Cuarto del Rescate](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/northern-highlands/cajamarca/attractions/el-cuarto-del-rescate/a/poi-sig/466812/363421) (Ransom Room) that Atahualpa had filled with treasures to plead for his liberation as well as his favored thermal baths, now called Los Baños del Inca. Slow down and explore the idyllic countryside nearby: get your hands dirty on an immersive visit to the dairy farm of [Granja Porcón](https://www.granjaporcon.org.pe/index.html), or visit the archaeological complex of [Cumbemayo](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/northern-highlands/attractions/cumbemayo/a/poi-sig/1601443/363420).

**Local tip:** Cheese is the Cajamarca specialty and is sold in numerous shops in and around the Plaza de Armas.

**13. Barranco, Lima**

**Best for boho vibes**

Bohemian, hip and creative Barranco is hands down the coolest district in the capital city of [Lima](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/lima). The coastal neighborhood is walkable and numerous boutique shops, bars and cafes decorate nearly every block. World-renowned restaurants such as [Central](https://centralrestaurante.com.pe/default.html), [Kjolle](https://kjolle.com/default.html), [Isolina](https://isolina.pe/) and [Merito](https://www.meritorestaurante.com/) all call this district home.

Many local artists reside in or have studios in Barranco, which means a gallery or exhibit is never far away. Duck into Jade Rivera World for street-art-inspired pieces or the sizable [Museo de Arte Contemporaneo](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/lima/attractions/museo-de-arte-contemporaneo/a/poi-sig/1512495/363412), as well as artisan shops such as [Puna](https://puna.com.pe/), [Dédalo](https://www.dedalo.pe/) and Las Pallas.

**Local tip:** Join the locals sipping potent pisco cocktails at vintage bars, refurbished mansions and chic lounges around Parque Municipal, which throngs with revelers on Friday and Saturday nights.

**IMPORTANTE NOTES**

* **Passport:** Ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date.
* **Visas:** For most tourist stays, a visa is not required.
* **Altitude:** Be aware of altitude sickness when visiting high-altitude areas like Cusco and Machu Picchu.
* **Currency:** The Peruvian currency is the Nuevo Sol (PEN)

**Peru’s only international airport is in Lima**

With ongoing delays to the opening of the new Chinchero Airport near Cuzco, all international air passengers to Peru currently start their trip at Lima's Jorge Chávez International Airport.

This means your first experience after landing will be navigating the trip to the neighborhoods of San Isidro, Miraflores or Barranco – the three districts that make up the capital’s tourist-friendly trifecta.

The drive to town normally takes around 40 minutes outside of rush hour, but you need to be a little cautious about getting around in Lima.

Don’t try to pick up a taxi outside arrivals or from the chaotic street beyond the airport limits; instead, use one of the authorized companies with booking desks just after customs. For travelers on a budget, the safest low-cost option is the Airport Express Lima bus (with transfers to and from Miraflores only).

**Book well in advance for Machu Picchu, Huayna Picchu and the Inca Trail**

Is it possible to snag last-minute tickets for [Machu Picchu](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/machu-picchu)? Sure, it can happen – but as visitor numbers are limited to 2500 per day and this is Peru’s most popular tourist attraction, it doesn't make sense to risk it.

Only 200 visitors a day are permitted to undertake the steep, hour-long ascent for a privileged bird’s eye view of the archaeological site.

Cuzco's dry months are also the high season for one of [Peru’s most epic hikes](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/best-hikes-in-peru), the four-day [Inca Trail](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/the-inca-trail) from Pisacucho near Cuzco to Machu Picchu.

This trek requires a permit that can only be purchased through an organized tour agency. Keep in mind the trail closes every February for maintenance.

**Keep cash handy, especially outside of major tourist zones**

Credit cards and even payment applications are quite widely accepted in bustling cities such as Lima and Cuzco, but you'll want to keep some local currency (sol) on hand at all times for small purchases, and for travel outside these urban hubs.

Be sure to make time for a visit to one of Peru's open-air markets, such as the public market in [Lima's Surquillo neighborhood](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/best-neighborhoods-in-lima) or the San Pedro market in Cuzco, where vendors almost always prefer cash.

While at the market, pick up a small purse or wallet for small bills and coins, as public transportation and restrooms run on pocket change.

When visiting towns outside of the typical tourist circuit – think Tumbes in the north or [Ayacucho](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/central-highlands/ayacucho) in south-central Peru – having cash on hand is a must.

**Take a full day (if not two) to acclimatize before any high-altitude activity**

No matter how much physical activity you've clocked up at sea level before your trip, arriving into a high-altitude destination like Cuzco – perched at 3399m (11,152ft) above sea level – can be a shock to the system.

Don't let dizziness, nausea and other symptoms of *soroche* (altitude sickness) keep you from bucket-list hikes, such as the ascent to Vinicunca, better known as Rainbow Mountain, set at a breathless 5200m (17,060ft).

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) can be deadly, so take precautions. When planning your trip, set aside a day or two to get used to the elevation before starting any physically demanding activity.

When trekking, ascend slowly, take regular rest days, stay hydrated and avoid rich foods and alcohol.

Medicines are available to reduce mild symptoms – and local remedies, such as *muña* tea and coca leaves, can also help – but the best way to prevent AMS is to give your body time to acclimatize.