

Title:

Peru Holidays in Arequipa - the White City

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536

Summary:

Continuing a series of articles looking at destinations to visit during a holiday in Peru, we take a look at the White City of Arequipa and the nearby Colca Canyon - real highlights of any Peru holiday!

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Article Body:

Nestling in the shadow of El Misti - a snow-capped volcano which towers above it - lies the city of Arequipa. Known as La Ciudad Blanca ('the White City') because of the local white volcanic rock, it is one of the jewels of Peru. Combining modern amenities with a laid-back lifestyle, stunning scenery and beautiful colonial architecture, it is somewhere everyone should try and visit while on holiday in Peru.

The Plaza de Armas is the heart of the city and is a peaceful, beautiful square - the perfect place to sit and wonder where to visit next on your Peru holiday! It is surrounded on three sides by colonial arcades and on the fourth by the beautiful white cathedral. The cathedral itself is open to the public in the morning and the evening and is well worth a visit. There are also several other colonial-era churches close to the Plaza that are fine examples of the elegant mestizo style.

As well as the kind of facilities and culture you'd expect from a major city, the people of Arequipa are justly proud of the amazing sites the city offers for tourists. Probably the main attraction in Arequipa is the convent-city of Santa Catalina, 2 blocks from the Plaza. It really is a city in miniature and housed over 200 nuns and 300 servants until it opened its doors to the public in 1970. It was a closed convent and today the nuns live in a small closed area while the miniature streets and houses which were previously the nuns' cells are open from 9am-4pm. It's an amazing place and you can really feel the history as you walk around.

If the sun is shining (which it always is here!) then there are some nice bars

and restaurants in the Pasaje de la Catedral - a pedestrianised street which lies just behind the cathedral from the Plaza. It's a lovely, tranquil place during the day and at night, and is a great place to unwind and send home those postcards making everyone feel jealous of your Peru holiday!

Outside the city itself, Colca Canyon is one of the undoubted highlights of many peoples' Peru holidays. It is twice as deep as the Grand Canyon and is 163m short of being the deepest in the world - all this at 3,500m above sea-level! It offers almost unparalleled views and is also probably the best place to see the famous giant Andean Condor. The sides of the canyon are lined with pre-Inca terraces, lying inbetween tiny villages clinging to the precipitous sides. You've got to see it to believe it!

And when you think that Colca Canyon was only 163m shallower than the deepest canyon in the world... it's because a few miles away is Cotahuasi Canyon! Similarly an area of more than outstanding natural beauty, Cotahuasi canyon is slightly more remote and harder to get to but is all the more breathtaking because of it. It was declared a Zona Reserva Turistica in 1988 and is only slowly opening up to tourists.

There's so much to see and do in Arequipa and the surrounding areas as part of your Peru holidays that your only problem is likely to be wanting to spend too long here!