



Peru

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HISTORY

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Peru is a very old country. The earliest inhabitants arrived there about 15,000-years-ago. Societies emerged on the west coast more than 5,000-years-ago and began to spread inland. These included the Chavín, the Moche, and the Nasca.

In the Beginning

The people who built the lost city of the Incas; the same ones who designed the most intricate roads and designed the most incredible hydraulic and agricultural engineering works, started out from cold caves at an altitude of more than four-thousand-meters. These hunter-gatherers were the first inhabitants of our country and have left countless traces of their way of life at sites such as Pikimachay (Ayacucho), Lauricocha (Huánuco) and Toquepala (Tacna), where researchers have unraveled the mystery of the birth of Peruvian civilization. These first inhabitants left their caves and shelters around seven-thousand-years-ago to descend to the western Pacific valleys, and from there crossed the coastal hills and finally reached the sea. The llama and deer hunters quickly became fishermen and shellfish collectors and then began domesticating plants in the warm valleys that cut through the desert. Men such as the man from Nanchoc bear witness to this dramatic juncture for Peruvians, when they began to cultivate their first crops such as lima beans, corn, potatoes and cotton, allowing them to leave their nomadic life behind and settle in their first hamlets.

Francisco Pizarro

Spanish explorer and conquistador Francisco Pizarro helped Vasco Núñez de Balboa discover the Pacific Ocean, and after conquering Peru, founded its capital city, Lima.

Independence

From 1808 to 1822, Spanish America fought for its independence from the Crown. In Peru, small-scale revolts had begun decades earlier, for example during the Tupac Amaru Rebellion in 1780–81, which was crushed and ended with the brutal execution of Jose Condorcanqui and his family on the Plaza de Armas in Cusco. In 1820, the Argentine general Jose de San Martin landed in Peru in Paracas Bay. Peru finally gained its independence on July 28, 1821. For the vast majority of Peru's people, independence brought few changes. Political and economic positions of power were still monopolized by a minority of Spanish descended elite. Slavery was not abolished until 1845, as part of the reforms instituted by president Ramon Castilla, which also included the construction of a railway system. Additionally, guano exports revived the city's coffers and provided funds for the construction of public buildings, markets, hospitals, and prisons.



MONEY

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The currency of Peru is the nuevo sol (symbol: S/.). Nuevo sol banknotes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200. One nuevo sol (S/.) is subdivided into 100 céntimos. Coins are available in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20 and 50 céntimos, as well as larger denominations of 1, 2 and 5 nuevos soles.

Credit Cards

Many top-end hotels and shops accept tarjetas de credito (credit cards) but usually charge you a 7% (or greater) fee for using them. The amount you'll eventually pay is not based on the point-of-sale exchange rate, but the rate your bank chooses to use when the transaction posts to your account, sometimes weeks later. Your bank may also tack on a surcharge and additional fees for each foreign-currency transaction. The most widely accepted cards in Peru are Visa and MasterCard, although American Express and a few others are valid in some establishments, as well as for cash advances at ATMs. Before you leave home, notify your bank that you'll be using your credit card abroad.

Debit Cards

You will need to make ATM withdrawals to cover your day-to-day expenses while travelling in Peru. Visa is accepted by all merchants set up to handle card payments, though fewer vendors accept Mastercard or American Express.



Visitors from the USA

US dollars are accepted by most tourist-oriented businesses, though you'll need Nuevos soles to pay for local transportation, most meals etc. Paying in nuevos soles can be a time-consuming hassle at some mid range hotels and many top-end establishments. ATMs are a convenient way of obtaining cash, but rates are usually lower than at casas de cambio. Both US dollars and nuevos soles are readily available from Peruvian ATMs. Your home bank may charge an additional fee for each foreign ATM transaction. Surcharges for cash advances from credit cards vary, but are generally expensive, so check with your credit-card provider before you leave home.

ATM

Cajeros automáticos (ATMs) are found in nearly every city and town in Peru, as well as at major airports and bus terminals. ATMs are linked to the international Plus (Visa), Cirrus (Maestro/MasterCard) systems, American Express and other networks. They will accept your bank or credit card as long as you have a four-digit PIN. ATMs are normally open 24-hours. For safety reasons, use ATMs inside banks with security guards, preferably during daylight hours.

HELPFUL INFO

Climate

In Peru, a country located just south of the Equator, there are three climate zones: a desert coastal strip (called la Costa), with a mild climate, cloudy and foggy in winter and pleasantly warm in summer; the Andean zone (la Sierra), more or less cold depending on altitude, and finally the large eastern area covered by the Amazonian forest (la Selva), with a hot and humid climate throughout the year.

Electricity

In Peru the power sockets are of type A and C. The standard voltage is 220-V and the standard frequency is 60-Hz.



Technology & Communication

Peru's international code is 51. In cities, public pay phones are to be found all around, pay phones to be paid with money or telephone card which can be bought in kiosks and stores. To call international it is best to go to one of the many phone cells inside the stores. No matter how small the place is where you are in Peru, you will nearly always find a place with internet access. They don't offer much more than just a computer with internet and the possibility of printing, so mostly no drinks or food. Also many hostels and hotels have a small internet corner.

Infrastructure & Transport

Peru has an extensive system of roads that cross most of the mountain and coastal regions. Of the 72,887-kilometers (45,300-miles) of roads, 8,698-kilometers (5,406-miles) are paved. The government dedicated a significant number of resources to building and rebuilding the highway system throughout the 1990s. The principal roads are the Pan-American Highway, which runs the length of the country down the coast; the Central Highway, which connects the capital, Lima, to the Andean highlands; and the Marginal Highway, which penetrates deep into the northeastern jungle region. The nation's rail system, which was privatized in 2000, services highland mining operations. Passenger service on the rail system is limited to certain areas, particularly serving the tourist trade between the highland states of Puno, Cusco, and Arequipa.



In Case Of An Emergency

For general emergencies requiring police assistance, such as theft, minor traffic accidents, drug-related crimes, or acts of violence, dial the country's central emergency number at 105.

Language

The official language of Peru is Spanish, and in the areas where prevail are also the Quechua, Aymara and other aboriginal languages. English is a language that many people linked to the tourism sector dominate, and the tourist operators dominate other foreign languages, as German, French, Italian, Japanese, etc.



LGBT Travel

Peru is a strongly conservative, Catholic country. In 2015, the Peruvian Congress rejected a bill for gay and lesbian civil unions, despite the adoption of similar measures in neighboring countries in the Southern Cone. While many Peruvians will tolerate homosexuality on a ‘don’t ask; don’t tell’ level when dealing with foreign travelers, gay rights remain a struggle. As a result, many gays and lesbians in Peru don’t publicly identify as homosexual. Public displays of affection among homosexual couples is rarely seen. Outside gay clubs, it is advisable to keep a low profile. Lima is the most accepting of gay people, but this is on a relative scale. Beyond that, the tourist towns of Cusco, Arequipa and Trujillo tend to be more tolerant than the norm.

Religion

The predominant religion is Roman Catholic, but there is a scattering of other Christian faiths. Indigenous Peruvians, however, have blended Catholicism and their traditional beliefs. An example is the near synonymous association of Pachamama (Mother Earth) and the Virgin Mary.



Getting There

Peru has 234 airports, but the majority are simple airfields serving small, private planes. The principal airport is the Jorge Chavez International Airport located in Lima, with other modern airfields in the major cities. Of the total number of airports, 44 have paved runways. Jorge Chavez International Airport was privatized in February 2001 and, 5 other airports, including the tourist destination Cusco are in the final stages of privatization. Peru has a series of excellent, deep-water ports. The largest port facility is in Callao, the port city adjacent to Lima. In addition to Pacific Ocean ports, the country also has 3 large river ports: Iquitos, Pucallpa, and Yurimaguas. Iquitos is located on the Amazon River, while the other 2 ports are located on major tributaries. Peru has 8,598-kilometers (5,344-miles) of navigable riverways. Lake Titicaca, located on the border with Bolivia, is the world's highest navigable lake.

Driving

Peru is located in the western part of South America. Its territory borders Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile. It covers 1,285,215-km² of land and 200 nautical miles of the Pacific Ocean, as well as 60-million-hectares in Antarctica. Classic Peru is a 2,000-mile self drive adventure which starts in Lima and visits Nazca, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca and many other superb locations. The changing scenery in South America is amazing and one day you will be driving along the Pan American highway through desert landscapes and the next you will be high up in the Andes, close to snow capped volcanoes. During the trip you may well see penguins, sea lions, condors, and llamas. Most of the driving is on good paved roads with a small amount of mild off road.

THE EXPERIENCE

Culture

Peruvian culture is a beautiful mix of Hispanic and native traditions. The Quechua and the Aymara are the two main native cultures of Peru, both of whom speak their native languages. These Inca descendants have successfully preserved and developed their proud cultures despite the creeping in of globalization. In fact, the old Inca seat of Cuzco is still perceived as the cultural capital of the country by many. Peruvian typical dress is beautiful. In some regions, the women wear layers of bright skirts called polleras. Some wear black skirts with a wide embroidered belt, or cotton petticoats underneath with elaborate designs. Peruvian ponchos are a necessity in the highlands, where the cold can be harsh; the ponchos of Cajamarca and Puno are long and dramatic, where as those of Cuzco are shorter. Woolen or straw hats are also common.

Bucket List

Visit a desert oasis

Fish for piranhas in the Amazon

discover ruins along the Inca Trail

Meditate at the Rainbow Mountain

Spend a night under the Sacred Valley stars in a hanging hotel

Visit one of the world's deepest canyons

Family Travel Highlights

Take a boat ride on Lake Titicaca

Meet the Animals of the Andes

Sample Traditional and Modern Cuisine in Lima

Horseback riding in the Andean foothills

Cycling the coastal paths of Lima

Splashing about in the hot pools in Cañón del Colca La Calera

Tourist Authority

iPeru Tourist Information and Assistance is a free travel information service provided by PromPeru, the official tourist board of Peru. PromPeru has taken great strides in the last few years, becoming a modern and effective promotional body, and the general standard of iPeru offices has also increased. Five or so years ago, you'd be lucky to find an actual person in an iPeru office or booth, let alone a simple map of the surrounding city.



Foods To Try

Aji de Gallina

Anticuchos

Arroz Con Pato

Causas

Ceviche

Cuy

Lomo Saltado

Jungle Fruits

Drinks To Try

Chicha Morada

Emoliente

Cremolada

Pisco Sours

Coca Tea

Chicha de Jora



Photography Hot Spots

Barranco streets

Historical center

Machu Picchu

Huacachina Oasis

El Misti

Monastery of San Francisco

Souvenirs To Buy

Ponchos and Alpaca clothing

Traditional Peruvian textiles

Dried sweet corn

Friendship bracelets

Chullo hat

Andean artwork

Inca Cross

Andean and Alpaca Dolls

Painted wooden bowls

Peruvian spices

