



ABOUT PERU

Peru is the third most mega-diverse country on Earth. Only seven countries in the world have received the title of mega-diversity, and within these seven countries you can find more than the 70% of the world's biodiversity. The total area of Peru is equivalent to the combined area of France, Italy and Spain, and holds a population of nearly 27 million inhabitants. Thousands of years ago, powerful civilizations flourished in Peru. They not only left behind a legacy of impressive constructions, but also a technological knowledge of such sophistication and complex symbolism that it still surprises the world today. The identity of these cultures is still alive and is reflected in our traditions and ways of life.

Peru offers a wide diversity of landscapes, cultures, and experiences for visitors, reflected in our celebrations, festivals, rich gastronomy, and outdoor sports. Obviously, all this diversity cannot be appreciated simultaneously and therefore careful travel planning is required, as well as a clear understanding of priorities and a reasonable amount of time to comfortably enjoy what our country has to offer.

Peru consists of four main geographic areas for visitors: the **Southern circuit**, the **Northern circuit**, the **Central Andes** and the **Amazon Basin**. The main cities of each of these areas can be reached easily by air from the city of Lima. Indeed, most of the trips we offer start and finish in Lima so that you can select the option that best matches your priorities and available time.

The **Southern Circuit** is probably the most popular. It includes both Cusco and Machu Picchu, the main tourist attractions of Peru due to their importance in the Incan culture. Cusco is the starting point for many tours that offer the opportunity to hike the Inca Trail, one of the most famous pilgrimages in the world. A visit to Cusco also nearly always includes a stop in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, where important archeological sites can be found. This region also provides evidence of the Spanish influence after the XV century, reflected in the colonial churches, Christian festivities, old houses, and varied culinary traditions.



From Cusco, you can also travel overland to Puno and Lake Titicaca, the largest and highest navigable lake in the world. On the shores of the lake, there are many rural communities of Quechua and Aymara origin that settled in the area hundreds of years ago. In this region, there are also a lot of colonial buildings that are rarely visited or explored by tourists. As a short alternative in this southern circuit, you can visit the Paracas area, situated on the coast of Ica where you will find natural attractions such as the Paracas Natural Reserve, the famous Nazca Lines, and the important wineries of the "Pisco Route".

The **Northern Circuit** is also extremely interesting, but has received little promotion and is therefore less visited than the southern area. This part of the country was the home to several extraordinary ancient civilizations, including the Moche, Chimu, Lambayeque and Cupisnique, which are in fact even older than the Incan culture. In this region, you can visit important ceremonial and administrative buildings such as the Huacas del Sol y de la Luna, Chan Chan (the largest mud-city in the world), the Tucume Pyramids, and museums like the Archeological Museum of Brunning, Sican National Museum and the Royal Tombs Museum (said to be one of the best museums in South America). All these attractions are in the cities of Trujillo and Chiclayo, on the northern coast of Peru. Once you are in this area, you can also visit the largest forest of carobs in Peru and the private conservation area of Chaparri.

In the **Central Andes** there are many beautiful and significant places, such as the **Callejón de Conchucos**, a mountainous area located in the department of Ancash, only eight hours by car from Lima. The Huascaran National Park is located in this area. This national park is a protected area that is famous for its impressive scenery and the opportunities it offers for adventure sports and trekking through rural communities. In this region, you will also find the Chavin de Huantar archeological complex - one of the oldest archeological sites of the pre-Hispanic world in the whole of Latin America.

The **Amazon Basin** represents over 60% of our national territory. It comes as a surprise therefore that it is home to only 6% of the Peruvian population. This is an area of extreme biological richness and holds two key protected areas: the Manu National Park and the National Reserve of Tambopata, both accessible by plane from the city of Cusco. Both of these attractions are located in the South, but it is also worth visiting the Northern cities of Tarapoto and Moyobamba, which are home to large groups of indigenous people that have little contact with the outside world. This is also an area



with amazing natural attractions, including the Blue Lagoon and the waterfalls of Ahuashiyacu. From Tarapoto, you can travel by road to Chachapoyas and the Fortress of Kuelap.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Peru is located between 3° and 18° south of the equator. It consists of a total area of 1,285,216km² - 0.86% of the earth's land surface and 0.25% of the earth's total surface (including oceans). It has 3,080 km of coastline along the Pacific Ocean. The sea waters are cold, limiting the amount of rainfall, which in turn has created a large desert along the coast (almost 150km wide). More than half of the population live in the coastal region, which covers only 12% of the total surface area of Peru. The mountainous areas of Peru all lie higher than 500m above sea level, and are formed by the Andes, the largest mountain-range in the world and the third highest after the Himalaya and the Pamir in Asia. The Peruvian highlands make up 27% of the total Peruvian territory and cross the country from North to South, forming a natural division between the coast and jungle. In Peru, there are more than 500 mountains over 5000m high as well as more than 40 peaks that reach over 6000m. The highest point of the country is the Huascaran – 6768m above sea level.

Peru has nearly 27 million inhabitants, of which 7 million live in the capital city of Lima where the country's government is based.

The **official languages** are Spanish and Quechua. Other languages such as Aymara are spoken in the Titicaca area. In the Amazon area, there are numerous dialects that have been divided into 15 families and 43 different languages.

The **official currency** is the Nuevo Sol (S/.), which is divided into 100 centimes. There are coins of 5, 10, 20 and 50 centimes, as well as 1, 2 and 5 soles. There are also 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 soles bills. American dollars and euros are accepted in major cities, but it is highly recommended to change money to soles in banks.

Peru is 5 hours before **GMT**. There are no time differences within the country nor changes during the summer and winter seasons.

Electricity is 220v and you may require an adaptor for the plugs here. The provision of electricity usually presents no problems, except in some isolated areas.



Communications are easy throughout the country. There are public phones that work with coins or telephone cards, as well as cheap call centers. In isolated areas there are often satellite telephones. Internet cafes are also widespread.

The **climate** in Peru varies in each region. The ideal season for visiting the central Andes is from May to September when the climate is more predictable, with little or no rain and cold nights (sometimes as cold as -10°C). During the rainy season, from November to April, some roads in the highlands can no longer be used and we therefore do not recommend visiting these areas during this time of the year. In the coastal area, the ideal season for visiting is from December to April - the Peruvian summer season. In the Amazon area, the best time to visit is between April and October, during the dry season. In this region, temperatures may reach up to 40 °C.

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

Documents: Your passport must be valid for six months following your date of entry into Peru. Foreign visitors do not need a visa to enter Peru as a tourist, unless you are from Fiji or India. During your flight, you will be asked to fill in a migration card which will allow you to stay for a maximum of 90 days. If you wish to extend your stay, you must renew your visa with an immigration officer in Lima.

Customs: You can bring in up to 400 cigarettes and 500 grams of tobacco, 3 liters of alcohol, and new objects for personal use or gifts worth up to US\$300. Laptops, cameras, bicycles, trekking equipment, and other outdoor sports equipment can be brought into the country without paying tax (as long as they are for personal use and will not be left or sold in Peru). It is illegal to take archeological objects or pre-Hispanic art objects out of the country. If you are buying copies/replicas, please ensure that you have evidence that they are not original objects by getting the manufacturer's stamp/seal or the artist's signature.

Travel Insurance: We highly recommended buying international travel insurance to cover you in the event of a medical emergency, especially if you are planning to take part in high-risk or outdoor activities. Several insurance policies may also cover you for other risks such as robbery, loss of money or personal objects, dental and medical care, flight cancellation, travel delays, accidents, baggage loss, passport loss, injury, and



legal costs. Certain policies also offer special coverage for people planning to take part in extreme sports. Please be aware that not all insurance companies cover ambulance services, helicopter rescue, or emergency flights back home.

Health: It is recommended that you consult your doctor prior to visiting Peru to discuss whether you will need any vaccinations. If you are traveling to the Amazon area, it is highly recommended to get vaccinations against Typhoid, Hepatitis and Yellow Fever. If you suffer from circulatory problems, you should seek your doctor's advice before traveling to mountainous areas. Lima and other major cities have well-equipped medical centers and hospitals.

Altitude sickness: Although our trips allow time for visitors to adapt to the altitude, you may experience the symptoms of altitude sickness (commonly known as "soroche") for a few days when you reach areas over 3000m. To overcome this, you must rest, drink large quantities of water, and drink coca tea (an infusion made from coca leaves).

Credit cards: The most commonly accepted credit cards are VISA, Master Card, American Express, and Diners. Some places apply commissions of 8% to 12%, so we recommend using your credit card to get cash from ATMs.

Suggested packing list:

- Small back pack
- Comfortable clothing – pack both light clothes and warm clothes so that you are prepared for a variety of temperatures and altitudes
- Comfortable hiking boots and thick socks
- Sandals
- Sun glasses, hat, flashlight/torch, batteries, and flask/water bottle
- First-aid kit
- Swimming suit and towel
- Insect repellent, sun block, altitude sickness pills, antihistamine pills and plasters/band-aids
- Ear plugs
- Toiletries
- Alarm clock