



Peru

Peru is a diverse, unique and fascinating country. Witness to the rise and fall of ancient cultures and empires that left their mark on the landscape, this Andean country is endowed with an extraordinary richness in natural beauty. While first time visitors cannot miss the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, the rest of the country offers everything from trekking and rafting to the enigmatic coastal cultures of the Moche and the mysterious Nasca lines.

It is easy to combine visits to Peru with Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and the Galapagos, and Venezuela.

Climate and when to go

April to October is the dry season in the mountains, with hot days and cold nights, and is the best time to visit, especially if you are hiking. In the Amazon it is humid and hot year-round, with particularly frequent rainfall between November and April. On the coast summer lasts from December to April with hot dry conditions and temperatures between 25 and 35°C. Between May and November the southern coast suffers from the *garua*, a blanket of sea-mist.



Machu Picchu



Chan Chan



Alpacas

Photo: Simon Heyes



Weavers in the Sacred Valley



Lima and the North: mountains and culture

Lima was the centre of Spanish power in the Americas for three centuries. Today it is a bustling modern city which still retains some of its historical ambience. Superb museums provide an excellent insight into the delights awaiting the traveller in the rest of the country.

Seven hours by road to the north of Lima is the town of Huaraz, which nestles amongst the soaring peaks and glaciers of the magnificent **Cordillera Blanca**, Peru's undisputed climbing and walking centre. Within a half day's journey is the site of Chavín de Huantar, a fascinating fortress temple believed to have been built over 2,500 years ago. The neighbouring Cordillera Huayhuash is even more remote and spectacular.

Further north, and relatively undiscovered by foreigners, coastal **Trujillo's** superb colonial architecture and fascinating pre-Columbian ruins await. Near Trujillo is Chan Chan, built by the ancient Chimu culture and the world's largest adobe city. Also nearby are the step pyramids that comprise the Temples (*huacas*) of the Sun and Moon.

Founded in 1560 by Spanish priests, **Chiclayo** has one of northern Peru's largest daily markets. From here one can explore the pyramid complex that contains the tomb of the Lord of Sipán, and the vast ruined city of Túcume, believed to have been built over a thousand years ago.



Cordillera Blanca

Still fewer visitors reach the **Chachapoyas** region, partly because of difficulty of access, although this is one of Peru's richest archaeological areas. From mountain fortresses like Kuelap, said to contain three times more stone than the great pyramid at Giza, to inaccessible cliff tombs like La Petaca and Diablo Huasi, this is an exciting region which is still being rediscovered. Trips can be combined with the lovely Andean town of Cajamarca, and with Pacaya-Samiria, the country's largest Amazon rainforest reserve, home to monkeys, sloths, iguanas, caiman, anacondas, piranhas and pink river dolphins.

The Southern coasts: Ica, Nasca and Paracas

A few hours' drive south of Lima, **Ica** is Peru's wine centre (harvest is between late February and early April). Fertile valleys punctuate the desert scenery, and the port of Pisco is the centre of a region renowned for its viticulture. Just to the south, the **Paracas Peninsula** and the nearby **Ballestas Islands** form an important attraction for wildlife lovers, a marine reserve home to a wide variety of sea mammals and rare birds. The **Nasca Lines**, enormous geoglyph figures of animals, birds and geometric patterns visible only from the air, are an extraordinary sight whose origins and meaning continue to confound experts.



Paracas

LIMA COUNTRY CLUB



In San Isidro, 40 minutes from Lima airport. An elegant 5-star property built in 1927 with 77 beautiful rooms. Small swimming pool, gym, sauna.



Kuelap



Ballestas Islands



Paracas



SUASI ISLAND



On a private island near the Bolivian side of Lake Titicaca. The Albergue Campestre Suasi has stunning views and lovely gardens, producing most of their own food. The atmosphere is warm, friendly and very relaxing: relax in a hammock, explore the island, meet the tame vicuñas and watch the dramatic sunsets.

Arequipa, Colca and Lake Titicaca

Over 1,000 kilometres south-east of Lima lies **Arequipa**, the 'White City', nestling below the imposing snow-capped volcano of El Misti. It enjoys an enviable climate, with beautifully preserved and restored colonial architecture, including the Santa Catalina Convent, a walled town within the city once shrouded in mystery. Half a day's drive away is the breath-taking **Colca Valley**, with untouched Andean villages, astounding views and one of the best opportunities to view condors in South America at the Cruz del Condor. They often fly so close that you can hear the air rushing through their feathers.

A paved road leads north-east from Colca to **Lake Titicaca**, the highest navigable lake in the world and mythical birthplace of the first Incas, Manco Capac and his sister Mama Ocllo. The islands of Taquile and Amantaní are a highlight, where the Aymara and Quechua-speaking inhabitants have developed 'communal tourism', continuing to preserve their unique traditions and way of life. It is also possible to visit the small villages around the lake, or stay in a comfortable lodge on the quiet, remote island of Suasi.



Taquile Island



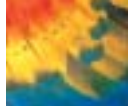
Santa Catalina convent



Colca valley



Colca valley



Cusco and Machu Picchu

From Lake Titicaca a railway, now operated by Orient-Express, and paved road run 300 kilometres at an average altitude of 3,500m to **Cusco**. Here, according to legend, Manco Capac plunged his golden staff into fertile ground, finding the 'navel of the earth', and founded the capital of the Inca Empire. Today Cusco is probably Peru's most attractive city, a fascinating fusion of the past and present that most visitors find very hard to leave.

North-west of Cusco the fertile Urubamba valley (also known as the **Sacred Valley**) winds westwards, with picturesque villages, local markets and ruins framed by towering peaks. The town of Ollantaytambo is famous for its fortress; Pisac and Chinchero have lively markets; while the salt pans of Maras and the Inca terraces of Moray are definitely worth a detour. There are also endless opportunities for mountain biking, white-water rafting, riding and walking.

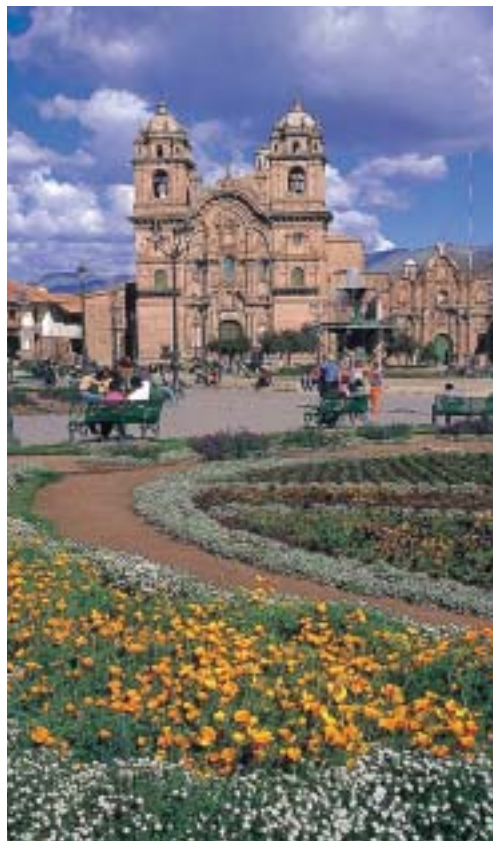
Further down the valley, the Inca citadel of **Machu Picchu** is for most travellers the climax of their visit. This is an awe-inspiring sight: superb Inca craftsmanship perched amidst verdant vegetation high above the winding Urubamba river.



Machu Picchu



Rafting the Urubamba



Cusco main square



Moray



Maras salt pans

HOTEL MONASTERIO



Set in a beautifully restored 16th century seminary just 2 blocks from Cusco's Plaza de Armas. Run by Orient-Express, it has retained its original charm, including the ornate Chapel of San Antonio Abad. Some rooms have oxygen. The most comfortable and stylish hotel in Cusco.

SOL Y LUNA



In the heart of the Sacred Valley, 57km from Cusco. Pretty cabañas each with their own terrace. Lovely gardens and a small pool. Riding, walking, rafting and mountain biking.

MACHU PICCHU SANCTUARY LODGE



Expensive, but the only hotel right next to the ruins (some rooms have views), run by Orient-Express. Ideal base for seeing the ruins without the crowds. Dawn, dusk and moonlight tours.



TAMBOPATA RESEARCH CENTRE



On the Rio Tambopata, 6 hours upriver from Puerto Maldonado. 13 double rooms with shared bathrooms designed with traditional low impact architecture. 25km of trails, 480 species of birds, and the world's largest macaw clay lick. A night at Posada Amazonas, two hours from Puerto Maldonado, is necessary before and afterwards.

SANDOVAL LAKE LODGE



3 hours by speedboat, canoe and on foot from Puerto Maldonado. 25 fully screened rooms with showers and hot water. Hiking, canoeing on the lake and birdwatching.

MANU WILDLIFE CENTRE



On the east bank of Madre de Dios River in the Manu Biosphere Reserve, normally reached by charter flight from Cusco. 22 spacious bungalows with private bathrooms and netting. Two canopy platforms with stunning views, a macaw clay lick close to the lodge and a large tapir clay lick an hour's walk away.

The Amazon

The Peruvian Amazon is vast, largely unexplored, and combines well with the other highlights of Peru. The **Tambopata-Candamo Reserved Zone**, home to a record numbers of species, is reached by river from Puerto Maldonado and boasts the world's largest known macaw clay lick. The **Manu Biosphere Reserve** is one of the oldest National Parks in South America and is said to have the highest biological diversity of any rainforest. Alternatively, from **Iquitos** it is possible to sail through the habitats of the Ucayali, Tapiche and Amazon river systems, although the effects of human presence are more obvious here.



Wiñay Wayna



Machu Picchu from the Sun Gate

The Inca Trail

The 5 day **Inca Trail** from kilometre 88 to Machu Picchu is a magnet for dedicated hikers worldwide. However, the overwhelming popularity of this route, particularly in July and August, has in the past led to severe overcrowding, as a result of which numbers are now restricted. There are a variety of excellent alternatives, notably the Inca trail via Choquequirao, with scenery every bit as impressive and no restriction on numbers, or the Ausangate circuit.



Trekking in Ausangate



Peru Itineraries

LIMA, AREQUIPA, LAKE TITICACA, CUSCO AND THE AMAZON



A carefully planned circuit of Peru's classic sites

Lima

Day 1: A night in Lima at the Hotel José Antonio Executive, a good 4-star hotel in Miraflores.

Arequipa and the Colca valley

Days 2-4: Fly to Arequipa for a night at the Posada del Puente, a small friendly hotel on the edge of the Chili river. A long drive, over dry altiplano and with views of El Misti volcano, brings you to the Colca valley. Here you spend 2 nights at the Colca Lodge, built with traditional materials and with its own hot springs. Visit the Cruz del Condor and explore the local villages.

Lake Titicaca

Days 5-6: Continue on a paved road (5 hours, lovely scenery) to Lake Titicaca. 2 nights at the Hotel Qelqatani, a good family-run hotel near the bustling centre of Puno. Visit the floating Uros reed islands and the beautiful island of Taquile.

Cusco and the Sacred Valley

Days 7-9: An 8-hour journey on the Orient-Express train brings you to Cusco. Spend 2 nights at the Hostal Las Ruinas, a friendly hotel near the Plaza de Armas. Driven down to the Sacred Valley, visiting Pisac market, and spend a night at the simple Hostal El Sauce in Ollantaytambo, with views of the fortress.

Machu Picchu

Days 10-11: Morning train down the valley to Machu Picchu. After a tour of the Inca citadel, return to Aguas Calientes for a night at the colonial Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, set in beautiful sub-tropical gardens. Afternoon return to Cusco.

The Amazon

Days 12-16: Fly east to Puerto Maldonado for 4 nights in the Amazon, at the Tambopata Research centre and Posada Amazonas (see page 58). Fly to Lima for onward connections.



Posada del Puente



Colca Lodge



Uros Islands



Uros Islands



THE CORDILLERA BLANCA, TRUJILLO, CHICLAYO, ICA, NASCA AND PARACAS



Remote walks through sacred mountains, glaciers and the best of the coastal pre-Inca cultures.

Cordillera Blanca

Days 1-4: A comfortable 7 hour bus journey north of Lima takes you to Huaraz and the glaciated mountain landscapes of the Cordillera Blanca. Stay 4 nights at the Hotel Andino, with superb views of surrounding peaks. Guided walks to explore the lakes at Llanganuco, the glacier at

Pastoruri and the fortress temple of Chavín de Huantar, believed to have been built around 800BC.

Trujillo and Chiclayo

Days 5-7: Full day drive to Trujillo for 2 nights at the colonial Hotel Libertador, on the main square. Visit the enormous adobe city of Chan Chan, and the Temples of the Sun and Moon. Continue north (3 hours) to Chiclayo for a night at the Gran Hotel Chiclayo and an afternoon visit to the eerie site of Túcume, one of whose 28 eroded pyramids is the largest adobe structure in the world.

Ica, Nasca and Paracas

Days 8-10: Fly to Lima and continue by road south to Ica for a night at the comfortable Hotel Las Dunas, with a pool. The next morning take a 45-minute flight over the Nasca Lines. Driven west to the Hotel Paracas, from where you take a boat trip to see the sea lions, boobies and penguins at the Ballestas Islands. Return to Lima for onward connections.



Cordillera Blanca



Ballestas Islands



Paracas



Peru Itineraries



PERU AND THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS



Explore archaeological sites, spectacular Andean scenery and the incredible wildlife of the Galapagos.

The Sacred Valley

Days 1-3: After a night in Lima at the family-run and colonial Hotel Antigua Miraflores, fly to Cusco and drive to the Hotel Sol y Luna for a 2 night stay (see page 57). Visit Maras, Moray and the local market at Pisac.

Machu Picchu and Cusco

Days 4-6: From Ollantaytambo take the train to Aguas Calientes and on by bus up to Machu Picchu. Afternoon exploring with a guide, before descending to the Machu Picchu Pueblo hotel, with its own orchid trail. Return by train to Cusco for 2 nights at the friendly Hotel Los Apus, three blocks from the central square in the pretty San Blas district. Visit Sacsayhuaman and other nearby ruins.

Lake Titicaca

Days 7-9: The 8 hour bus journey to Puno includes guided visits to Racqui, Pucará y Andahuaylillas. Spend 2 nights at the Hotel Libertador Isla Esteves, with views across Lake Titicaca to the Cordillera Real. A full day tour to Sillustani and Lampa, then fly to Lima for a night at the Antigua Miraflores.

Guayaquil, Ecuador

Day 10: Fly to Guayaquil and overnight at the Hampton Inn, close to the iguana-filled Parque Bolívar and restored promenade.

The Galapagos Islands

Days 11-17: Morning flight to the Galapagos, and embark on your chosen boat for a week-long cruise (see pages 45-48 for Galapagos cruise options). An experienced naturalist guide will ensure you learn the most about the unique wildlife you will see as you visit the different islands.

Quito

Days 18-20: Fly to Quito for 2 nights at the Hostal de la Rábida, a small colonial hotel in the heart of the city, with a day to explore this beautiful colonial city before departure.



Machu Picchu Pueblo



Hotel Los Apus, Cusco



Libertador Isla Esteves, Puno



Land iguana, Galapagos

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE INCAS



A special journey of cultural discovery to some of the less visited sites around Cusco, including two fascinating short treks.

Lima

Day 1: A night at the Lima Country Club, a lovely hotel in San Isidro (see page 55).

The Sacred Valley

Days 2-3: Fly to Cusco, and visit the ruins of Pisac on the way to the Hotel Sol y Luna (see page 57), where you stay for 2 nights. Visit the Inca fort of Ollantaytambo, Chinchero market and the salt pans of Maras.

Huchuy Qosqo trek

Days 4-6: Drive to Taucsa and trek for 4-5 hours to Huchuy Qosqo, where you camp for a night and dine by candle-light under the stars. Inca terracing surrounds you and there are superb views of the Vilcabamba range. Walk to the village of Lamay in the heart of the Sacred Valley and return to Sol y Luna for a night. Visit the ruins of Pumamarca and a traditional Quechua village before arriving at the Hotel Pakaritampu for a night, close to Ollantaytambo train station and with views of the ruins.

Machu Picchu and Cusco

Days 7-12: Board the train as far as kilometre 104. Visit the Chachabamba site and start the one-day Inca Trail, past the ruins of Wiñay Wayna, from where the trail cuts across the ridge above Machu Picchu to the Sun Gate (5 hours total). Overnight next to the ruins at Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge (see page 57). A morning visit of the ruins before taking the train back to Cusco for 3 nights at the luxurious Hotel Monasterio (see page 57) and time to explore Cusco at your leisure. Fly to Lima for a final night at the Country Club.



Hotel Pakaritampu



Inca Trail



Huchuy Qosqo



AA MOUNTAIN-BIKING, RAFTING, THE INCA TRAIL, AND AMAZON



A multi-activity trip covering the highlights of Peru, organised by Amazonas Explorer.

Cusco

Days 1-3: After a night at the Hotel Pardo Doubletree, a comfortable hotel in Lima's Miraflores district, fly to Cusco for 2 nights at the Hostal Centenario. Activities include a walking tour of the city, a day's easy riding, and visits to the main Inca ruins in the Cusco valley and Sacsayhuaman fort.

Sacred Valley

Days 4-5: Driven to the upper Urubamba for a day's grade III-IV rafting, visit Pisac's local market, before heading to the beautiful Hacienda Marcabamba for 2 nights. Driven up

to Chinchero for a fantastic one day mountain-bike: down old Inca trails to the village of Maras, followed by a descent on donkey trails past spectacular salt pans.

Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

Days 6-11: After a tour of Ollantaytambo fortress, driven to Chilca to embark on the classic Inca Trail. Over 4 days follow the banks of the Urubamba river, pass stunted cloud forest, walk to the top of Warmiwañusqa (the highest point of the trail at 4,200m), and camp overnight at spectacular ruins along the way. After reaching the Sun Gate and Machu Picchu, descend through the ruins and spend a night in a hostel in Aguas Calientes. Early the following morning re-visit Machu Picchu for a full guided tour. Return in the afternoon by train to Cusco and Hostal Centenario for 2 nights.

The Amazon

Days 12-14: Fly east to Puerto Maldonado. Travel by motorised dug-out canoe to Sandoval Jungle Lodge (see page 58) for 2 nights. Return to Puerto Maldonado, and fly to Lima for onward connections.

Fixed departures. Amazonas offer several different itineraries, including family adventures.



Rafting the Urubamba



Inca Trail



Inca Trail

AA CHACHAPOYAS, KUELAP, COCHABAMBA AND CAJAMARCA



A journey through Peru's less-visited north to the archaeological wonders of the Chachapoyas region including a trek to Cajamarca.

Chachapoyas

Days 1-2: Fly north to Tarapoto and on by car (9 hours) to the city of Chachapoyas. Spend 2 nights at the Gran Hotel Vilaya with a full day to relax and explore the city and local markets.

Karajia and Kuelap

Days 3-4: Driven north-west to visit the spectacular sarcophagi of Karajia. These six 2½ metre effigies, mummies of the Chachapoyan

nobility, rest on seemingly inaccessible cliff shelves. After a night at El Chillo, a converted hacienda, drive to the stunning fortress of Kuelap. Overnight in the sleepy village of Leimebamba.

Trek to Cochabamba

Days 5-8: Hike along a well-preserved Inca road to Tajopampa, and camp for 3 nights in an isolated farmstead surrounded by ruins and mountains. Explore the nearby sites of Boveda and Monte Viudo and the cliff tombs of La Petaca and Diablo Huasi. A hike through grasslands, terraces, cloud forest, and jagged peaks brings you to the village of Cochabamba (2,600m), where you camp.

Cajamarca

Days 9-10: Descend to the small town of Pusac, and drive (8 hours) to Cajamarca for 2 nights at the Hostal Portal de Marquéz. Explore the town before a 5 hour drive to Chiclayo for onward connections, stopping at the adobe ruins of Túcume.

Operates May-September.



Chachapoyas



Kuelap



See page 26 for another Peru itinerary