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THE ESSENTIAL

# PERU TRAVEL GUIDE

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# A WORD FROM THE FOUNDERS

SouthAmerica.travel is proud of its energetic Team of travel experts. Our Travel Partners are based in 7 South American countries, have traveled extensively throughout South America and work “at the source” from their operations headquarters in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and the Guyanas.

We are passionate about South America Travel, and we're happy to share with you our favorite Buenos Aires restaurants, our insider's tips for Machu Picchu, or our secret colonial gems of Brazil, and anything else you're eager to know.

The idea to create SouthAmerica.travel first came to Co-Founders Juergen Keller and Bradley Nehring while traveling through Brazil's Amazon Rainforest. The two noticed few international travelers, and those they did meet had struggled to arrange the trip by themselves. Expertise in custom travel planning to Brazil was scarce to nonexistent. This inspired the duo to start their own travel business to fill this void and help travelers plan great trips to Brazil, and later all South America.

With local tour operators throughout South America, as well as local telephone numbers in multiple countries worldwide, the SouthAmerica.travel Partners have helped hundreds of thousands of travelers fulfill their unique dream of discovering the marvelous and diverse continent of South America. Where will your dreams take you? Let's start planning now...



Juergen Keller  
*Co-Founder*



Bradley Nehring  
*Co-Founder*

“Our goal is to create memories that will last our clients a lifetime.”

*Juergen Keller*



## THE ESSENTIAL

# PERU TRAVEL GUIDE

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# ESSENTIAL PERU TRAVEL TIPS

## Cultural & History

Peru is rich in culture and history and boasts the capital of the Inca Empire, Cuzco, as well as the spectacular city in the sky, Machu Picchu. The Peruvian Amazon Rainforest is home to some of the most varied wildlife in the world. The beautiful Lake Titicaca, legendary birthplace of the Incas, is worth visiting to see traditional reeds craftsmen and weavers. View our most requested Peru tours or create a custom trip to Peru today.

## When to Visit Peru

During the months, May – September, Peru has their “dry season.” The dry season is considered to be the best time to visit Peru. By May, the rain has started to cease in the Andes and Peru becomes a destination for adventures. The sun shines a little brighter, and the sky becomes a little bluer. With hot shimmering days and cool crisp nights, tourists enjoy boating trips on Lake Titicaca, trekking passed snowcapped mountains, and hiking the Inca Trail. During these months, it’s considered winter. And winter in Cusco is beautiful. The weather is dry, and the streets are full of vibrant outdoor festivals. It’s a perfect time to take a walking tour through the city or make your way to Machu Picchu. June and August are typically the most popular months to travel to Peru.

## Passport Requirements

Most travelers, including citizens of the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, the European Union, and Singapore, only need a valid passport (minimum of 6 months validity) to enter Peru. Upon arrival, you will receive a tourist visa, valid for 90 days. Always check with the Peruvian Consulate in your area.

## Recommended Food & Drinks

Eating local foods enhances your cultural experience and your taste buds. While in Peru, eat at a local restaurant rather than an overpriced one on the main streets. Some must-eats in Peru are ceviche, lomo saltado, and for the bold and brave, guinea pig. For a night out in Lima, head to Central. It has been rated among the top restaurants in Latin America year after year. This Avant Garde Peruvian-style cuisine is not only pleasing to the taste buds, but to the eyes as well.

## National Cocktail

The Pisco Sour is by far one of the most popular drinks in Peru. This explains why both Peru and Chile claim it as their national drink. However, Peru's version of the Pisco Sour is more traditional. The Peruvian Pisco Sour is made with 1.5 ounces of Pisco, 1 ounce of lime juice, simple syrup, egg white and Angostura bitters. The Pisco Sour pairs well with ceviche.



# THE HIGHLIGHTS OF PERU

## The Peruvian Amazon Rainforest

Although Brazil has the lion's share of the Amazon Rainforest, the eastern side of Peru cradles thick rainforest vegetation and Amazon River tributaries that beckon the traveler to explore its many oxbow lakes, winding rivers, and crisscrossing trails.

There are three main rainforest areas in Peru, the northernmost Iquitos, the south-central Manú, and the southern Puerto Maldonado where the Tambopato and the Madre de Dios Rivers collide. You may see pink river dolphins, river otters, caiman, hoatzins, Andean cock-of-the-rock, sloths, monkeys, parrots, macaws and so much more.

Choose between staying at an Amazon Lodge or taking an Amazon River Cruise. Stay in luxurious accommodations, or take the most authentic route and sleep in an open air lodge. Both options provide ample opportunities to discover the sights, sounds, and smells of the jungle. The lodges and cruises all have expert Amazon Travel Guides, to ensure you get the most out of your Amazon adventure.

[See our Best Amazon Tours & Cruises Here](#)





## The Sacred Valley of the Incas

From Pisac, Chinchero, Maras, Moray, & Ollantaytambo to Llactapata, Wiñaywayna, and Machu Picchu, the Sacred Valley of the Incas was dotted with tambos (rest stops) and small farm villages. Many surmise that the Inca Trail led through the Sacred Valley to Machu Picchu because the site was one of vital religious significance.

The Pisac Market is worth visiting both for its agricultural terraces and its open-air market. This is a great place to buy colorful textiles, alpaca sweaters and other fun souvenirs for your friends and family.

During your trip, add a visit to Maras and Moray to see more impressive Inca agricultural terraces and salt mine terraces. Stop in Ollantaytambo to climb the massive terraces on a hilltop hovering over the quaint town.

Spend the night in the town of Ollantaytambo, which has been in operation since the time of the Incas. This is a great starting point for your trip to Machu Picchu. Wake up early and continue through the Sacred Valley by train. As the train whisks you along the Urubamba River to Aguas Calientes, your final town before Machu Picchu. If you prefer trekking, Ollantaytambo is where the Inca Trek starts.



## Lake Titicaca - Birthplace of the Inca Empire

Legend has it that the god Viracocha created humanity here. Manco Capac, the first Inca, was born out of the reeds of Lake Titicaca, and given the task to carry a golden staff until it sank into the ground in Cusco, where he established his empire.

Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable body of water in the world and it sits between Peru and Bolivia. Along the Peruvian side, sits Puno. Depart from the shores of Puno early in the morning and go on a tour to the floating reed islands. Here you will meet the Uru people, who to this day still live on the lake in handcrafted floating islands made from the totora reeds that grows on the shore. They plant crops on the islands, fish, and weave colorful and intricate clothing. In recent years, the Uru people have sustained themselves by selling textiles and handicrafts to visitors.

You can also visit Taquille and Amantani, two larger islands on Lake Titicaca. Go on a guided tour to the island and learn about the local traditions while enjoying an authentic lunch. The largest island on the lake is Isla del Sol on the Bolivian side. Both pre-Inca and Inca ruins are scattered about the island. Stroll along the hilly island and gaze out at the crystal-blue waters stretching in all directions.

Read more: [Lake Titicaca Tours](#)



## Machu Picchu

Nestled in the cloud forest on the edge of the Peruvian Amazon, the stone city of Machu Picchu is situated in one of the most verdant and dramatic landscapes in Peru. Indeed, many experts on Machu Picchu believe that the Inca city was deliberately placed deep in the forests, atop luminous granite mountains, for religious purposes.

There is something breathtaking when you arrive to Machu Picchu early in the morning, when the mist still shrouds the city and the surrounding mountains. The agricultural terraces built on the side of the mountain seem to fall off into infinity. The giant walls made of precisely cut Inca stones are the best remaining examples of Inca stonework. And the granite peak of Huaynu Picchu looms over it all, beckoning more adventurous travelers to scale its vertiginous cliff.



When traveling to Machu Picchu, try to get there early and beat the crowds. Take a picture from the Funerary Rock Hut, also known as Watchman's Hut, search for the Royal Tomb, or walk to the Inti Punku Sun Gate, which is the end of the Inca Trail. Trekkers who want an additional challenge should reserve a ticket to hike to Huaynu Picchu - this must be done in advance. The hike takes about 2 hours, and although some parts are steep with narrow stone staircases, the view of Machu Picchu below is stunning.

**Explore our Machu Picchu Tours**





## Lima - The City of Kings

Lima, the capital of Peru, is a burgeoning metropolis with a population of over 9 million. Visitors to Lima flock to the posh seaside neighborhoods of Miraflores and Barranco. Dotted with parks and open spaces, these neighborhoods offer quiet respite from the frantic cajoling of buses, taxis, and peddlers on the city streets.

The hub of activity centers in the Ovalo Miraflores, where huge department stores loom over backpacker hostels and churches. Stroll by the shops on Larco street until the buildings give way to a lush open green, the glossy high-rise JW Marriot, and the crystalline Pacific Ocean. Here is Larcomar, where para-gliders launch off the Costa Verde cliffs and wave hello to shoppers and diners nestled in the Larcomar shopping center

Spend the evening in El Centro, the historic, district, where the Plaza de Armas is lit up beautifully at night. Much of the architecture has been wonderfully preserved, including the Cathedral, several museums, monasteries, and colonial mansions. The Monastery of San Francisco is a must-see, with its centuries-old library and the Well of Souls deep in its catacombs.

[View our Lima Peru Tours](#)





## Cuzco

The Incas called Cusco “the Navel of the Universe,” and from here, they ruled a vast empire that stretched from south of Peru to Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina, and north of Peru to Ecuador and parts of Colombia. The Spanish conquistadors, busy razing the Mayan Empire in Mexico, caught wind of a great empire in Peru that had rich mines of gold and silver. The conquistadores arrived in 1532 and by 1533, the Inca leader Manco was fighting a losing battle against the Spanish and fled into the jungle beyond Cusco and the Sacred Valley.

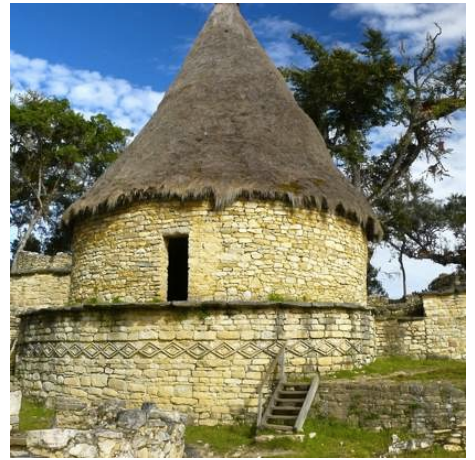
Even after the colonization of Cusco, several earthquakes, and the modernization of many of its buildings, Cusco retains several of its important Inca structures – albeit many are merely the foundations for later Spanish structures or recent posh hotels. Even still, it’s possible to see some of the former grandeur of the Inca capital, such as the 12-sided stone on Hatun Rumiyoq street.



[View our Cusco Peru Tours](#)

## Northern Peru - Trujillo, Cajamarca & Kuelap

Visit Peru's pre-Inca archaeological treasure trove: Trujillo, Cajamarca, Chiclayo & Kuelap. The Inca Empire met its fate in Cajamarca, the coastal city where the last Inca Atahualpa was captured, held for ransom, and then executed by the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro. Atahualpa claimed his empire could fill a room once with gold and twice with silver. The Inca people stripped many lavishly decorated temples to bring the precious metals to the feet of the Spanish. The Spanish received the ransom, but reneged on their promise to release the Inca. The alleged Ransom Room is still standing in Cajamarca today.



The fascinating history of northwestern Peru goes back further than the 16th century. Pre-Inca people known as the Chavin, Moche, Chimu, and others thrived in the region, leaving behind intricate artwork, impressive sculptures, and many religious and civic buildings in the dry coastal desert of northern Peru. Highlights on the Trujillo Circuit tour include a visit to the Moche Temple of the Sun and the Temple of the Moon, the “El Brujo” complex built by the Moche people, and the royal tombs and museums of Sipan and Sican. Many of these sites were only discovered in the 1980s and 1990s.

Another important archaeological site is Kuelap, home of a stone fortress built on a hilltop near Chachapoyas in northern Peru. Tucked into the cloud forest, the Kuelap fortress is an impressive pre-Inca site worth exploring for its aqueducts, well-preserved walls, and distinctive turrets.

### [View our Northern Peru Tours](#)



## Arequipa

Arequipa sits at the foot of El Misti Volcano, located high in the southern deserts of Peru. This city was an important juncture on the colonial trade routes from Lima to Santiago and beyond. Arequipa was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has preserved much of its colonial architecture including the Cathedral de San Francisco, La Compañía de Jesús Church, and the Santa Catalina Convent. Arequipa has a special old-world charm with its archways, brightly painted buildings, Spanish-style Plaza de Armas, and the Santa Catalina monastery in existence since the 16th century.



## The Colca Canyon

Miles beyond Arequipa lies the Colca Canyon, a gaping gorge that could swallow the Grand Canyon in one gulp. Here Andean condors soar the thermals above the canyon. At the Mirador lookout, visitors can oftentimes watch these condors in flight. Dotted with small Andean villages, the Colca Valley features many agricultural terraces that the local people continue to farm in the tradition of the Incas.



# SIX THINGS TO DO IN PERU

## 1. Visit the Plaza de Armas in the Historic District

Today, Pizarro's tomb lies in the Lima Cathedral. The heavy-handed influence of the Spanish colonial era is evident in the historic district of the city, called El Centro Historico. The Plaza de Armas, or the Main Square, is a lovely place to spend an afternoon, whether people-watching or witnessing the Changing of the Guard at the Palacio Gobierno, or Government Palace. The Palace is decorated in a lavish French neo-baroque style, with wrought iron gates and ornate facades. Sit on the steps of the Cathedral and admire its soaring front doors, called La Portada de Perdon, or Doorway of Forgiveness.

## 2. Visit the Second Home of Victor Delfin & Parke del Amo

The Peruvian sculptor and artist Victor Delfin has produced many works of art that have placed modern Peruvian art in the international art scene. Perhaps his most notable of works is the Parke del Amor, or Park of Love, located just north of Larcomar.

## 3. Go Para-gliding Over the Costa Verde

While you're near the coast of Lima, you're sure to see para-gliders riding the drafts that come off the Pacific and hit the jutting cliff side.





## 5. Drink a Pisco Sour in Plaza San Martin

From the Plaza de Armas, you can walk along Jr. de La Union Street Towards Plaza San Martin. The Jr. de La Union Street was once full of churches, elegant homes, and small shops, as evidenced by the ornate facades on the top level of the buildings. Later, head to Hotel Bolivar and order a Pisco Sour from this 20th century establishment that has earned the reputation of being both elegant and reliable when it comes to pouring a perfect Pisco Sour.



## 4. See the Well of Souls at the Monastery of San Francisco

The San Francisco Monastery is located near the Plaza de Armas, and is worth visiting even if this is the only church you see while in Lima. This baroque-style church painted is often lined with pigeons sitting among the concave ridges in the facade. Inside is one of the most impressive library collections in the Americas along with a picturesque courtyard.

## 6. Dine in the Huaca Pucllana Restaurant and see the Ruins

Well before the time of the Incas, ancient people called the Lima gave the land it's name. They built large temples like the Huaca Pucllana. Located in the Miraflores District, the sandy dirt and adobe bricks of the pre-Inca temple are surrounded on all sides by suburban homes. After dark, the ruins are lit up beautifully and the adjacent 5 star restaurant enjoys a direct view of the ruins. Dine on aji de gallina, a Peruvian specialty, or a number of other delectable dishes.

# THE BEST PERU TRAVEL PACKAGES

## The Essence of Peru

**9-15 Days in Lima, Paracas, Ballestas Islands, Nazca Lines, Arequipa, Lake Titicaca, Cuzco, & Machu Picchu**

Peru is a land full of rich history, incredible natural beauty, and friendly people. You'll see the Spanish colonial architecture in Lima's historic center, the beauty of Paracas Bay and the Ballestas Islands, the mysterious Nazca Lines, the mythical Lake Titicaca, and the condors of the Colca Canyon.

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## Incas & the Amazon

**7-10 days Lima, Cusco, the Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu, and Puerto Maldonado or Manu National Park**

Delve into the Peruvian Amazon on a Peru Amazon tour. You'll be amazed by the breadth of biodiversity, the abundance of flora and fauna, and the different pace of life during your Peru Amazon tour. Take a dip in the river, hang out in a hammock while listening to the sounds of the jungle, or take a canopy walk above the treetops to see over the Amazon canopy. It's a sight you'll never forget.

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## The Lost City of the Incas

**8 Days — Rio de Janeiro, Ilha Grande, Paraty**

This classic Machu Picchu tour includes everything you need to see in Machu Picchu – flights to and from Lima, a Cusco city tour, scenic train rides through the Sacred Valley, and a fully-guided tour of Machu Picchu itself.

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## Travels of the Incas

### 10 days in Lima, Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca, & La Paz

Follow the footsteps of the Incas on this tour of Peru and Bolivia to see the ruins of the Inca Empire. You'll visit Lima, tour Cuzco and the Sacred Valley, spend a full day at Machu Picchu, enjoy the beauty of Lake Titicaca, and end your journey in La Paz.

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## The Trujillo Circuit

### 8 days to Lima, Trujillo, Chiclayo, Tucume, & Cajamarca

Visit three of Peru's most important archaeological treasures on a tour of what is known as the Trujillo Circuit. Visit the Temples of the Sun and the Moon in Trujillo, and the impressive brick palace of Chan Chan. See Tucume and the Valley of the Pyramids, and then the royal tombs of Sipán in Lambayeque near Chiclayo. Finish in Cajamarca to witness the Ransom Room where the last Inca King Atahualpa was held for ransom by the Spanish.

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## Kuelap and Northern Peru

See many of the important archaeological findings on the Trujillio Circuit tour, but head inland to Chachapoyas instead of to Cajamarca. Near Chachapoyas, see Kuelap, a huge stone fortress with round turrets and advanced aqueducts, distinct from any other style of architecture for its time period. Also see the Chaparri Natural Reserve, the Cliffside tombs in the Utcubamba Valley, and more.

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## Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

### 4 Day Hike to Machu Picchu

Hike in the footsteps of the Incas on the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. This classic 4 day hike takes you through the Sacred Valley on an original Inca footpath, past rural farmlands, sweeping views of snow-capped mountains, and Inca ruins, until you reach the Inti Punku Sun Gate, and greet the spectacular city in the sky, Machu Picchu.

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## Machu Picchu & the Galapagos Islands

**12 days in Lima, Cuzco, the Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu, Quito, & Galapagos Islands**

This tour combines two highlights of South America: Machu Picchu deep in the Peruvian jungle & the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador. The first part of the tour includes Cusco, the Sacred Valley, and then a full day exploring Machu Picchu. Return to Lima and fly to Quito, the capital of Ecuador, and enjoy this colonial city that was second only to Cusco in importance during the Inca Empire, and second only to Lima during the colonial era. Finish with a deluxe cruise of the Galapagos Islands

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## From Machu Picchu to Rio de Janeiro

**18 days in Lima, Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca, La Paz, Iguassu Falls, & Rio de Janeiro**

An excellent introduction to Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil, this multi-country tour begins with our popular Travels of the Incas Tour, continues through the wonderful and striking landscapes of Bolivia, and then covers the highlights of Brazil including Iguassu Falls and the marvelous city of Rio de Janeiro.

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