



North Coast

Includes »

Barranca.....	308
Casma.....	310
Chimbote.....	312
Trujillo.....	313
Huanchaco.....	326
Puerto Chicama (Puerto Malabrigo).....	331
Pacasmayo.....	331
Chiclayo.....	332
Around Chiclayo.....	339
Piura.....	343
Cabo Blanco.....	350
Máncora.....	350
Punta Sal.....	355
Zorritos.....	355
Tumbes.....	356

Why Go?

The apocalyptic dune desertscape that makes up Peru's unruly north coast is a startling clash of sun and sand that refuses to relinquish the horizon for some 1300km from Lima to the Ecuadorian border. Cerulean waters settling in on Peru's best beaches bounce off the seemingly barren desert, but scattered about this heaving coastline are enough antediluvian ruins to send archaeologists into a head-spinning frenzy of Raiders of the Lost Ark proportions.

Travelers drool at the gold-laden million-dollar once-buried treasures at Sipán; they marvel at the largest pre-Columbian city in the Americas at Chan Chan; they scratch their heads in wonder at the remnants of the continent's oldest civilization at Caral. Meanwhile, graceful surf, enduring sunny months and frisky seaside resorts beckon modern-day sun worshippers down from the Andes, a white-knuckle, jaw-dropping adventure in itself.

Best Places to Eat

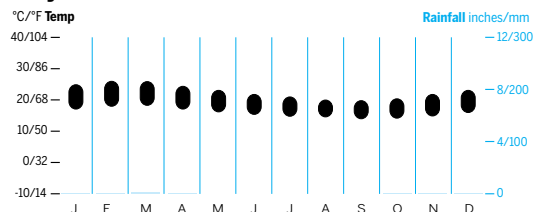
- » La Sirena d'Juan (p353)
- » Mar Picante (p319)
- » Fiesta Chiclayo Gourmet (p335)
- » Capuccino (p347)
- » Big Ben (p329)

Best Places to Stay

- » Sunset Hotel (p351)
- » Loki del Mar (p351)
- » Chaparrí Ecolodge (p341)
- » Playa Colán Lodge (p344)
- » Hostal Colonial (p318)

When to Go

Trujillo



Mar Summer's sizzling sun remains, but prices smolder back down to earth.

Apr–Nov The further north you go, the shinier the sun and fewer the people.

Nov–Feb Surf's up in Máncora, Huanchaco and Puerto Chicama.

Barranca

📍01 / POP 54,000

Barranca, located 195km north of Lima, has a relaxed, fountain-spouting plaza and a cacophonous stream of traffic passing through on the Carretera Panamericana, which bisects the town. Neighboring Pativilca, located 10km further north, is where the road branches off to Huaraz and the Cordillera Blanca. This spectacular route climbs inland through cactus-laden cliff faces; watch the cathedrals of sheer rock slowly turn into a carpet of greenery as the road climbs up to Huaraz.

👁 Sights

Caral

RUIN

(adult \$11; ☀9am-4pm) About 25km inland from Barranca lie the monumental ruins of the urban settlement of Caral, which confounded Peruvian archaeologists when they proved to be part of the oldest civilization in all of South America. Before Caral's discovery, the city of Chavín de Huántar near Huaraz, built around 900 BC, held that particular title. Caral culture arose in the Supe Valley some 4500 to 5000 years ago, making it one of the world's earliest large cities, alongside those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and China. This ancient culture was a conglomeration of 18 city-states and controlled the three valleys of Supe, Pativilca and Fortaleza, with the main seat of government at Caral. At the site, six stone-built pyramids (most of which have been excavated) were found alongside amphitheatres, ceremonial rooms, altars, adobe complexes and several sunken circular plazas. Most of the pyramids have stairways leading to their peaks, where offerings were once made; the stairs can be climbed for great views of the lush Supe River valley.

The people of Caral-Supe were experts in agriculture, construction, public administration and making calendars and musical instruments. Evidence of elaborate religious ceremonies among elites suggests a highly stratified culture in which classes were organized according to their labor in society; archaeologists at Caral believe that men and women may have enjoyed considerable equality. Among the many artifacts you'll see at the site are millennia-old bone flutes and Peru's oldest *quipus* (a system among Andean cultures of tying cords in knots to convey information). A large geoglyph – a design carved into earth – called Chupaci-

garo attests to the Caral people's sophisticated measurements of the movements of the stars. Unesco declared the Sacred City of Caral a World Heritage site in 2009.

Considering how few people visit Caral, the site is well set out for visitors. There are plaques in both Spanish and English illustrating points of interest. **Proyecto Especial Arqueológico Caral** (www.caralperu.gov.pe) is in charge here, and its **Lima office** (📞01-205-2500; Av Las Lomas de La Molina 327, Lima 12) has tonnes of information and also offers informative full-day tours – often including Chupacigaro – on weekends for \$90 per person (see the website for a calendar). Weekends are a great time to visit because handicrafts and local food are for sale at the site. **Lima Tours** (📞01-619-6900; www.limatours.com.pe; Jr de la Unión 1040, Central Lima) in Lima arranges expensive private tours to Caral and Paramonga on request. *Colectivo* (shared transportation) taxis depart from Calle Berenice Davila in Barranca to the nearby hamlet of Caral fairly regularly for \$10 (two hours). Alternatively, elusive private taxis will cost \$70 for the return journey (including waiting time); some charge \$20 per hour for the same route.

The road out here is rough and may be impassable during the December to March wet season. Spanish-speaking local guides are also available at the site for \$29 per group (up to 29 people).

Paramonga

RUIN

(admission \$4; 🚫closed Mon) The adobe temple of Paramonga is situated 4km beyond the turnoff for the Huaraz road and was built by the Chimú culture, which was the ruling power on the north coast before it was conquered by the Incas (see p515). The fine details of the massive temple have long been eroded, yet the multi-tiered construction is nonetheless impressive and affords fantastic panoramas of the lush valley. *Colectivos* from Barranca (\$2.50, 25 minutes) leave from the corner of Ugarte and Lima and will drop you off at a spot 3km from the entrance. A private return taxi here, including wait time, will cost about \$40 but are hard to come by.

🏠 Sleeping & Eating

Most hotels are along Barranca's main street.

Hotel Chavín

HOTEL \$\$

(📞235-2253; www.hotelchavin.com.pe; Gálvez 222; s/d/tr \$80/145/180; 🚻) Barranca's big shot