



# Northern Highlands

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Magredana (p411)
- » La Patarashca (p433)
- » La Olla de Barro (p429)
- » La Casa de Seizo (p429)
- » El Tejado (p420)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Posada del Purhuay (p409)
- » Gocta Andes Lodge (p423)
- » Kentitambo (p426)
- » Estancia Chillo (p424)
- » Pumarinri Amazon Lodge (p432)

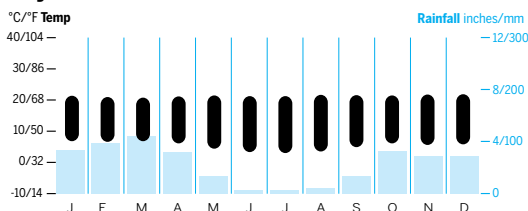
## Why Go?

Vast tracts of unexplored jungle and mist-shrouded mountain ranges guard the secrets of the northern highlands like a suspicious custodian. Here, Andean peaks and a blanket of luxuriant forests stretch from the coast all the way to the deepest Amazonian jungles. Interspersed with the relics of Inca kings and the jungle-encrusted ruins of cloud-forest-dwelling warriors, connections to these outposts are just emerging from their infancy.

Cajamarca's cobbled streets testify to the beginning of the end of the once-powerful Inca empire, and remnants of the work of these famed Andean masons still remain. The hazy forests of Chachapoyas have only recently revealed their archaeological bounty: the staggering stone fortress of Kuélap, which clings for dear life to a craggy limestone peak. At the jungle gateway of Tarapoto, the Amazon waits patiently on the periphery, as it has for centuries, endowed with a cornucopia of wildlife and exquisite good looks.

## When to Go?

### Cajamarca



**Jan–Apr** Rain-soaked but vibrantly lush and full of life with waterfalls in full-gushing glory.

**Feb & Mar** Let the rowdy mayhem commence: Carnival is on in Cajamarca.

**Jun–Oct** The rains – and the landslides – are a thing of the past. Enjoy the sunshine.

## Cajamarca

☑076 / POP 146,000 / ELEV 2750M

The most important town in the northern highlands, Cajamarca is a dainty colonial metropolis with a fierce will cradled in a languid valley and stonewalled by brawny mountains in every direction. Descending into the vale by road, Cajamarca's mushroom field of red-tile-roofed abodes surely confesses a secret desire to cling to its village roots. Fertile farmland carpets the entire valley and Cajamarca's streets belong as much to the wide-brimmed-hat-wielding *campesinos* (peasants) bundled in brightly colored scarves, as the young city slickers who frequent the boutique restaurants and bars. In the colonial center, majestic churches border the capacious Plaza de Armas. From here, once-decadent baroque man-

sions spread out in concentric circles along the cobbled streets, many enclosing ethereal hotels and fine restaurants.

Things have changed slowly here. Only recently has the Yanacocha gold mine (see the boxed text) injected Cajamarca with an avalanche of cash, a steady stream of money-eyed engineers and a heaping dose of unruly discontent.

### History

In about 1460, the Incas conquered the local Cajamarca populace and Cajamarca evolved into a major city on the Inca Andean highway linking Cuzco and Quito.

After the death of the Inca Huayna Capac in 1525, the remaining Inca empire, which then stretched from southern Colombia to central Chile, was pragmatically divided between his sons, with Atahualpa ruling the north and Huascar the south. Obviously not



### Northern Highlands Highlights

- 1 Scramble through **Kuélap** (p424), an immense citadel that rivals Machu Picchu but lacks its crowds
- 2 Get within a hairbreadth of the jungle at **Tarapoto** (p430) without leaving the comfort of the paved highway
- 3 Take a high-adrenaline dip under 771m of falling water at the beautiful **Catarata de Gocta** (p423) near Chachapoyas
- 4 Get close-up looks at hundreds of recently discovered mummies and the strange Marvelous Spatuletail Hummingbird near **Leimebamba** (p425)
- 5 Wallow a few days away in the underrated colonial ambience of **Cajamarca** (p404)
- 6 Take the ride of a lifetime on one of Peru's most spectacular and frightening bus rides along the cliff-teetering dirt track from **Cajamarca to Chachapoyas** (p419)
- 7 Have a raucous night out sampling root-soaked jungle elixirs in **Chachapoyas** (p434) or **Tarapoto** (p434)