

Welcome to Peru

Peru is as complex as its most intricate and exquisite weavings. Festivals mark ancient rites, the urban vanguard beams innovation and nature brims with splendid diversity.

All Things Ancient

Visitors pilgrimage to the glorious Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, yet this feted site is just a flash in a 5000-year history of peoples. Explore the dusted remnants of Chan Chan, the largest pre-Columbian ruins in all the Americas. Fly over the puzzling geoglyphs etched into the arid earth at Nazca. Or venture into the wilds that hem the fortress of Kuélap. Lima's great museums reveal the sophistication, skill and passion of these lost civilizations. Visit remote communities and see how old ways live on. Immerse yourself, and you will leave Peru having gotten a little closer to the past.

Pleasure & the Palate

One existential question haunts all Peruvians: what to eat? Ceviche with slivers of fiery chili and corn, slow-simmered stews, velvety Amazonian chocolate – in the capital of Latin cooking, the choices dazzle. Geographic and cultural diversity has brought ingredients ranging from highland tubers to tropical jungle fruits to a complex cuisine of Spanish, indigenous, African and Asian influence. Fusion existed here long before it came with airs. Explore the bounty of food markets. Sample grilled *anticuchos* (beef skewers) on the street corners and splurge on exquisite *novoandina* (nouvelle cuisine).

Life is a Carnival

Welcome to a place of mythical beliefs where ancient pageants unwind to the tune of booming brass bands. Peru's rich cultural heritage is never more real and visceral than when you are immersed streetside in the swirling madness of a festival. Deities of old are reincarnated as Christian saints, pilgrims climb mountains in the dead of night and icons are paraded through crowded plazas as once were the mummies of Inca rulers. History is potent here and still pulsing, and there is no better way to experience it.

Oh, Adventure

Giant sand dunes, chiseled peaks and Pacific breaks a few heartbeats away from the capital's rush-hour traffic: from downtown Lima to smack-dab nowhere, this vast country translates to paradise for the active traveler. All the usual suspects – rafting, paragliding, ziplines and bike trails – are present. Spot scarlet macaws in the Amazon or catch the sunset over the dusty remnants of an ancient civilization. Take this big place in small bites and don't rush. Delays happen. Festivals can swallow you whole for days. And that's when you realize: in Peru the adventure usually lies in getting there.



Why I Love Peru

By Carolyn McCarthy, Writer

For me, Peru is the molten core of South America, a distillation of the oldest traditions and the finest building, weaving and art made by the most sophisticated cultures on the continent. In Peru the wildest landscapes – from frozen Andean peaks to the deep Amazon – help us reforge our connection to the natural world. It is also a cultural stew, where diverse peoples live side by side, negotiating modern life with humor and aplomb. Beyond that, the cuisine alone makes it worth the trip. Every return is rich and surprising.

For more about our writers, see page 576.