

# Understand Peru

## **PERU TODAY** .....490

Despite environmental woes, a growing drug trade and political uncertainty, Peru seems to be finding its way.

## **HISTORY** .....492

From the rise of the Incas to the conflicts of the 20th century, Peru's history teeters between grace and tumult.

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A mix of indigenous, Spanish, African and Asian, Peruvians are well-mannered people brought together by their love of  *fútbol* .

## **PERU'S CUISINE** .....509

A country renowned for its cultural blend, Peru was cooking up 'fusion' before anyone knew what the term meant.

## **ANCIENT PERU** ..... 514

Peru was home to countless majestic civilizations before the Spanish ever set foot in the New World.

## **INDIGENOUS PERU** ..... 519

With hundreds of native communities all over the country, Peru has one of the richest Amerindian cultures on the continent.

## **MUSIC & THE ARTS** .....522

This is an accomplished culture at every level, from baroque painting to soulful waltzes to Nobel Prize-winning literature.

## **THE NATURAL WORLD** .....524

Peru has it all: towering Andes mountains, an arid desert coast and the planet's great rainforest – the Amazon.

# Peru Today

From the happening capital of Lima to cobblestoned Andean villages, Peru leaves an indelible impression as a place of incredible diversity, bustling commerce and innovation. In 2011 it became one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Though the pace of progress has slowed, there are still many positives. That doesn't mean there are no tangles to be worked out. Environmental woes, a growing drug trade and political uncertainty are all concerns without an easy out. But by and large, Peru is finding its way.

## Best in Print

**The Last Days of the Inca** (Kim MacQuarrie; 2007) The history-making clash between civilizations.

**Aunt Julia & the Scriptwriter** (Mario Vargas Llosa; 1977) A classic unconventional love story.

**Cradle of Gold** (Christopher Heaney; 2010) Readable biography of Hiram Bingham, the 'real' Indiana Jones.

**At Play in the Fields of the Lord** (Peter Matthiessen; 1965) Inspired by Amazon conflicts.

## Best Music

**Uchpa** Quechua band lacing Peruvian punk rock with blues.

**NovoLima** Internationally popular Afro-Peruvian and electronic music.

**Bareto** Alt rock and Peruvian rhythms.

**Arturo 'Zambo' Cavero** Legendary crooner.

**Pauchi Sasaki** Modern violinist incorporating diverse influences.

## Etiquette

**Manners** Transactions begin with a formal *buenos días* or *buenas tardes*.

**Photos** Ask before photographing people in indigenous communities – payment may be requested.

**Antiquities** It is illegal to buy pre-Columbian antiquities and take them out of Peru.

## Unparalleled Boom

Between the violence of the Conquest, the chaos of the early republic and the succession of dictatorships that swallowed up much of the 20th century, stability has been a rare commodity in Peru. But the new millennium has treated the country with uncharacteristic grace. Peru's economy has grown every year since 2003. Foreign investment is up and the country's exports – in the areas of agriculture, mining and manufacturing – have been strong. Tourism is also big: the number of foreign travelers going to Peru almost tripled between 2003 and 2014 from 1.3 to 3.2 million, according to World Bank data.

In addition, since 2000, a succession of peaceful elections has provided political stability. In 2011 former army officer Ollanta Humala was elected to the presidency. The son of a Quechua labor lawyer from Ayacucho, he has made social inclusion a theme of his presidency. One of his early acts was to make it a legal requirement for native peoples to be consulted on mining or other extractive activities in their territories.

As Humala's term comes to a close, political bickering, a stalled economy and the absence of a clear successor all put Peru into a moment of uncertainty during this relatively stable period of growth.

## Cultural Renaissance

The good times have resulted in a surge of cultural productivity – much of it revolving around food. Once considered a place to avoid, Lima is now a foodie bastion, where gastronomic festivals attract visitors from all over the world. La Mistura, an annual culinary gathering organized by celebrity chef Gastón Acurio, drew half a million people in 2013.