



PERU

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

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Welcome to Peru

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

Peru is a place of ancient beliefs where age-old pageants unfold to the tune of booming brass bands. Its 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.

Visitors flock to the glorious Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, yet this feted site is just a flash in a 5000-year history of Peruvian settlement. Explore the dusty 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 peruse Lima's great museums that reveal in full detail the sophistication, skill and passion of these lost civilizations.

Save time for adventure too. Giant sand dunes, chiseled peaks and Pacific breaks are a few heartbeats away from rush-hour traffic: this vast country translates to paradise for the active traveler. Take it in small bites and don't rush. Festivals can swallow you whole for days. And that's when you realize that in Peru the adventure usually lies in getting there.

Peru is a place where age-old pageants unfold to the tune of booming brass bands



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Woman in traditional dress holding a baby llama, Cuzco (143)

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Arequipa

Cuisine and architecture in an ethereal cityscape

Crowned by dazzling baroque architecture hewn out of the local white *sillar* rock, Arequipa is primarily a Spanish colonial city that hasn't strayed far from its conception. Its beautiful natural setting amid volcanoes and high pampa is complemented by a 400-year-old monastery, a huge cathedral and innovative fusion cuisine.

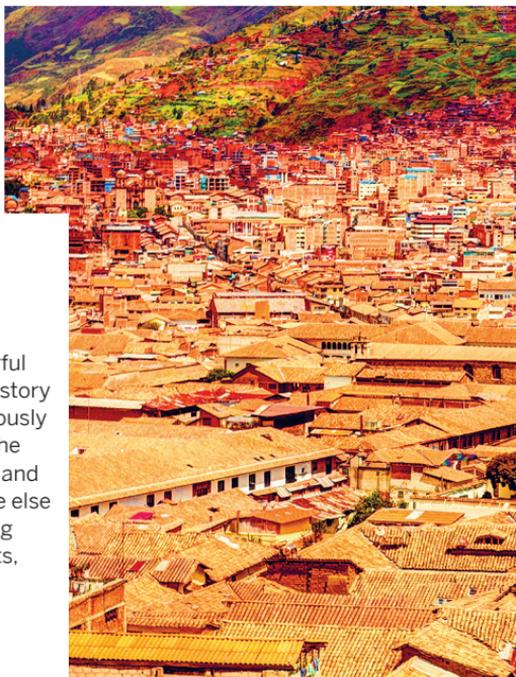


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Cuzco

The ancient Inca capital

With ancient cobblestone streets, grandiose baroque churches and the remnants of masterful Inca temples, no city looms larger in Andean history than Cuzco, which has been inhabited continuously since precolonial times. Cuzco also serves as the gateway to Machu Picchu. Mystic, commercial and chaotic, this unique city is still a stunner. Where else would you find ornately dressed women walking llamas on leashes, a museum for magical plants, and the wildest nightlife in the high Andes?





Nazca Lines

Mysterious giant geoglyphs

Made by aliens? Laid out by prehistoric balloonists? Conceived as a giant astronomical chart? No two evaluations of Peru's giant geoglyphs – known as the Nazca Lines – are the same. The mysteries have attracted outsiders since the 1940s, but no one has been able to fully crack the code. The lines remain unfathomed, enigmatic and loaded with historic intrigue.





Trujillo

Colonial architecture and modern culture

Old Trujillo boasts a dazzling display of preserved splendor. The city's historic center is chock full of elegant churches, mansions and otherwise unspoiled colonial constructions, which are steeped today in a modern motif that lends the city a lovely, livable feel. Add the close proximity of impressive Chimú ruins such as Chan Chan, and the Moche pyramids at Huacas del Sol y de la Luna, and Trujillo easily trumps its northern rivals in style and grace.

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Islas Ballestas

The Pacific Ocean's most astonishing fauna

A barren collection of guano-covered rocks, the Islas Ballestas support an extraordinary ecosystem of birds, sea mammals and fish. They also represent one of Peru's most successful conservation projects. Boat trips around the island's cliffs and arches allow close encounters with barking sea lions, huddled Humboldt penguins and tens of thousands of birds.

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