

Outposting: Peru
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PERU

Formal Name: Republic of Peru
Capital: Lima
Area: 1,285,220 sq. km
Population: 28,302,603
Languages: Spanish, Quechua
Religion: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Seventh Day Adventist
Currency: Nuevo sol (known as sol)
Time Zone: GMT/UTC -5
Per capita income: US\$6,000
Climate: Ranges from dry and hot in the desert in the west to rainy and humid in the tropical areas to the east, with both extremes coming together to create the mountainous weather of the Andes.

WHEN TO GO

Peru isn't like Canada where you can expect frosty cold weather countrywide between December and March. In Peru you can experience different seasons in the same month depending on where you're planning your big adventure. If heading for the desert, you have the flexibility to plan your trip for any time of the year as the hot, dry weather rarely changes. If you're planning on trekking up towards Machu Picchu or anywhere else in the Andes, it's best to travel between June and September when it's dryer. Keep in mind that these are also the busy tourist months, so if you're looking for a more solo experience, May or October may be worth a little extra dampness. October to April is actually the sunny season on the coast, and in the east in the jungle, the weather's hot and humid all year long, just be prepared for some heavy rainfall.

GETTING THERE

Continental, LAN, Delta and American Airlines all fly from most major Canadian cities to Peru with connecting flights in the U.S. If leaving from Toronto you can also take TACA. Most flights fly into Lima where you can catch a plane to all other Peruvian cities including Cusco.

GETTING AROUND

There are a number of ways to wonder the vast lands of Peru. Internal flights may be the best option if you're in a hurry as every major city is no more than a couple hours flight from the capital. The most common form of travel is by bus. In Peru, you can get on a bus just about anywhere, go anywhere and do it all for extremely cheap. Make sure you keep your passport with you as busses are often stopped and checked by police. Taxis are also everywhere in Peru, especially major cities because almost anyone with a vehicle (or the ability to rent a vehicle for cheap) and a taxi sign can drive a cab. That's right, no meter, so you have to agree on a price before the driver hits the gas. Taxis also don't have

great reputations for being safe, so try to pick a more official looking one if not avoid them all together. Trains are more expensive but very scenic and comfortable. Taking a guided tour may be a better option than wondering through the mountains on your own and luckily there are plenty of adventure outfitters to choose from, including:

Mountain Lodges of Peru: Guided hikes and horseback tours through the mountains with lodge accommodations. Different adventures for different skill levels including the lodge to lodge trek to Machu Picchu www.mountainlodgesofperu.com

BikeHike Adventures Inc.: Challenging adventures through the Andes including a variety of activities like mountain biking, rock climbing, white water rafting, hiking and horseback riding. www.bikehike.com

Adventure Life: Tours for both the sightseer and the adventure sport lover with packages including trips to the Amazon, train rides to Machu Picchu and exploration of the Galapagos Islands. www.adventure-life.com

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

You're more likely to run out of time before you run out of things to do in Peru. Hiking your way to the "Lost City of the Incas", paddling through the biggest rainforest in the world, and exploring Canón del Cotahuasi, the deepest known canyon in the world, should all be added to your checklist, right after trying the country's delicacy: guinea pig.

GOOD TO KNOW

Altitude sickness may occur the higher you trek above sea level. It's important to ascend slowly up the mountain and sleep at a lower altitude than the highest altitude you reached in that day.