

SOUTH AMERICA · HISTORY · HIKING · MOUNTAINS · FOOD · CULTURE · ADVENTURE

 Peru

Watching dawn break over Machu Picchu is one of the great payoffs in world travel, but Peru is far more than one ruin: Cusco's Inca stonework, the Sacred Valley's markets, Lake Titicaca's reed islands and Lima's restaurants all compete for your time. Book the Inca Trail months ahead, as permits are strictly limited.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all but essential travel to parts of Peru.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 9 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Lima	 CURRENCY Peruvian sol (PEN) £1 ≈ PEN 4.59	 LANGUAGE Spanish, Quechua Aymara	 BEST TIME May–Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £35–£190 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, B, C 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 13h direct ~£700–£1,300 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-5 standard time

Peru packs desert coast, high Andes and Amazon rainforest, which covers around 60% of the country, into one trip. Most first visits follow the southern circuit: fly from Lima to Cusco, acclimatise in the Sacred Valley, reach Machu Picchu by train or on foot, then continue to Puno and Lake Titicaca and on to Arequipa and the Colca Canyon. Two to three weeks covers it comfortably. Add a few days in the Amazon from Puerto Maldonado, the Nazca Lines and Paracas on the south coast, or the mountains around Huaraz and the adobe ruins near Trujillo in the north.

Peru is good value away from Machu Picchu, whose train, bus and entry tickets add up fast. Altitude defines the trip: Cusco sits at about 3,400 metres and Puno at 3,800, so plan slow first days. June to August is dry in the Andes but also peak season, and Inti Raymi fills Cusco in late June. Lima surprises many visitors twice: with grey sea mist, the garúa, for much of the year, and with some of the best restaurants in the Americas. It suits hikers, history lovers and anyone who travels to eat.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Machu Picchu

The 15th-century Inca citadel on a ridge above the Urubamba, its terraces and temples framed by Huayna Picchu. Entry is by timed ticket on set circuits; arrive by train to Aguas Calientes or on foot via the classic four-day Inca Trail.
- 2

HISTORY

Cusco

The former Inca capital, where Spanish churches and mansions sit on flawless Inca stonework. See the Qorikancha sun temple, the zigzag walls of Sacsayhuamán above town, and the steep artisans' quarter of San Blas.

3

CULTURE

Sacred Valley

The Urubamba valley between Cusco and Machu Picchu, lower and warmer than Cusco, links the Pisac market and ruins, the Inca fortress-town of Ollantaytambo, the circular terraces of Moray and the Maras salt pans.

4

CULTURE

Lake Titicaca

At about 3,800 metres, the vast lake is reached from Puno. Visit the Uros people's floating reed islands, then stay overnight with a family on Amantaní or watch Taquile's men knitting their famous hats.

5

ADVENTURE

Cordillera Blanca

A range of glaciated peaks topped by Huascarán (6,768 m), Peru's highest mountain and the highest summit in the tropics. From Huaraz, hike to turquoise Laguna 69 in a day or tackle the four-day Santa Cruz trek.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Lima

≈ 11 million people

Peru's food capital: eat ceviche at lunch in Miraflores or Barranco, see the pre-Columbian collections of the Museo Larco, and walk the colonial centre's balconied streets and monastery catacombs.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Arequipa

≈ 1.1 million people

The 'White City', built of pale volcanic sillar stone beneath El Misti volcano; visit the walled Santa Catalina Monastery and the Inca ice maiden Juanita, and use it as a base for Colca Canyon.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Trujillo

≈ 1 million people

A colonial city of pastel mansions near the north coast, and the base for the vast Chimú adobe city of Chan Chan and the Moche temples of the Sun and Moon.

Lima's figure includes the port city of Callao, which forms one metropolitan area with the capital.

When to go to Peru

Best time: **May–Sep.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

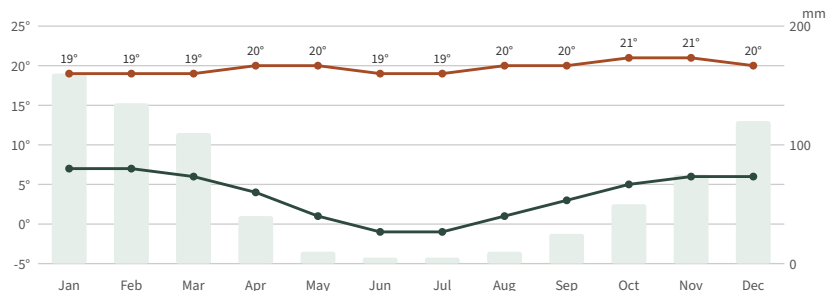
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Cusco

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb	Fiesta de la Virgen de la Candelaria Puno's huge February fiesta, on UNESCO's heritage list, brings tens of thousands of costumed dancers and musicians to the shores of Lake Titicaca over two weeks.
Jun	Inti Raymi On 24 June Cusco re-enacts the Inca festival of the sun, with a costumed procession from Qorikancha to Sacsayhuamán; seats there sell out, but the events in town are free.
Oct	Señor de los Milagros Lima's October processions of the Lord of Miracles, among the largest Catholic processions in the world, fill the centre with purple-robed devotees and stalls selling turrón.

How much does Peru cost?

SHOESTRING £35 per person / day ≈ PEN 161 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £85 per person / day ≈ PEN 391 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £190 per person / day ≈ PEN 873 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Ceviche

Raw white fish cured briefly in lime juice with red onion, ají limo chilli and coriander, served with sweet potato and big-kernelled corn; a lunchtime dish in cevicherías.

Lomo saltado

Strips of beef stir-fried with onion, tomato, soy sauce and vinegar, served with chips and rice; a criollo classic shaped by Chinese-Peruvian chifa cooking.

Ají de gallina

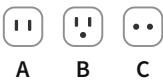
Shredded chicken in a creamy, mildly spicy sauce of yellow ají amarillo chillies, bread, milk and nuts, served over rice with potatoes, olive and egg.

Getting around

LATAM, Sky and JetSMART fly from Lima to Cusco in about 80 minutes and connect most cities. Overnight buses run by companies such as Cruz del Sur, with near-flat 'cama' seats, cover the coast and the south. PeruRail and Inca Rail trains run from Cusco and Ollantaytambo to Aguas Calientes for Machu Picchu, and PeruRail's Titicaca train links Cusco with Puno. Uber, Cabify and InDrive work in Lima and Arequipa.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-A/B/C adapter

DIALLING CODE

+51

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **106**

Fire: **116**

Police: **105**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC-5 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Leave about 10% in sit-down restaurants unless service is included, and tip trekking guides, cooks and porters generously at the end of the Inca Trail.

ETIQUETTE

Ask before photographing people in Andean communities; children posing with llamas in Cusco expect a sol or two. Greet people with 'buenos días' and expect a relaxed approach to time.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Jorge Chávez International Airport (LIM), Lima; Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport (CUZ), Cusco; Rodríguez Ballón International Airport (AQP), Arequipa

Visas & entry for Peru

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel to Peru without a visa for tourism or short visits. If you are travelling for any other reason, check requirements with the Peruvian Consulate General in the UK (in Spanish).

When you arrive in Peru, you will normally get permission to stay for up to 90 days in a 180 day period. The 180 day period is calculated from the date of your first entry into Peru. Immigration officials can grant you a maximum of 183 days in a 365 day period as a visitor or tourist.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Rabies

Tuberculosis

Yellow fever

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter. There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

Low risk of malaria

- There is a low risk of malaria in the Amazon basin of Peru along the border with Brazil, particularly in Loreto province and in the other rural areas of Peru below 2,000m including that part of the Amazon Basin which borders Bolivia: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Peru

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Tue 8 Dec 2026	Immaculate Conception
Wed 9 Dec 2026	Battle of Ayacucho Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Thu 25 Mar 2027	Maundy Thursday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Mon 7 Jun 2027	Battle of Arica and Flag Day
Tue 29 Jun 2027	Saint Peter and Saint Paul's Day
Fri 23 Jul 2027	Peruvian Air Force Day
Wed 28 Jul 2027	Independence Day
Thu 29 Jul 2027	Great Military Parade Day
Fri 6 Aug 2027	Battle of Junín Day
Mon 30 Aug 2027	Rose of Lima Day
Fri 8 Oct 2027	Battle of Angamos Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Spanish

ENGLISH	SPANISH	SAY IT
Hello	Hola	<i>OH-lah</i>
Thank you	Gracias	<i>GRAH-see-ahs</i>
Please	Por favor	<i>por fah-VOR</i>
Excuse me	Disculpe	<i>dees-KOOL-peh</i>
How much is this?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	<i>KWAN-toh KWES-tah</i>

Know before you go

Inca Trail permits are capped and sell out months ahead for May to September, and the trail closes every February; Machu Picchu entry tickets are timed, so book both early.

Ease into the altitude: start in the lower Sacred Valley rather than Cusco, take the first day slowly, drink plenty of water and go easy on alcohol.

Use Uber, Cabify or a hotel-booked taxi in Lima rather than hailing one on the street, and keep phones out of sight on busy pavements.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.