

PACHAMAMA **EXPLORERS**

ADVENTURE TOURS AND TREKS



GUIDEBOOK FOR PERU





Dear Pachamama Passenger,

It is with great delight that you have chosen us to host you and your Family or Friends on your Peruvian vacation!

Life bursts in this South American country in many different ways!

Peru is one of the most privileged countries of the world. It is the fourth country with the greatest megabiodiversity of the planet, and together with 11 countries, 70% of the world's diversity of life. Peru shelters 13% of the world's tropical forests, 10% of the plant species, 18% of birdlife and 10% of fish species of the world.

We feel privileged to have you Travel with us in our wonderful country! We look forward to sharing our treasures with you and create unforgettable memories!

Leave as a Traveler, not just a Tourist!



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WELCOME TO PERU

BIODIVERSITY

Peru is one of the most privileged countries of the world. It is the fourth country with the greatest mega-biodiversity of the planet, and shelters, together with 11 countries, 70% of the world's diversity of life. Peru shelters 13% of the world's tropical forests, 10% of the plant species, 18% of birdlife and 10% of fish species of the world.

The possibility of marvelling oneself at the colours of three thousand orchid species or 3.500 types of butterflies, feeling the effects of 28 out of the 32 world's climates, visiting 11 eco-regions, ranging from cold and tropical seas to jungles and tropical forests, across deserts, moorlands, and mountain range can be offered by very few countries.

Life bursts in this South American country in many different ways. Marvelled scientists found 5,000 insect species (80% of them were new to science) in one only tree of Madre de Dios, a region in the southern Peruvian forest which is so rich in animal life that 800 bird species can be found in one only square kilometer. This forest is considered by experts to be the world's "drugstore", since its 1.400 medicinal

plant species (in addition to the 4.400 species used by its population) are a discovery source for modern scientists.

At least 25.000 plant species, that is, 10% of all existing species in the planet, grow in this land. 30% of these plant species is endemic, this meaning that they can only be found in Peru. Thus, this is a marvellous spot for nature observers who can find unique species such as the biggest orchid of the planet, which is 13 meters high and is found in Huachucolpa (Huancavelica). This is why the renowned botanist David Bellamy said, when referring to this country: "Peru is a surprisingly diverse country in biological terms. If we could save it, we could virtually rehabilitate the rest of the world".

Peru is also the third country in the world with the greatest diversity of amphibians and mammals. A recent study conducted at Yavarí, in the region of Loreto, recorded over 50 species of frogs and toads, 5 of which were new to science. Peru hosts the second largest variety of primates: 34 species, one of them is endemic, the choro de cola amarilla (Yellow-tailed Woolly-Monkey-*agothrix flavicans*).

Moreover, half of the spider species inhabiting in the Neotropical region are concentrated in Peru.

The Peruvian sea - one of the seven fishing marine basins of the world- and the rivers that flow throughout Peru are home to about two thousand fish species, exceeding thus the number of fish species found in the whole Atlantic.

More importantly, the Peruvian sea is home to 32 cetacean species and about 400 shellfish. Additionally, its guano islands concentrate the largest number of sea birds of the planet, which are found in millions.



Weather in Peru

To be well prepared for your travels to Peru, it is important to know what the climate is like. First and foremost, it's important to know that the climate of Peru varies dramatically due to the numerous microclimates throughout the country. Preparing for your trip to Peru will depend on if you are planning to visit the Andean highlands (Cusco, Puno, Arequipa), the coast (Lima, Trujillo, Ica, Nazca, Mancora) or the Peruvian jungle (Iquitos, Manu, Tambopata).

PERUVIAN ANDES

In the Andean highlands there are only two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. In Cusco, the rainy season starts in December and ends in April. During the rainy season, the average temperature during the day is around 18-24C (64-75F). During the night, the temperature drops to around 7-10C (44-50F). Typically, it will rain hard for a few hours throughout the day and then the clouds will part and it will be partly sunny. Thunder storms and lightning are also very common during the rainy season. As most of Cusco is paved with cobblestones, it is important to be careful in the slippery streets when it rains.

The dry season in the highlands lasts from May until November. In this season, the weather is more variable and the temperatures differ highly between day and night. During the day, the average temperature is approximately 20C (68F). However, during the night, the temperature can drop as low as 2C (35F). Not many people are aware of this fact while packing their backpack for Cusco. Although you can buy a plethora of scarves, sweaters, hats, and gloves in Cusco, it is advisable to bring warm clothes from home. May, June and July are the coldest months in Cusco. Although these months are also the sunniest, known for clear blue and sunny skies, the air is very cold in the evening and early morning. Warm clothes and dressing in layers is advisable, since there is no built-in heating in most hostels, agencies, cafes, pubs or any buildings in Peru.

PERUVIAN COASTLINE

Weather on the Peruvian coast is very different from the Andes. In the coastal areas we find a sub-tropical climate with high humidity and very little rainfall. The warmest months on the Peruvian coast are January and February. Peruvian summer on the coast is characterized by hot, humid and sunny conditions with occasional afternoon and nocturnal rainshowers. The further north on the coast, the more rainshowers do occur. The lowest average temperature in summer is between 20-22C (68-71F) and the highest, between 24-29C (75-84F). Winter is characterized by cloudy conditions. A few kilometers inland from the coast, a thick layer of fog occurs in winter. High temperatures in winter range between 15-20C (59-69F) and the lows between 8-15C (46-59F).

PERUVIAN RAINFOREST

The climate of the Amazon region in Peru is hot and rainy most of the year. Temperatures range between 18-36C (64-96F) year-round and rain showers vary between 1,000 and 4,000mm per annum. In the region around the Manu National Park and Tambopata Reserve of Peru, there are two seasons: the dry season during the months of May – September, and the wet season October – April. Be aware of the fact that there are more mosquitos in the wetter months of the year.



GETTING READY

Some general information to help you get ready before you enter Peru. This will ensure a smooth visit and avoid any drawbacks or delays.



CURRENCY

In Peru both Peruvian Soles and US Dollars are accepted. However, most items are charged in Soles. You can pay in USD but it is not beneficial to you as you will be charged high fees or exchange rates when doing this.

Bring with you a small amount of US Dollars to get started. You can change your USD into Soles in the airport (although rates are not good) or at any exchange office often found in city centres—you will get the best rates here. Avoid changing in Banks!

There are many ATMs in all major cities from where you withdraw both Soles and USD. We recommend withdrawing USD and changing it at a Money Exchange into Soles to get the best value of your money.

CREDIT CARDS

Always advise your credit card Company that you will be traveling abroad, before you depart, otherwise the sudden change in spending patterns and location could trigger a card alert and blockage by your Bank.

PASSPORTS / VISAS

Citizens of most Western European countries, North and South America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand only require a valid passport to enter Peru. You need to ensure that your passport has at least 6 months validity left after the date that you enter the country. If you are unsure if you require a visa or not, please consult with your nearest Peruvian Embassy.

On arrival you will stamped with a 30, 60 or 90 day visa.

When travelling between towns always have your passport close to hand since you may require for inspection. In the cities it is best to leave it in the hotel safe and carry a photocopy of it with you. It is also a good idea to make photocopies of important documents and take note of your credit card account numbers and emergency phone numbers.

ELECTRICAL GOODS

If you're bringing electronics, 220 volts AC, 60Hz is the voltage in Peru - twin flat blade (as used in the USA) and twin round pin plugs (as used in continental Europe) are standard.

IMMUNIZATIONS & HEALTH

Before you travel you will need to get the correct travel vaccinations. It may be boring and costly, but it's an important part of your pre-trip planning.

Although no vaccines are currently required for entry into Peru, the necessary immunizations will help keep you safe and healthy on the road. Always seek advice from your doctor or a specialist travel clinic before you travel, ideally 4 to 6 weeks before you go to Peru.

The commonly recommended vaccines are Thyphoid, Tetanus and Hepatitis A/B.

Good medical care is available in hospitals and clinics in main cities, but limited in more remote areas like the jungle and once out on a trek. There are no airlift facilities once out on a trek, but should you fall ill we do our utmost to evacuate you to the nearest city. Make sure you carry any medication that you are taking with you.



MONEY / CREDIT CARDS

You will find many ATMs in cities from where you can withdraw either Soles or US Dollars. We recommend withdrawing US Dollars and changing them into Soles to get the best value for your buck!

There are many money exchange offices “cambios” where you can change your Dollars into Soles. They are safe and secure. Always ask the rate before changing, although most of the time they show you on their calculator the rate prior to the transaction.

Although credit card acceptance is common, at least in the cities, many places will not accept them for small payments, and in remote areas it is cash only. If such areas are in your plans, make sure you have small notes, as shops may not have sufficient change for the larger ones. Most places take Visa and Mastercard, and many take American Express and Diners.

Always try and get small change/notes when you change money as you will find in market places or if you take a taxi that often the proprietor does not have change forcing you to pay more than you need too.



ALTITUDE SICKNESS

If you are visiting Cusco which is 3,350masl / 11,500 feet then you should rest for a few hours on arrival and take it easy for the first few days. This is seriously the easiest—and most ignored—piece of advice for avoiding altitude sickness.

Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration (altitude is a diuretic). Coca tea (mate de coca) helps alleviate symptoms and most hotels include it. Eat light meals, with high carbohydrate and low fat and protein content. Dine early, allowing digestion time pre-sleep. Avoid cigarettes and alcohol.

If you experience persistent nausea you should consult with a doctor.

In Pharmacies you can purchase medication called Soroche which helps combat the effects—note that this medication contains caffeine.

HEALTH

Staying healthy whilst on your vacation is important to us. Always keep hydrated, low air pressure at altitude has diuretic effects, as does the heat and humidity of the jungle. Only drink bottled or previously boiled water.

Don't underestimate the strength of the sun's UV rays at altitude. Over-exposure, especially in the early stages, can contribute to altitude sickness. Wear a broad-brimmed sunhat.

Avoid eating from street vendors unless you can see that food is freshly cooked, untouched and served on clean dishes.

STAYING SAFE

Like in most cities in the world the best way to stay safe is to be vigilant with your personal items. In Peru the biggest problem in cities is petty theft. We recommend you:

- Leave valuables in your hotel safe when going out, only take with you what you need for the day
- Carry a copy of your Passport & credit cards.
- If you are carrying a backpack ensure that your zips are always closed. You may want to carry the bag on your chest. Don't put loose money in areas of the bag that are exposed to the outer side.
- Don't carry wallets in your back pockets.
- Care is needed in markets and bus terminals.
- At night, avoid quiet streets or streets with poor lighting, especially if alone; it's best to use taxis at night, wherever you are.
- NEVER leave your bags unattended, especially in airports, bus terminals and hotel lobbies.



Peruvian cuisine is rated among the best in the world and is currently experiencing a period of flourishing self-confidence and great popularity overseas. The country's chefs are adept at creating innovative new fusions with its fantastic wealth of food products, most of which are indigenous. Food varies between the three main regions of Peru (coastal, mountains, jungle).

COASTLINE

Along the coast **seafood** is the speciality; the Humboldt Current keeps the Pacific Ocean off Peru extremely rich in plankton and other microscopic life forms, which attract a wide variety of fish. **Ceviche** is the classic Peruvian seafood dish and must be tried! It consists of fish, shrimp, scallops or squid, or a mixture of all four, marinated in lime juice and chilli peppers, then served "raw" with corn, sweet potato and onions. You can find ceviche, along with fried fish and fish soups, in most restaurants along the coast from S/15–25.

MOUNTAIN

Mountain food is fairly basic – a staple of potatoes and rice with the meat stretched as far as it will go. Lomo saltado, or diced prime beef sautéed with onions and peppers, is served anywhere at any time, accompanied by rice and a few French fries. A delicious snack from street vendors and cafés is papa rellena, a potato stuffed with vegetables and fried. Trout is also widely available, as are cheese, ham and egg sandwiches. Chicha, a corn beer drunk throughout the sierra region and on the coast in rural areas, is very cheap with a pleasantly tangy taste. Another speciality is the pachamanca, a roast prepared mainly in the mountains but also on the coast by digging a large hole, filling it with stones and lighting a fire over them, then using the hot stones to cook a wide variety of tasty meats and vegetables.

Guinea pig (*cuy*) is the traditional dish most associated with Peru. It is mostly roasted and served with potatoes.

JUNGLE

Bananas and **plantains** figure highly, along with *yuca* (a manioc rather like a yam), rice and plenty of fish. There is **meat** as well – mostly chicken supplemented occasionally by **game** (deer, wild pig or even monkey). Every settlement big enough to get on the map has its own bar or café, but in remote areas it's a matter of eating what's available and drinking coffee or bottled drinks if you don't relish the home-made *masato* (cassava beer).

SNACKS & LIGHT MEALS

All over Peru you'll find a wide variety of traditional **fast foods** and snacks such as *salchipapas* (chips with sliced sausage covered in various sauces), *anticuchos* (a shish kebab made from marinated lamb or beef heart) and *empanadas* (meat- or cheese-filled pies). These are all sold on street corners until late at night. The most popular sweets in Peru are made from either *manjar blanco* (sweetened condensed milk) or fresh fruits. In general, the market is always a good place to stock up – you can buy food ready to eat on the spot or to take away and prepare – and the range and prices are better than in any shop.

RESTAURANTS

Peru has some of the best restaurants in the world! Not only the gourmet type, but in general traditional restaurants offer great good too! You will find a lot of Chinese (*chifa*) restaurants in all cities as well as a fair number of Vegetarian options too. Many traditional places offer a set menu, from morning through to lunchtime, and another in the evening. Ranging in price from S/6 to S/25, these most commonly consist of three or four courses: soup or other starter, a main dish, a small sweet or fruit-based third plate, plus tea or coffee to follow. Every town, too, seems now to have at least one restaurant that specializes in *pollos a la brasa* – spit roasted chicken.



TREKKING WITH PACHAMAMA

OUR TREKS TO MACHUPICCHU

Trekking in the Andes is one of the best experiences in Peru that one can have!

If you are fortunate enough to have obtained a permit on the Inca Trail, or have signed up for one of our alternative trekking routes, you have a wonderful Adventure waiting for you!

We have a team of qualified, professional English Speaking Guides. They are all passionate about their Inca cultural roots and excited to share it with you!



Our Guides will happily extend their historical knowledge of the Inca and Quechua culture with you—all our guides also speak the native ancient language of Quechua, so take the opportunity to learn a few words!

No matter how fit you are or not, they will help you reach your end destination.

For large groups we will send an assistant guide for every 8+ passengers thereby ensuring there is one guide in the front of the group and one guide at the back of the group.

Our equipment is fully maintained and checked yearly at Inca Trail inspections.

We provide 3/4 man tents, but only put two persons per tent. If you don't wish to share with another and want a single tent we have that option available to you.

Our Chefs are second to none! If you think restaurant food is good in Peru, wait until you taste food on our treks. You will be amazed what our Chefs can whip up on a small gas fire. Want a cake? They can do that too! We have celebrated many a Birthday on our treks - let us know and we will make it happen for you!

You will never sleep on an empty stomach! We cater for all types of diets so if you are Vegan, Gluten Free, Vegetarian or Pescatarian, just let us know ahead of your departure so that we can prepare the best menú for you.

Our porters are great people! They are the essence and backbone behind every single trekking Adventure our passengers embark on... Without them your trekking experience would not be possible! They are humble persons who are willing to go above and beyond to create the best trekking Adventure for you. Please do remember them at the end of your hike—tipping is not obligatory but it is expected in Peru (see our guidelines on tipping).

In order to have the best trekking experience possible it is essential that you pack correctly. We have a full packing list for your perusal in this document.

We look forward to creating wonderful memories with you on one of our treks!



TREKS : PACKING CHECKLIST

TREKKING CHECKLIST

Passport

Essential for all treks and other.

Day Pack

It is usually more comfortable to carry a slightly larger pack that is not full, than to carry a small pack that is overfull! A pack between 20-25 litres capacity is suitable.

Plastic Packets

If you pack bits and pieces into plastic bags inside your day pack they will stay dry in case of rain. A bin liner is a good idea to pack inside your day pack!

T-shirts

We recommend polyester/polypropylene fabrics which keep you warm even when wet.

Shorts

These can be very comfortable to walk in but you must carry long trousers with you in case you get either sunburned or cold!

Gloves and Hat

Very useful around camp in the morning and in the evening at higher altitudes.

Waterproofs

Breathable waterproofs not only protect against rain and wind but also stop you from overheating, especially in the months of November to March which is rainy season.

Thermals

Comfortable around camp and much more practical (and warmer) to sleep in than pyjamas.

Thick sweater/fleece jacket

A thick sweater or fleece jacket is necessary as nights can be very cold at altitude, especially in the months of June to August.

Walking Boots

We strongly recommend walking in good walking boots. Trainers simply do not have the proper ankle support you need for treks. Many people now trek in lightweight Gortex or leather boots like Karrimor, Berghaus – these are usually satisfactory. They have the advantage they need little breaking-in! Above all, your boots must be well broken-in and comfortable.

Trainers or Trekking Sandals

Useful around camp.

Socks

It is best to wear a pair of liner socks under a pair of fairly thick socks. This helps to protect your feet against blisters. Avoid nylon socks, they do not breathe well and can cause blisters.

Sleeping Bags

We recommend 4-season (to zero degrees). A cotton liner is helps to keep your bag clean. You can also rent from us.

Water Bottle

You are provided with purified water each day with which to fill your own bottle. Bottled water can also be bought at some spots along the trail. Our cook also boils water for more than 10mins at meal times.

Torch & Batteries A small torch is essential for the nights and early mornings in case you need to go to the toilet or find things in your tent. A head torch is very practical, allowing you to have both hands free. Remember to bring spare batteries along as sometimes you cannot find the same as in your home country.

Toiletries

Try to keep heavy cosmetics to a minimum. Essentials are toothbrush/paste, toilet paper. Wet-Wipes are great for a quick clean up in your tent. We give you a bowl of hot water in the mornings to freshen up with.

Sunblock is a must! At high altitudes the sun can burn you much faster that you would imagine! Insect Repellent is also essential, especially in the area of Aguas Calientes. It is not malarial!

Personal First Aid Kit

On our treks we do carry a first aid kit along with oxygen, but you should have your own blister kit, supply of plasters, aspirin, etc.



Tipping in Peru is not obligatory, but is expected. The following are general guidelines. You should tip any amount you feel comfortable with, after all, tipping is an additional compensation for the good service and attention you were provided with on your tour services.

TIPPING IN HOSTALS AND HOTELS

Hotels in Peru follow the same tipping customs as found in many parts of the world. Tip porters S/1 per bag (or US\$1 in top-end hotels) and feel free to leave the cleaning staff an occasional tip for keeping your room in good order.

TIPPING WAITERS

In touristic or upscale restaurants a 10% tip is customary (a service charge is sometimes included in the bill). Waiters in midrange restaurants might receive a few Soles for good service, but it's not a hard and fast rule. Tipping is especially rare in cheap, family-run restaurants serving set lunchtime menus. That said, waiters in these cheaper restaurants earn very little, so all tips are more than welcome.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND PRIVATE DRIVERS

As a rule, you don't need to tip when traveling by public transport in Peru. Taxi drivers do not expect a tip, so arrange the price in advance and stick to it (taxi drivers tend to overcharge tourists anyway). If your driver is particularly friendly or informative, or if he carries your bags into your hotel or hostel, feel free to give him a S/1 or S/2 tip, but it's certainly not obligatory.

With private drivers (including river travel), consider tipping anywhere between S/10-S/30 per day for good service.

PRIVATE GUIDES

If you have hired the service of a Private Guide you should consider tipping around S/30 per day (around \$10 per day).

TIPPING OF TREKKING STAFF (GUIDES / PORTERS / COOKS)

We always hold a pre-trek briefing with your Guide prior to commencing any trek. At the briefing the Guide will be able to inform you of how many staff are going to accompany you on the trek thereby allowing you to work out your tips prior to departure. Please refer to our full trek programs that we email you for full tipping guidelines.

RANDOM TIPPING REQUESTS

A tip request will sometimes come when you're not expecting it. This happens quite often in tourist hotspots such as Cusco, Arequipa, and Lima, where foreign tourists have a reputation for tipping beyond the norm.

Photos: Some photo opportunities come at a price, especially in Cusco where women in traditional dress (often leading a lavishly adorned llamas or alpacas charge one or two Soles for a picture. Always ask before taking someone's photo and bear in mind that a service charge/tip may be necessary.

Above suggestions are in Peruvian Nuevo Soles which you can convert in US Dollars—the rate is around 3 Soles to 1 USD—subject to change



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