



# PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

## Visiting Peru



Think Galapagos have meticulously planned all aspects of your trip to make sure that your trip is a fun, memorable, and safe one.

This document will help you plan for your trip, as well as answering some of the key questions you may have.

Despite being quite long, it is by no means exhaustive, so please do get in touch with us any time with any questions you may have and we are always delighted to help.

Your final details on the trip will usually be sent around two weeks prior to travel, as we need to wait until then for the final details to be confirmed on the ground. If we send it out earlier things tend to change!

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# 1

## MONEY

### Personal Finances

Peru Currency is the Nuevo Sol. It currently trades at around 5 Nuevo Sol per GB£ though US Dollars are much easier to change in many of the currency bureaus (casas de cambio) and banks than GB£ - so best to travel with US\$ dollars in cash.

It is a good idea to bring some Nuevo Sol and US\$ in cash in small denominations to have with you on arrival and when receiving local currency, always ask for small bills (billetes pequeñas), as S100 bills are hard to change in small towns or for small purchases. Most tourism oriented businesses accept US dollars, however it is useful to have some Nuevo Sol for purchases you may wish to make from smaller local establishments.

Do not accept torn money as it will likely not be accepted by Peruvians. It is best not to change money on the street as counterfeits are a problem.

### Nuevo Sol

The Nuevo Sol ('new sun') comes in bills of S10, S20, S50, S100 and (rarely) S200. It is divided into 100 céntimos, with copper-colored coins of S0.05, S0.10 and S0.20, and silver-colored

S0.50 and S1 coins. In addition, there are bimetallic S2 and S5 coins with a copper-colored center inside a silver-colored ring.

### ATMs

Cajeros automáticos (ATMs) are found in nearly every city and town in Peru, as well as at major airports and bus terminals. ATMs are linked to the international Plus (Visa), Cirrus (Maestro/MasterCard) systems, American Express and other networks.

They will accept your bank or credit card as long as you have your four-digit PIN. Before you leave home, notify your bank that you'll be using your ATM card abroad. ATMs are normally open 24 hours. For safety reasons, use ATMs inside banks with security guards, preferably during daylight hours – and we recommend you always to ask your guide to accompany you to the ATM for security and to help you if you have any issues with the machine.

# 1

## MONEY

### Security tip!

In recent years the number of credit cards which are 'cloned' in various large cities in Latin America, including Peru has increased dramatically. In order to avoid this don't hand over your card to staff in shops or restaurants when paying. They should have a terminal that they can bring to the table in restaurants, or in shops on the counter, and failing this you could go with them with your card to pay, but avoid giving your card to them and it going out of your sight as they could have a cloning machine in their pocket.

### Pre-paid currency cards

Even better than your credit cards are pre-paid currency cards which are more secure than cash and more flexible than travellers cheques.

They look just like a credit or debit card, and you can get them online, or at large branches or Tesco or the Post Office (you do need to shop around as some can make charges for withdrawals but most don't). They allow you to preload

money from your bank account on to the card, fixed at that day's exchange rate.

Getting hold of a card is easy for anyone with a UK bank account. You can then use it like a normal card, withdrawing cash from an ATM or paying for things. You can normally apply online, choose the currency in which you would like your card denominated, load it with funds from your current account and wait for it to arrive in the post: typically five to seven days later. You can top up and check your balance online, by phone or, in some cases, by text.

# 2

## DOCUMENTATION

### Passport

If you don't have a passport, apply for one now because the process can be lengthy. If you do have a passport, find it and check the expiration date. The expiration date is important because many countries, including Peru, won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the date you complete your trip.

### Visas

Citizens of the European Union, USA, Australia and Canada do not require a visa if the intended stay is less than 90 days. You will be given a Tourist-Visa Card on the airplane en route to Peru.

In Immigration, it is imperative to verify that the time period entered by the official on the Tourist Card more than covers the time period you will be in Peru and that you keep the carbon copy with your return ticket to give to officials at the airport at the time of your departure from Peru. You must have this form to leave the country.

Nationals from other countries should check the situation with the Peruvian Embassy. The UK Embassy of Peru should you require it:

**52 Sloan Street, London,  
Tel: 020872351917**

### Travel Insurance

Whilst Think Peru has a corporate insurance policy and financial failure cover that ensures all our guests payments to us are protected, all passengers must take out their own separate travel insurance to cover any medical expenses or trip cancellation due to unexpected medical circumstances.

You must bring verification of policy and terms with you on the trip and provide us with your policy number and emergency contact before travelling. You will be fully responsible for any medical expenses that you may incur.

# 3

## MEDICAL

Please be aware that hospital facilities for serious medical problems may at times be a long way away, that a doctor may not always be available, and that evacuation can be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. Your guide does not carry prescription medications.

Insect repellent and bite remedies are always good to have with you. It is also good to have some over the counter remedies such as headache tablets, Imodium, rehydration sachets with you in case you need them.

Think Peru are not medical specialists and we strongly recommend that you visit your GP at least 8 weeks prior to your holiday for the latest medical recommendations for travel to Peru. It is likely your GP will discuss the following with you:

### Vaccinations

#### • Yellow Fever

There is a small risk of Yellow Fever in some areas of Peru – however if you are just staying in the Andes with a short stay in Lima you will be fine. In essence this is required only for people travelling to the Amazon region or the coastal lowlands (a stop in Lima is fine). Official advice is to consult your GP and they will conduct a risk assessment before deciding whether or not they recommend a vaccine.

#### • Malaria

Like Yellow Fever, if your trip is in the Andes of Peru, you don't need to worry about this. If you are travelling to the Amazon region, coastal locations and at places under 1,500m altitude the official recommendation is to take anti-malarial medication. The new varieties are much easier to take than older versions of anti-malarial tablets; however there are side effects in some guests like a bad tummy, mouth ulcers etc. Whilst we stress we aren't medical authorities, local information is sometimes useful when making decisions on what medications you want to take.

So please do ask us if you are unsure and we can try and help with the latest information on this from the Amazon lodge you would be staying at.

#### • Dengue Fever

Travellers should take mosquito bite avoidance measures.

#### • Hepatitis A- A

Vaccine is available and travellers should practise strict food, water and personal hygiene precautions.

#### • Hepatitis B- A

Vaccine is available. Travellers should avoid contact with blood or bodily fluids.

#### • Tetanus

A vaccine is available. This is caused by a toxin released from Clostridium bacteria. Travellers should thoroughly clean all wounds and seek medical attention.

#### • Rabies

In the last few years or so we have had guests say that they have been recommended to have anti-rabies medication. If your GP advises you to have this done, we would ask that you give us a call to discuss this to see if it really is necessary.

# 3

## MEDICAL

### Altitude Sickness

Many of the places you will be visiting in Peru are high in the Andes, which means we need to factor in time for you to acclimatise to the altitude within your itinerary. Most people are absolutely fine at altitude, but most do experience breathlessness during the first few days at altitude. You definitely do need to take it easy the first day or so (a bit longer before doing the Inca Trail),

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is often referred to as altitude sickness. AMS is a condition caused by a lower amount of oxygen molecules present in the air. In mild cases this leads to symptoms like Headache, Nausea & Dizziness, Loss of appetite, Fatigue, Shortness of breath and Disturbed sleep. We meticulously plan our trips to giving you the best possible route that allows for gradual acclimatisation to the altitude.

In all the years we have been planning and creating our trips in Peru and Ecuador we have never had any guest suffering from AMS if however, AMS does strike you, your guide and our team in Peru will be there to help.

Avoiding AMS is not an exact science but doctors recommend the avoidance of alcohol and cigarettes and encourage you to remain well hydrated and to not over exert yourselves. Please speak to your GP if you have any other questions.

Coca tea is offered regularly and is very widely drunk by local people in the Andes – and whilst not tasting great – does help ease the effects of altitude! Many hotels in Peru specially Cuzco and Puno have oxygen tanks that can be ordered to the rooms in case you require them in the event of difficulties with altitude.

On the following page is a table of the altitudes of some of the most popular places that we visit.

# 3

## MEDICAL

Place	Altitude in metres (m)	Altitude in feet (ft)
Arequipa	2,350	7,710
Colca Canyon (colca lodge)	3,250	10,725
Cusco	3,399	11,152
Inca Trail – highest point	4,215	13,800
Lake Titicaca	3,810	12,500
Lima	500	1,600
Machu Picchu	2,430	7,970
Ollantaytambo (Sacred Valley	2,792	9,160

# 3

## MEDICAL

### Sun Protection

The sun is very strong at altitude and the higher the altitude, the higher the exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Protection against UV light should include:

- Wearing clothing that covers the skin and is impermeable to ultraviolet light.
- Using a sunscreen that protects against UVA, UVB and UVC with a high sun protection factor (at least SPF15).
- Lips, ears and nose should be protected with a high protection sunblock.

### Drinks

Use bottled water for brushing your teeth, do not open your mouth in the shower, and never drink tap water.

Also ask for your drinks without ice (“sin hielo”), because you can’t be sure it was made from purified water (except in 4\* or 5\* hotels in which case it will be fine).

# 4

## WEATHER

Peru has three very distinctive regions all with very different climatic patterns that create a very diverse and beautiful landscape. The three regions: The Andes are the mountains that run down central Peru, The Coastal area that is on the West side of Peru adjacent to the Pacific Ocean and The Amazon Rainforest is located in Eastern Peru.

Although they are three very different regions, they are similar climatically in that they have two main seasons- the rainy season and the dry season. The guide below outlines the main weather conditions of the three main regions.

### The Andes

Mid April – October (Dry Season)

The weather in these months is dry and hot during the day which makes it perfect for outdoor activities, be it cycling down a volcano or taking a guided tour around the majestic Machu Picchu the weather is very reliable and beautiful in this season. Due to the high altitude of the Andes, temperature decreases significantly at night often hitting lows of 1 or 2 degrees Celsius. The beginning of the dry season (May) is the best time to visit the highlands as the weather is dry and sunny, but the rainy season has just finished and the rivers are full and the vegetation is refreshed.

November – mid April. (Wet Season)

Although November to April is classed as the rainy season, most of the rain falls in January to February. The mornings are normally bright and crisp, but rain often interrupts the afternoon. Think Peru take into consideration these weather patterns.

### The Coast

December – April

This is the Peruvian summer and the coast comes alive with families flocking from inland Peru looking to enjoy some sun, sea and sand. The beautiful warm weather of these summery months co insides with many a national fiestas- none are bigger than the famous Carnival. This energetic party begins on the Saturday and ends on Mardi-Gras (Shrove Tuesday). Temperatures are very hot in this season and range from 25 – 35°C. The Pacific Ocean is perfect for a cool down after absorbing some strong equatorial sun rays.

May – November

The temperature in these months’ drops and the sea cools down in most areas. The northern beaches are by far the best beaches to visit during this period despite them being a little cooler. Many Spas and tasty restaurants are open all year around catering for anyone looking for some rest and relaxation. This is also the best time to visit the archaeological ruins like Chan Chan as the hot arid location is cooler and walking around the site can be done at your own pace without worrying too much about the temperature.



# 4

## WEATHER

### The Amazon

The weather is always hot and humid in the rainforest and each season offers something a little unique. This climate is very sticky, but our hand selected lodges will ensure that you are kept well refreshed and fed with beautiful fresh produce

April – October (Dry season)

This is the most popular time to visit the rainforest as the dry conditions make it possible to follow some of the nature trails deep into the heart of the jungle from where you will come up close with many rare and exotic species.

November – March (Wet season)

The rainforest is very wet in this period and the Amazon River rises and falls by as much as 40 feet each year. Although some of the nature trails may be too difficult to walk, canoes become the main mode of transport in this region and your guide will take you through this exciting ecosystem.

### What are the temperatures in Peru?

The graph gives average rainfall and temperature in Lima (Coastal location) and Cusco (Andean location). They are representative of the regions climate.

# 4

## WEATHER

Lima (Coast)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. High (°F)	77	79	79	75	70	68	63	63	63	68	68	73
Av. High (°C)	25	26	26	24	21	19	17	17	17	19	20	23
Av. Low (°F)	66	68	66	65	61	59	57	56	56	57	61	63
Av. Low (°C)	19	20	19	18	16	15	14	13	13	14	16	17
Wet Days	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	0

Cusco (Andes)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. High (°F)	66	66	67	68	68	67	67	68	68	70	69	68
Av. High (°C)	19	19	19	20	20	19	19	20	20	21	20	20
Av. Low (°F)	44	44	44	41	37	34	34	34	39	42	43	43
Av. Low (°C)	7	7	7	5	3	1	1	1	4	6	6	6
Wet Days	16	12	10	7	4	3	2	2	6	8	10	14

# 5

## CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

### Andes

In the Andes layers work well, with a warm layer for morning and evening. Although warm in the daytime the temperature at night in the Andes can drop down to 1 or 2 degrees. We recommend wearing long trousers and layers on top so you can respond to changing temperatures. The higher you go the cooler it usually gets!

T-shirts, long sleeved jumper and light fleece jacket is usually enough. Attire is very informal, though some people do like to bring a lightly smarter change of clothes for the occasions when you eat meals in restaurants, though it is still casual.

### Amazon

We recommend long trousers and long sleeved cotton shirts for the Amazon – though in the Amazon a short sleeved shirt can also be worn as well with a light dousing of insect repellent.

Full waterproof clothing isn't needed for the Amazon – you will probably get more wet with sweat than with rain! Ponchos are recommendable for brief tropical storms rather than rain coats as they are easy to get on and off, and protect you better if you are sat in a canoe.

### Coast

The temperatures at the coast vary a lot from season to season. In the summer

months (December-April) it can get very warm and you will need bathing costumes for time spent on the beach or at your hotels private pool. During the day shorts, sandals/flip flops are most practical. In the evening light clothes that cover up your bare skin from the Mosquitoes is the best option.

In the cooler months (May-November) the temperature drops and the sea cools down in most areas. The northern beaches are by far the best beaches to visit during this period despite them being a little cooler. During this season we recommend wearing light clothes with layers as it can get cool. You will also need swimwear if you are staying at a hotel with a pool.

### Footwear

Sturdy, properly fitting footwear can make your trip much more pleasurable and this is the area we get asked most questions on. If you're buying new boots for this trip, please break them in by wearing them as often as possible before the trip – however for most guests who are not doing the Inca Trail or other trekking with us a strong pair of trainers or walking shoes will be more than adequate.

You may also wish to bring a pair of comfortable shoes such as loafers that you can wear to relax in a bar, a restaurant or in your hotel.

# 6

## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Communication

Communication by telephone and internet is possible from many hotels and your smartphone should work in most places. Though costs are high, so we would recommend that you always ensure you turn off data roaming, and only use WIFI in the hotels.

### Shopping

In the main tourist areas like Lima and Cuzco you will find all the modern amenities on offer in the UK from branded toiletries to memory cards for your digital camera. But they may be slightly more expensive and fewer options from which to choose. We recommend bringing with you everything you may need on your holiday.

Across the country there are excellent markets selling local artisan handcrafts. Everything from alpaca woollen ware to beautiful ceramics and jewellery. In the markets the goods do not have price tags and it is accepted that the vendor will quote a very high initial price for their goods.

Be prepared to barter, but stay fair and offer them a decent price for whatever you are buying, and bear in mind

how great a deal you are getting in comparison to what you would pay in the UK.

### Electrical goods

Peru is on the 220V system, the same as in the US so you will need a travel adaptor that has 2 flat prongs or two round prongs

### Laundry services

There are laundry services available at some hotels and also in all of the major towns and cities. For a little premium they will normally wash and dry your clothes within a couple of hours. They charge by weight, and we have always found it to be very reasonably priced.

### Do I need flight or hotel vouchers?

No. Everything will be taken care of by our team in Peru from the moment you arrive. You will be picked up from the airport by one of our guides, and from that moment on they will take care of everything, advising you of the next stage of the journey, exact pick up times for transfers and give you flight tickets as and when you need them.



# 6

## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Luggage on Train to Machu Picchu

Due to insurance and new regulation – each guest travelling by train to Machu Picchu or from Puno to Cusco can only take on board with them one piece of hand luggage which is quite strictly enforced.

This isn't a problem it just means some forward planning - you can leave luggage that you won't be needing at the hotel in the Sacred Valley or Cusco (depending on where you travel to Machu Picchu from) and our driver will pick it up for you when he meets you as you travel back from Machu Picchu (or in the case of Cusco, it will be there at the hotel for you). So you will need some kind of day pack or smaller case to take with you on the day you go to Machu Picchu the things that you will need for that night.

### Luggage in the Amazon

Once you have arrived at Puerto Maldonado you will take a short boat ride to your Amazon Lodge. Due to weight and space limitations on the boat, passenger luggage is limited according to what lodge you will be staying at:

- For Reserva Amazonica the limit is 10 kg. (22 lbs.) per person.
- For The Tambopata Research Center, Refugio Amazonas, Posada Amazonas and Amazon Villas the limit is 15kg (32 lbs) per person.

If your bag exceeds this weight, or you have some things that you would prefer not to bring to your lodge you can leave them in a secure and safe storage location run by the lodges.

1 bag or backpack	05kg/11lb	62 inches/157cm (length + height + width)
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# 7

## SECURITY

As with all big cities of the world you have to be aware of security in Peru and you'll be wise to follow some simple safety precautions. Leave valuables such as traveller's checks, passport, cash, jewellery and air tickets locked in the hotel safe or locked in your case - don't carry them with you because of pickpockets and don't leave them lying in the open in your room.

- Never leave your handbag or backpack unattended, even in the hotel lobby.
- Carry just a reasonable amount of spending money and credit cards stashed in a money belt or hidden pouch (bags and purses attract attention).

- The hotel reception can order you a taxi, and then for your return to and from wherever you would like to visit. Do not walk around alone at night looking for a taxi.
- We advise against wearing large and bold pieces of jewellery that stand out. This may draw unwanted attention to you and make you a potential target for thieves.

# 8

## RECOMMENDED READING

- **The Conquest of the Incas**  
by John Hemmings
- **Peru-Culture Smart! A quick guide to customs and etiquette**  
by John Forrest and Julia Porturas
- **A History of Latin America**  
by George Pendle
- **Peru before the Incas**  
by Edward P Lanning
- **Shinning Path**  
by Simon Strong
- **The Naturalist on the River Amazonas**  
by Henry Walter Bass
- **Art of the Andes**  
by Rebecca Stone-Miller

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