



Peru Fast Facts

Population:

27,544,305 (July 2004 est.)

Capital:

Lima

Currency:

nuevo sol (PEN)

Religion(s):

Roman Catholic 90%

Language(s):

Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara, and a large number of minor Amazonian languages

Major Events:

Independence Day, July 28 (1821)
Catholic holidays

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Online Resources

IIEPassport.org:

<http://www.IIEPassport.org>

Portal del Estado Peru (Spanish):

<http://www.peru.gob.pe/>

Commission for the Promotion of Peru – PromPerú:

<http://www.peru.info/perueng.asp>

iAgora.com:

<http://www.iagora.com>

Lonely Planet:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

WorldInfoZone.com:

<http://www.worldinfozone.com>

CIA Factbook:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>

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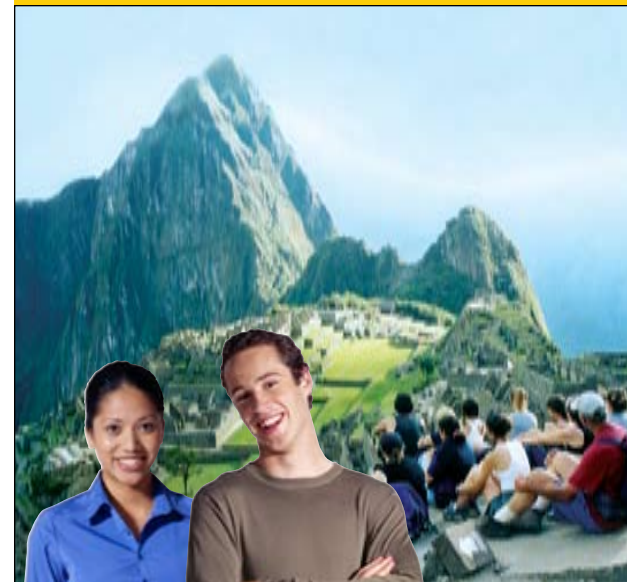


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Peru at a Glance...

Peru's extraordinary diversity allows students to experience the best of South America from the country's rich indigenous culture to its fascinating Spanish colonial history and modern complexity. Peru is also known for diversity from its amazing biological marvels to its turbulent political tradition.

Peru's higher education system is heavily centered in the nation's capital of Lima. Lima boasts South America's oldest university, the Universidad Nacional Mayor De San Marcos, which was founded in 1551 and still operates today as a state-financed institution. Modern Lima also offers numerous private institutions such as Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Major public universities include Universidad Nacional Agrario—UNA (National Agrarian University) and Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (National Engineering University). The Universidad de Lima is also popular, and the most prestigious medical school is the private Cayetano Heredia in Lima.

While Lima has the highest concentration of universities in the country, Cuzco is also an extremely popular destination for study abroad students, particularly those interested in archaeology, history, art, culture, and the Incas. Cuzco was the center of the vast Inca empire and is the oldest continuously inhabited city on the continent, as well as an excellent starting point for a trek to the well preserved sacred city of Machu Picchu. Cuzco provides a rich tapestry of the cultures that have inhabited the city over time from the Incas to the Spanish conquistadors to its modern mix of peoples.



Peru also provides varied opportunities for students of biology and related fields with one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world, the Peruvian Amazon. The country has close to 1,200 plant and animal species and contains 84 of the world's 104 known bio-zones. Some of Peru's more stunning and unique geography includes its coastal deserts with rolling dunes punctuated by fertile valleys and oases. From its tropical rain forests to the amazing Andes mountains, Peru is one

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of the world's top 10 biodiversity 'hot spots'. Peru has 1,500 miles of Pacific coastline, and is the only country that shares borders with all other Andean states.

Peru has had a turbulent past. The Inca empire was uprooted by the arrival of Pizarro in the 1530s, and the Spanish subsequently controlled the country until the 1800s. After independence from Spain, Peru experienced many years of border disputes and wars with Ecuador and Chile, as well as uprisings from various guerilla groups and insurgencies, including the Maoist Shining Path. The election of President Alberto Fujimori in 1990 brought hopes for stability, but ended with more upheaval as Fujimori resigned and fled the country in 2000 after his intelligence advisor was charged with human rights violations and corruption. The current president, Alejandro Toledo, is the country's first indigenous president. He faces many challenges in improving Peru's economy and controlling rebels.

Both the turbulence and diversity of Peru's history influence its literary and artistic traditions today. The country's literature encompasses the indigenous texts of the past while embracing the modern in a body of

renowned contemporary works including the famous novels of Mario Vargas Llosa. Similarly textiles that historically were ritual objects serve today as a means of communicating identity and status. There are more than 50 distinct groups of indigenous people living in Peru today and the Quechua culture and language remain strong in the Andes. Beyond just art or literature, their influence extends to farming, music, folklore, and architecture as well. Peru's population of 23 million is almost equally divided between the subsistence agriculture of the inland regions and the wealthier, more cosmopolitan culture of the fertile river valleys of the lowlands.

Modern Peru offers biological diversity and cultural depth that can be found in few other places in the world. However, it also struggles to overcome political and economic challenges and turmoil. All of these factors make Peru a fascinating and fulfilling destination for study abroad.

