

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a stunning mountain landscape. In the foreground, there's a bright turquoise lake. Beyond it, several peaks rise, some with patches of white snow and others with dark, rocky slopes. The sky above the mountains is filled with soft, grey clouds.

Beyond the Map

PREPARING FOR PERU

➤ Guide 101





PERU

An Introduction

The popular stereotype of Peru and South America — happy, colorful, poor, sometimes chaotic, and always ready for a party — is all correct, as far as it goes, but there's so much more to Peru!

Geographically, Peru is home to deserts, mountain ranges, glaciers, jungles, the world's highest inhabited area, and the world's most biodiverse stretch of jungle. Historically, it's one of the longest inhabited places on earth and was home to at least 15 separate recognized civilizations, BEFORE the Incas came along. Culturally, it's home to 47 official languages (three of which are widely spoken), a burgeoning, food-obsessed middle class, and perhaps the world's liveliest, most colorful and festive syncretic religion.

All this as well as a cosmopolitan, sophisticated capital city, the world's longest left-handed surf break, and of course, one of the most renowned gastronomic scenes on the face of the planet. It's a lot to take in – and that's where we come in! We'll map a path for you through the incredible profusion of experience that is Peru, making sure you engage with what fascinates you most.

On our tours, we eat, drink, hike, bike, paddle, climb, cook, swim, dance, learn, and play our way through Peru, in between exploring world famous attractions and local secrets where other tourists never go. It's a lot of fun, and you'll go home relaxed and rejuvenated, but it's a lot more than just a vacation. You'll learn about yourself and this world we live in. You may be changed forever.

This eBook will help you prepare for your Peru trip, and reading it before you arrive will help make your experience more enjoyable. And of course, we're here to answer any questions you have – drop us a line or give us a call any time



ACCLIMATISATION

The effects of being at altitude vary from person to person. Altitudes on our Peru trips are significant but not extreme. You will almost certainly notice shortness of breath when you arrive, particularly when walking uphill – there's simply less oxygen!

Other typical effects are:

- Sleep disruption
- Headache
- Sleep disruption
- Light-headedness
- Stomach disruption
- Dehydration

These symptoms almost invariably disappear after a couple of days, so we recommend getting here a couple of days before the trip if you can, so you're acclimatised by the time you start exercising.

The best things you can do to acclimatize are:

- Keep hydrated
- Avoid alcohol (it dehydrates you)
- Eat lightly (digestion slows down at altitude)
- Don't push yourself physically too soon

About one percent of people experience severe headaches and nausea. Again, this generally fades within a few days.

If you have, or have recently had, a respiratory complaint (even a cough) when you arrive, please let us know so we can keep an extra eye on you. The biggest danger with altitude is that it is possible to push a struggling respiratory system too hard and end up with pulmonary oedema, a serious condition that requires evacuation to sea level. We've never had to evacuate anyone from a trip.



ALTITUDES

Here are the altitudes of some of the places we visit on our trips:

Location	Metres	Feet
Arequipa	2,350	7,700
Cusco	3,400	11,150
Lares	3,200	12,500
Machu Picchu	2,400	8,000
Malaga Pass	4,350	14,250
Ollantaytambo	2,800	9,200
Pisac	2,700	8,850
Puerto Maldonado	200	650
Puno	3,800	12,500
Santa Teresa	1,900	6,200

If you'd like to do more background reading about altitude and acclimatization, there's plenty of information on the internet. Here is one article we like on the subject:
www.traveldoctor.co.uk/altitude.htm



LANGUAGE

Spanish is spoken in practically every city and town in the country, while Quechua is mainly spoken in the Andes. In the altiplano, around Lake Titicaca, Aymara is spoken.

Do I need to speak Spanish?

A little would be helpful, especially on arrival and for ordering food in restaurants, but it's certainly not required. Our local guide speaks fluent English and Spanish, so if you don't have time to learn a little Spanish before arrival it's no worries...they'll be on hand to translate for you. If you wish to learn some helpful, easy phrases, we've included some basics, which you'll find at the end of this document. We also recommend the Lonely Planet language phrasebooks, which have great sections for travel and food, along with help on pronunciation.





MONEY & EXCHANGE RATES

Unless otherwise stated, all prices given are in US dollars. The currency in Peru is officially called the Nuevo Sol, but everyone calls it the sol (plural - soles). You can see current exchange rates here: www.xe.com/

Except for US\$, it can be hard to change foreign currency in Peru, and you may not get a good exchange rate – for cash, you're best asking your bank for some US\$ before you leave, which you can then change into Soles in Peru. Some big ticket items in Peru – say you bought some artwork or jewelry – also tend to be priced in US\$.

ATMs all over Cusco dispense both Soles and US\$. Your Visa or MasterCard will work in these machines to get cash advances, at a price – please check with your bank to find out the fees for cash advances. Some shops in Peru accept credit cards but they tend to charge extra for it so you're usually better off paying in cash. Please contact your credit card companies with a travel notice prior to departing so that you do not experience any interruptions.





PERUVIAN FOOD & DRINKS

Food is one of the highlights of any trip to Peru – it's considered one of the world's greatest cuisines – and we'll eat in a range of places, from local holes in the wall to fancy theatre restaurants, to give you a taste of it all.

Local produce is amazing: jumbo corn, football-sized avocados, tomatoes bursting with flavor – and of course, more than 200 kinds of potatoes! Lunch is the main meal of the day, and is huge. Actually, most meals in Peru are pretty large – there is no way you'll go hungry on our trips!

Peruvian food tends to be carbohydrate heavy – rice and potatoes on the same plate is nothing unusual. There's also a lot of meat, but we're used to catering for vegetarians and other special diets (See below for more detail on gluten-free diet). However people with special diets may face limited choices.

Though tap water is treated in cities including Cusco, it's safest to avoid it, even to brush your teeth.





ENTERTAINMENT

It's a terrific idea to gain some background information, as it will help you to better process your experiences while in Peru. There's also a few of our favorite travel and adventure books in there. Enjoy!

Read:

- The Conquest of the Incas - John Hemming
- Lonely Planet Peru guidebook
- The Celestine Prophecy - James Redfield
- The White Rock - Hugh Thomson (Cody's favorite!)
- Jungleland: A Mysterious Lost City and a True Story of Deadly Adventure - Christopher S. Stewart
- Wild- Cheryl Strayed

Watch:

- [Unexplainable Mysteries of Machu Picchu](#) (History Channel)
- The Motorcycle Diaries
- [The Ghosts of Machu Picchu](#) (PBS)
- [Secrets of the Incas](#) (first major Hollywood film in MP)
- Disney's The Emperors New Groove (okay, perhaps not the most historic account!)
- Touching the Void



TIMEZONES

Peru is 5 hours behind UTC (Coordinated Universal Time), and doesn't have daylight saving. To easily work out the current time in Peru or elsewhere, we use:

www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/



TIPPING

It's fine to tip in either dollars or soles – just do whichever is more convenient for you. If tipping in soles, just multiply the dollar amounts given by three (eg 10 dollars = 30 soles).

Suggested amounts are per guest (not per group) and you would tip lower or higher in the range depending how well looked-after you felt, and also how many people are in your group – for a larger group, a smaller (bottom end of the range mentioned) per-person tip is appropriate.

Guides and drivers

Tipping guides and drivers is not compulsory, but many of our guests choose to do so. If you feel they looked after you well, anything in the range of US\$10-25 per day they were with you is appropriate for guides, and US\$5-15 per day they were with you is appropriate for drivers.

Cooks and horsemen (on trekking and biking trips with camping)

Porters (on the Inca Trail), horsemen (all other treks) and cooks (all camping trips) are some of the hardest working members of our team! It's expected and culturally appropriate to tip each of them in the range of US\$5-10 per day they are with you.

Restaurants

Tipping is expected in restaurants in Peru, and 10% is an acceptable rate. Your guide will take care of tipping waiters and hotels during your trip. You might want to tip a little extra if you feel someone gave really fantastic service, but it's not necessary.

**If traveling as part of a larger group, tipping is often included at restaurants and for primary guides. Please plan to tip cooks and horsemen.



WEATHER

When is the best time of year to explore Peru?

There's a few factors to consider:

- DRY SEASON: May to December
- WET SEASON: January to April
- INCA TRAIL: Closed in February
- HIGH SEASON FOR TRAVEL: June to August (coinciding with the timing of the main North America and European holiday period)
- BEST SEASON FOR TRAVEL: In our personal opinion, May and November are great times as they generally have good weather, but are not the busiest times of year for tourism

Of course, July-August is still a great time too. The only places tourists congregate to the point where you might notice it are at Machu Picchu, which is busy year-round anyway, and in the city of Cusco, which is a busy city anyway - it's not like you're ever going to get it entirely to yourselves!

For more details (and a few graphs) check this out: www.weather-and-climate.com/average-monthly-Rainfall-Temperature-Sunshine,Cusco,Peru



USEFUL SPANISH PHRASES

English

Spanish

Hello / Good morning	¡Hola! / Buenos días
Good afternoon / evening / night	Buenas tardes / noches / noches
Goodbye	Adiós / chau
See you later	Hasta luego
How are you?	¿Cómo estás?
I'm fine	Estoy bien
Pleased to meet you	Mucho gusto
Please	Por favor
Thank you (very much)	(Muchas) gracias
You're welcome	De nada
Yes / no	Sí / no
Excuse me	Permiso
Sorry	Lo siento
I (don't) understand	(No) entiendo
Please speak slowly	Hable despacio por favor
What's your name?	¿Cómo se llama?
My name is...	Me llamo...



USEFUL CONTACT INFO

On-ground Contact

If you need our assistance between leaving home and meeting your guide to start your trip with us (the most likely reason for this is to let us know of flight changes, so we can adjust our plans to meet you), call our Cusco Operations Coordinator, Mayli Marmanillo, on +51 987 969 929 or +51 984 700 434. Don't be shy about calling Mayli – she speaks English, knows who you are, and is there to help you!

If for any reason you cannot reach Mayli, here is a list of other contacts that will be able to assist you:

Cody Bliss (BTM Trip Peru Director): 724-757-6474 *

Lystina Kabay (BTM Trip US Ground Support): 724-316-4225 *

Email: info@beyondthemap.org

*Our guides have international service plans, however, downloading and using the "WhatsApp" app is often times more successful and a great way to keep in touch with folks back home.