

# Important Travel Notes

## Personal Safety

There is always a chance, travelling to any foreign country with high tourism, that pickpockets or thieves can be an issue. Peru is no different. Making sure that your passport, money, and phone are close to your body, and not carrying a large purse, or wearing very flashy jewelry can help reduce the risk. It is a good idea to always travel in pairs or groups, and don't go wandering around at night.

Other things you should do before/while travelling is:

1. Register your travel on the State Department's Website
2. Don't keep large amounts of cash on you
3. Make a photocopy of all of your documents as a backup just in case.
4. Leave expensive or flashy jewelry in the United States
5. Keep your phone and/or camera well protected when you are touring and out in public
6. Keep your bags at your feet in the tour vans or taxis
7. Do not use your credit or debit cards for street vendors or ATM's that are not located inside of banks or well known institutions
8. If you choose to drink alcohol, watch your drink and make sure you are with other members of our tour
9. Don't pull out wads of money to pay for things, keeping small bills in numerous locations in your purse/pocket can be helpful
10. Never get into a car or taxi with someone you don't know that is not part of our tour.

## Health Safety

Travelling to a foreign country with different foods, health codes, and water system is cause for a bit more preparedness and safety. Some important tips:

1. Never drink tap water - the plumbing system in Peru is different than the US and can cause stomach problems. Drink only bottled water, or bottled drinks, and when in restaurants verify that ice and table shared drinks are made only with purified water. (Ice is not a common request in Peru anyway, mostly you order your drink cold or room temp)
2. Only eat food from street vendors that are recommended by tour guides. Many times the street vendors are not following rules of health and safety when preparing foods.
3. Many medicines are available over the counter in Peru, but you must make sure you are buying from recommended and respected pharmacies.
4. Vegan food is almost impossible to find in Peru, Vegetarian is hard, but not impossible. If you have food allergies, or sensitivities, please discuss them with myself and our tour guides to verify you will be safe and healthy during our trip
5. Altitude sickness can be a real problem in Cusco and the surrounding areas. There are a number of options available in Peru. Sorochin is the most commonly used medication and is available all over airports, stores, and everywhere in Cusco. It is a combination of Tylenol, Aspirin, and Caffeine and helps open the blood vessels a bit to get more oxygen flowing to your body in high altitudes. Please ask your doctor about using this or other medications while on your trip to Cusco.
6. Another commonly used altitude medicinal is Mate de Coca. It is a tea made from Coca leaves in Cusco. You do not get "high" from them, but it can be very helpful in dealing with the altitude. Because of the way drug tests in the US look for cocaine, it is possible to fail a drug test within a couple of weeks after sipping this tea, so please use caution before drinking it. It is ILLEGAL to bring coca leaves into the US, so please leave them in Peru.

7. "S" Signs and Zona Segura - Peru is located on a major fault line, and has many small earthquakes, occasionally larger ones as well. Whenever you are in a building in Peru you will see "S" signs which show you where the safest places to stand would be in case of earthquakes. Peru has had them for so long that even the buildings from thousands of years ago in Northern Peru are built to withstand them. They are much more prepared than other places.
8. October/November is the end of the dry season and can mean the beginning of the rainy season in Peru. We will always be with experienced local tour guides to make sure we are taking the safest routes to every location. (Just a note: There is never heavy rain in Lima - but it is almost always overcast because of the way the climate works in that area)

## Let's Talk Food

Peru has been listed as one of the top culinary destinations in the world numerous times. The food is rich and diverse. There is a large variety to choose from, and while there is a lot of seafood, there is also an amazing array of potatoes, (More than 4000 varieties grow in Peru) tropical fruits that can only be found in Peru, and fresh chicken, beef, rice, etc. There is just so much food! LOL

Here are a list of foods you might see on a menu in Peru, and what they are in case you want to try (or avoid) them::

1. Guinea pigs and rabbits are not pets in Peru - Sorry to anyone who had them as pets, but in Peru they are bred for food. You will see "Cuy" and "Conejo" on menus many times and it is good to be aware of what that is before you go.
2. Mondongo - While it sounds a bit tropical and interesting, please note that Mondongo is cow or pig stomach that has been boiled or sauteed.
3. Anticuchos - These look like meat kabobs so you should know that they are always made from chicken or cow hearts. They are sold everywhere, and I am told they are delicious!
4. Criadillas de Toro or Criadillas de Res - These are made from bull testicles.
5. Chicken Feet - You will often see local Peruvians eating soup filled with these, or see them hanging from food carts to sell.

6. Jerky - "Jerky" is the only word in English that comes from old Quechua (The language of the Incas) The original word was Ch'arki - You can get lots of types, and also Llama Ch'arki (Some of the cheaper beef jerky sold by street vendors is actually horsemeat)
7. Alpaca Steak and Meat - Many restaurants offer Alpaca as one of their meat options.
8. Sangrecita - This is chicken blood sausage. (I have never tried it)
9. Caldo de Cabeza - Goats Head Soup - and yes they include the goats head.
10. Churos - Giant Amazon River Snails sold in some places in Iquitos
11. Paiche - The largest freshwater fish in the world. It has lungs and gills, and hasn't evolved in almost anyway in the last 5 millions years!
12. Ceviche - Raw fish that is then marinated in citrus juices to cook it. Peru is famous for their Ceviche.
13. Lucuma - A fruit only grown in Peru and has a natural maple syrup flavor. They use it to make shakes, juices, and ice cream!
14. Menú - When you see this in a restaurant it means they have a lunch and/or dinner special. It will almost always include a starter, a main course, and a drink. (Often for \$5.00 or less)
15. Chicha Morada - This is one of the most famous Peruvian Beverages. It is made from boiling and discarding Peruvian Purple corn, then adding cinnamon, clove, sugar, and lime juice to the liquid. It is their version of Kool-aid and is available everywhere!
16. Chicha de Jora - This is an alcoholic drink that is usually homemade. Don't confuse it with Chicha Morada :)
17. Pisco - Pisco is the national alcohol of Peru. Pisco was developed by Spanish Settlers in the 16th Century as an alternative to the Brandy they were importing from Spain. It is made by fermenting Peruvian Wine Grapes into a High Proof Spirit.
18. Pisco Sour - The National Drink of Peru - It is made with Pisco, egg whites, Lime Juice, and Simple Syrup.

## Weather Safety

Peru is much closer to the equator and so there are some weather items to be discussed. Lima has a very mild climate and in the summer (December to February) gets up to 88-90 degrees

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with high humidity and more sun than usual. In the Winter, (June - August) it gets down to 60 degrees with high humidity which feels a bit colder. However, because the climate is more temperate, they do not usually have central heating or air conditioning in homes and often in hotels. There are some tips for what the weather will be like on our tour:

1. Lima will be cooler in the Winter months - June, July, and August - and bringing a jacket and warm clothes along with a scarf is a good idea for the Lima portion of our tour. September, October, and November - Peru's Spring - AND March, April, May - Peru's Fall - are usually the mildest climate times and will range from 70-75 degrees during the day. Having a couple of layers for Lima can be a good idea for evenings especially. It is always humid in Lima as it is right on the Ocean. (90% humidity often)
2. Cusco will be a bit colder in the Winter months, and wearing a jacket and scarf will be needed. The weather in Cusco is usually 67-70 degrees in the daytime and can get down to 35 degrees in the middle of the night. Cusco in the Fall and Spring - the highs are usually 70-75 and can get down to 45 degrees at night. So bringing layers is always a good idea. It is always a bit more dry in Cusco, with humidity maxing out at 45% or so.
3. Machu Picchu is a bit warmer than Cusco all of the time, and in the Spring is around 77-81 degrees as a high and a low of 45 degrees at night. In the Fall and Winter - Machu Picchu is usually 68-72 as a high during the day as a high and 37 degrees or so at night. Bringing layers is always a good idea. The humidity is usually higher from the end of November to March during the rainy season and peaks at around 92% humidity. In the dry season it stays around 75% humidity.
4. Iquitos always has the same weather (Closest to the Equator and Rainforest) the high is around 89-90 degrees in the day with a low of 72 degrees at night. It rains 14 days on average per month in Iquitos, so we always have to be prepared for a quick downfall of rain. It usually clears up quickly though! The humidity is always around 80%.
5. Mosquitos are always around in Iquitos - and while there are natural options - the doctors and locals always suggest having bug spray on hand. My sister in law, Trilce, uses a great one from REI that is Deet Free and works well for her.
6. Sunburns are always a possibility - Having sunscreen or sun covering for every stage of our trip is important. Even in overcast areas and low heat days, because of the proximity to the Equator, it is still possible to get sunburned. Please protect your skin in whatever way you feel comfortable.

## Other Important Things

1. Please check your expiration date on your passport! - If it expires within 6 months of travel they may not allow you to enter the country.
2. Price Haggling is the only way they do business - always offer a lower price or you will get taken advantage of.
3. They have higher voltage in Peru - we use 120 volts, they use 220 volts. You will need an adapter to run your electronics in many cases.
4. Everything in Peru is a bit smaller, elevators, rooms, beds. The country is set up more like Europe, so you won't find anything Texas sized there!
5. You will see a very large Rich/Poor disparity - especially in Lima. You will see many people working on the street for money. (In Peru, people don't beg, they do street performances or sell candies/items to earn money)
6. You CANNOT flush toilet paper down the bowl in Peru. Their plumbing cannot handle it. Every bathroom has a trash bin next to the toilet, and all paper goes in there. ALL paper.
7. While we are talking about toilets...Gas stations, some restaurants, and grocery store bathrooms WILL NOT have toilet paper for you. Always have toilet paper, tissues, and hand sanitizer on you in Peru. It is not their custom to offer restrooms that are above "Usable"
8. Money exchange - Peruvians almost exclusively use cash. Restaurants will take cards, and grocery stores as well...but having cash on you is necessary. We will exchange money upon arrival and can pull money/exchange again multiple times during our trip.
9. Snacks will not be provided, but we will have many opportunities to buy snacks along the way. Please bring snacks you might need along with you, as many items available here, are not available there.
10. Some notes about Tips - There will be many opportunities to take photos of customary culture, clothing, and items. Most people who dress up and allow you to take their photo will ask for a tip (The word in Spanish is Propina) it is customary to give 1-2 Soles per photo taken (Peruvian money.) Tipping at restaurants and hotels is similar. You tip more places in Peru, but for less money than Americans do.
11. Breastfeeding - Is Completely Normal - You will see a lot of it.

12. Dogs - There are many, many stray dogs in Peru...they often carry illnesses and tourists are discouraged from touching them. They wander the streets and it can be very sad to see them in this state.
13. Travel Insurance - While Not Included in the tour cost - is highly recommended. If you are interested please check into your options and be sure to read all the fine print before signing anything.
14. Last, this is a beautiful country with beautiful people, AND, they have different customs and different ways of doing things. Peruvians take life much slower than we do, and are often late...they live on Peruvian time. As with any other country, and any travel, we are always prepared for things to shift, and have to go with the flow. I have taken many precautions to help this, but if things shift, we will have many resources to continue moving forward.

Our trip will be Amazing and Sacred, and I will do everything I can to help you have the most enjoyable time possible!

~ Cerise ~