

WORDS KIKI DEERE

Peru

In the spotlight



From arid deserts to laid-back coastal towns and vibrant Andean villages, Peru has a mind-boggling variety of places to visit. It's also remarkably rich in history, with Inca ruins, colonial cities, mysterious ancient geoglyphs and boisterous fiestas.

Foodies will take delight in the country's fine cuisine too, which is ranked among the best in the world



BEST FOR...

Elegant rococo architecture

Until the 19th century, Lima was considered to be the most beautiful city in Spanish America, with its elegant avenues lined with rococo mansions, impressive gardens and splendid palaces. Today it's possible to catch a glimpse of this opulence on the pretty streets of Lima Centro, the heart of which is Plaza Mayor, where Colonial and Republican-era buildings still stand with their ornate balconies and elaborate facades. The most notable is the stately Government Palace, where Argentine general José de San Martín declared the independence of Peru in 1821.



BEST FOR...

Top-notch dining

By serving innovative dishes that make the most of local ingredients, Lima has firmly established itself as the culinary capital of Latin America. A much-loved staple, ceviche is a classic that consists of fish, squid, scallops or shrimps marinated in lime juice and chilli peppers. The dish's citrus-based marinade – known as *leche de tigre*, or tiger's milk – is the mother of all hangover cures, so much so that it is said to *levantar muertos* (raise the dead). For some top local cuisine, try Astrid y Gastón (left), which was voted one of the world's best restaurants, or go casual at Caplina, a great cevichería.





BEST FOR...

Alternative sightseeing

Machu Picchu may be Peru's most famous archaeological site, but there are plenty of other impressive ruins scattered across the country that are a reminder of the many great civilisations that once inhabited it. Chan Chan (above) is one such complex. Comprising nine citadels with thick earthen walls, the ruined city is intricately planned with flat-topped adobe buildings and pyramidal temples that were once panelled in gold. With its network of canals and agricultural and industrial systems, it is testimony to the Chimú people's ingenious urban planning and impressive engineering skills.



BEST FOR...

Birdwatching

The uninhabited Islas Ballestas off the coast of Pisco have been eroded into a series of craggy arches, crevices and caves that harbour over 150 species of marine birds. But it's the Humboldt penguins (below) that draw the most oohs and aahs from the eager crowds, who view the scene from boats. (The islands make up a protected national reserve, so cast adrift is as close as you'll get to this avian paradise.) Named after the chilly

Humboldt Current that flows from Antarctica to the Pacific Coast, the endangered, tuxedoed seabirds find refuge here, waddling about doing little else but sleep, eat and rest.



OVERLAND ADVENTURES

Experience this magical country on an immersive two-day Cuzco and Machu Picchu overland tour, covering the Peruvian Andes and Sacred Valley by plane, train and automobile. **For more information and itinerary details, head to princess.com**



SOUTH AMERICA



BEST FOR...

Charming history

Stroll around Trujillo and you'll think you have time-travelled to the Spanish era. Polychromatic mansions and wonderfully preserved churches line the centre in a spectacle of colours. It's undoubtedly one of the most attractive northern cities in Peru, and visiting these grandiose buildings is a highlight of any trip. Many are still in use today – some are museums, others have been converted into cafes and restaurants – and they are characterised by large windows with gorgeous wrought-iron grillwork, leafy patios, opulent salons and intricate balconies. On the way back to the coast, see the sculptural fishing boats (left) made of *totora* reeds.



BEST FOR...

Namesake tipples

Peruvians and their Chilean neighbours have long battled over who can lay claim to pisco's origins. The brandy, made by distilling fermented grape juice, was in any case created by Spanish settlers in the 16th century, and has recently bounced back to life across bars in South America. It is named after the old town of Pisco, which once served as an international port for the high-proof spirit thanks to its proximity to the area's vineyards. To make a pisco sour – a popular cocktail thought to have been first concocted by American bartender Victor Morris in Lima in the 1920s – mix pisco, lemon juice, simple syrup, egg white and ice. Or, if you're in the capital, pop into Huarinas, a hip bar that serves the classic drink.



TRUJILLO

The hotspot for marinera, Peru's national dance

LIMA

Capital city with first-rate culinary creds

MACHU PICCHU

An archaeological gem found high in the Andes Mountains

CHAN CHAN

Pre-Columbian America's largest city; now an impressive ruin

PISCO

Celebrated for spirits, seabirds and a puzzling prehistoric geoglyph

