

Peru including Galapagos Premium Dossier

Highlights

See the amazing lost city of Machu Picchu
Explore the colonial elegance of Cuzco
Experience the incredible Amazon jungle
Discover the beautiful Sacred Valley
Cruise the remarkable waters of the Galapagos Islands



Factfile

Transfers Arrival and departure transfers to airports.

Escorted Services of local representatives in Lima, Cuzco and Guayaquil. Tours by English-speaking guides and transfers with driver.

Transport Private air-conditioned car for transfers, round trip on the Vistadome train to Aguas Calientes, bus to Machu Picchu, boat and canoes in the jungle and domestic flights Lima-Cuzco-Puerto Maldonado-Lima-Guayaquil-Galapagos-Quito

Activities Extensive walking at sites, city tours in Cuzco and Guayaquil, tour of Machu Picchu, tour of Sacred Valley, jungle excursions, wildlife spotting in the Galapagos Islands

Accommodation 7 nights boutique colonial and superior hotels,
3 nights jungle lodge
4 nights cruise
For Further details please see the Trip Dossier.

Meals As per itinerary.
B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner.

Entrance Fees Included for all sites listed as part of the itinerary except Galapagos National Park. This should be paid locally and costs US\$100.

Itinerary

DAY 1 - LIMA

Arrival transfer to your hotel Antigua Miraflores, in the heart of Lima.

Lima

Situated on either side of the Rio Rimac, shrouded in the garua (coastal fog) for eight months of the year, Lima is the capital of Peru and home to an estimated third of the country's 27 million inhabitants. Crouching at the foot of Cerro San Cristobal, Lima replaced the Inca city of Cuzco as the capital of Peru in 1535. Initially called La Ciudad de Los Reyes (City of Kings) by the first colonialists, Lima was the principal Spanish capital of South America, an essential trading post on the Pacific and gateway to the continent responsible for establishing their empire. Despite a devastating earthquake in 1746, Lima has maintained the character of this heritage whilst growing into a bustling, modern metropolis with an abundance of attractions. From the excellent Museo de la Nacion, crammed full of Inca, pre-Colombian and colonial historical artefacts, to the cosmopolitan shopping centres at San Isidro and Miraflores, Lima is amongst the most atmospheric cities in South America. UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as the Plaza de Armas on the south bank of the Rimac, are interspersed with market stalls selling authentic Peruvian handicrafts.

Hotel Antigua Miraflores

The Antigua Miraflores is a hidden treasure in the heart of Lima. The place is filled with antique furnishings, wooden fixtures fashioned from Oregon pine and modern Peruvian artwork, whilst the tiny central courtyard is a haven of tranquility.

DAY 2 - CUZCO

This morning you will take a flight to the beautiful city of Cuzco. Transfer to your room in Los Marqueses, a cosy restored colonial mansion. In the afternoon your guide will take you to discover the secrets of Cuzco. (B)

Cuzco

Once the epicentre of the Inca Empire, buried in the heart of the mysterious Sacred Valley, Cuzco offers a magical combination of ancient religious sanctity and colonial splendour. Unquestionably the archaeological capital of the Americas and the oldest inhabited city on the continent, Qosqo (Cuzco in Quechua) has been declared the historic capital of Peru and is so shrouded in mystery that it is impossible to separate the facts of its history from fiction. The Inca legends of Cuzco are proudly remembered by the Quechua-speaking descendants

of the Incas who still live amidst the original stonework that was laid down in 1100 AD. The more recent Spanish colonial influence manifests itself in ornate cathedrals such as La Compania and mansions piled with priceless treasures. An intoxicating blend of indigenous ritualism and colonial bombast, Cuzco is now home to a thriving tourist industry.

Los Marqueses

Los Marqueses Hotel is a beautiful colonial house located just one block from the Plaza de Armas (the main square in Cuzco). Originally built in the 16th century, it was extensively restored and refurbished in 2004 and is now a charming boutique hotel. Each of the rooms are individually decorated in the local style and have been attractively furnished in cedar and aliso wood.

DAY 3 - SACRED VALLEY

After breakfast you will follow the Rio Urubamba as it snakes through the lush landscape of the Sacred Valley, passing charming Andean villages and some of the most breathtaking views in Peru. Our visit through the pictureque Sacred Valley will include a stop at the vibrant Pisac Indian Market which is a sight to behold as it attracts thousands of visitors and people from remote communities dressed in colourful, traditional attire. Overnight at Posada del Inca Yucaj. (BL)

Sacred Valley

The Rio Urubamba snakes through the lush landscape of the Sacred Valley, passing ancient Incan stonework, charming Andean villages, quaint colonial churches and some of the most breathtaking views in Peru. The strategic fortress citadel of Pisac lies 30km to the north-east and provides a convenient gateway to the valley. Every Thursday and Sunday Pisac bursts into life with a teeming market in the Plaza Constitucion. Stalls overflow with everything from bricks of adobe to reams of vivid llama wool, manned by native Andeans clothed in the traditional dress of the Peruvian highlands. Behind the market, 600m above colonial Pisac, deep gorges flank the Incan ruins overlooking the town. Ollantaytambo also offers beautiful Inca ruins, in a spectacular natural setting.

Posada Del Inca Yucaj

The Posada del Inca Yucaj is located in the heart of the Sacred Valley. Built in the 18th century, this beautiful colonial building was originally a monastery and is situated in spacious gardens.

DAY 4 - MACHU PICCHU

Early in the morning board the Vistadome train to Machu Picchu for a spectacular journey through a dramatic and changing landscape. On arrival in Aguas Calientes you will be taken by bus to Machu Picchu where you will enjoy a private guided tour of the famous citadel. After lunch return to Cuzco by train. (BL)

Machu Picchu

Perched high on a ridge between enormous peaks, framed by the towering Huayna Picchu and the raging Vilcanota River, the lost city of Machu Picchu stands as one of the most revered archaeological sites in the world. Concealed beneath dense Andean foliage, Machu Picchu was discovered on 24th July 1911 by the American Hiram Bingham whilst searching for the ancient ruins of Vilcabamba. Thought to have been built in around 1440 AD at the height of the Incan epoch, the site was inhabited until the Spanish conquest of 1532. Archaeological evidence indicates that rather than being a permanently inhabited city, Machu Picchu was in fact a country retreat for the Inca nobility. Irrespective of why Machu Picchu exists, it is an unforgettable sight.

Hiram Bingham Express – Day 4 Upgrade

Upgrade your day for an amazing experience on the Peruvian Orient Express, the Hiram Bingham Express to Machu Picchu. With distinctive blue and gold carriages, the train reflects the luxury of the 1920s Pullman era. The Hiram Bingham Express departs Cuzco at 9am which gives a more leisurely start to the day than the traditional 6am departures of other services. Brunch is served on board the train whilst travellers enjoy the spectacular scenery unfolding before them from the large windows. The arrival at Machu Picchu at 12.30 pm gives passengers the advantage of entering the sanctuary at an hour when the majority of the visitors are already beginning to leave for

their journey back to Cuzco. This not only gives the opportunity to experience the ancient citadel at Machu Picchu in relative solitude, but also gives a longer stay there, as passengers only return to the train as the sun goes down. Once back on board for a 6.30pm departure, pre-dinner cocktails are served in the bar accompanied by live entertainment before passengers enjoy a four course à la carte dinner in the dining cars. The train pulls into Poroy station in Cusco at 10pm.

Hike the Inca Trail?

If you would like to hike the Inca Trail we can arrange this for you. It takes four days and offers a spectacular approach to Machu Picchu. Please ask us for further details.

DAY 5 - CUZCO – PUERTO MALDONADO

Fly to Puerto Maldonado. On arrival you will travel deep into the Amazon jungle by motorised canoe and spend two nights at a remote jungle lodge. (BLD)

Amazon Jungle

Covering 7 million km² (an area as large as the United States) and producing 15% of the world's oxygen, the Amazon Basin is the largest and most dense tropical forest in the world. Andean winds warmed by the humid blanket of foliage have produced an environment of critical global importance, home to some 2,500 fish species, 1,780 bird species and 500 plants species, many of which are rare and unique to this region including the red-billed toucan, black spider monkey and Amazonian pygmy owl. The south-eastern jungle around Puerto Maldonado receives less rainfall than tropical forest and is dominated by the floodplains of various Amazonian rivers. Home to black caiman, giant otter, jaguar, puma and tapir, Puerto Maldonado is an isolated outpost on the fringe of the Amazon Basin, famed for the production of jungle crops such as Brazil nuts and coffee, and the mining of gold. The pioneer spirit amongst the locals recalls a boomtown era and adds to the authenticity of this isolated port overlooking a network of intersecting rivers.

Reserva Amazonica Inkaterra

To arrive at the Reserva Amazonica Inkaterra is to enter into another world. Situated right on the river bank in the heart of a 100km² private ecological reserve, the lodge boasts private cabanas built with local materials in the indigenous style and unrivalled views of the rainforest.

DAY 6 TO DAY 7 - AMAZON

Two full days to explore the Amazon by foot and canoe, accompanied by a specialist wildlife guide. In the evening you can relax in your hammock while the magic sounds of the jungle continue around you. (BLD)

DAY 8 - AMAZON – LIMA

Transfer to Puerto Maldonado in time for your flight back to Lima. (B)

DAY 9 - LIMA – GUAYAQUIL

Transfer to the airport to fly to Guayaquil where you can enjoy a guided city tour in the afternoon.(B)

Hampton Inn

The Hampton Inn offers comfortable accommodation in a modern block in the heart of Guayaquil. Situated a short distance from the Malecon 2000 complex with bars and restaurants, gardens, cinemas and shops, the Hampton Inn is conveniently located for everything Guayaquil has to offer.

DAY 10 - GUAYAQUIL - GALAPAGOS

In the morning transfer to the airport for your flight to the Galapagos Islands to meet your cruise boat. Settle into your private cabin and enjoy your evening meal whilst taking in the spectacular ocean views.

DAY 11 TO DAY 13 - GALAPAGOS CRUISE

Three days spent cruising these incredible islands and admiring their unique wildlife. Whilst exploring you may be lucky enough to get up close to some of the islands inhabitants including giant tortoise, sea lion, marine iguanas and dolphins. (BLD)

The Galapagos Islands

Often described as a wildlife paradise, the Galapagos Islands are nature's showcase, a chain of stunning volcanic islands jutting out of the Pacific Ocean 1000km off the coast of Ecuador. One of the most remarkable things about the islands is that since they have been isolated from predators for so long, the animals have lost their fear of man and you can swim with sea lions and dolphins, go diving with hammerhead sharks, encounter a giant tortoise, walk through colonies of frigate birds or step over seals basking on the beaches.

The islands were visited by Charles Darwin in 1835 and were instrumental in him forming his theory of evolution. On the cruise, presentations will be given by naturalists about the remarkable ecosystem of the islands, and there will be plenty of opportunities to disembark and walk on the islands, observing bird colonies of blue footed boobies, frigate birds, swallow tailed gulls, sea lions and marine iguanas.

The islands were discovered by accident in 1535 when the Bishop of Panama drifted off course while bound for Peru. He reported the presence of giant tortoises – galapago – where the islands got their name from. The islands were often used as a stop off point by sailors in search of firewood and fresh water. Ecuador announced sovereignty over the Galapagos Islands in 1832, and the entire archipelago became a national park in 1959.

A Typical Day

On a typical day cruising the Galapagos you might disembark at a white coral beach where you can take a short walk and watch the sea lions, marine iguanas, mockingbirds and finches, or just enjoy the beach. There is good snorkelling in many areas as well. After lunch on board or at a local restaurant depending on your location, you might go for a walk on lava terrain to visit unique sea bird colonies - masked boobies, frigate birds, storm petrels and albatross are all found. In addition excursions by dinghy can sometimes be arranged. In the evening there is often a naturalist's briefing before dinner.

Your Cruise

The exact boat that you use will be determined by your departure date in the Galapagos. We will be able to send you full details at the time of booking.

Please Note

Entrance fees for the Galapagos National Park are not included in the price of the tour. Please allow US\$100 which should be paid locally.

Every visitor to the Galapagos must also buy a Transit Card for their stay on the islands, which will cost US\$10 per visitor.

We can arrange a longer cruise in the Galapagos if you would prefer. Please discuss this with your travel consultant at the time of booking.

DAY 14 - GALAPAGOS - QUITO

Return flight to Quito. On arrival transfer to Patio Andaluz, your sumptuous accommodation for your last night. (B)

Quito

Nestled in a long, narrow valley between the lush base of the Volcano Pichincha to the west and the precipitous canyon of the river Machángara to the east, Quito enjoys an unmatched natural setting. During the pre-Columbian era several tribes inhabited present-day Quito. During the early 16th century, while the Incas controlled Ecuador, Quito served as the capital of the northern half of their empire. In 1533, the Inca General Rumifahui destroyed Quito so that it would not fall into the hands of the advancing conquistadors. Just a year later the Spanish began rebuilding what was left of Quito. The city sits at an altitude of 2,850m but because of its proximity to the equator it experiences wonderful spring like conditions most the year, with blue skies and crisp cool evenings. Today the UNESCO listed colonial centre is splendidly preserved whilst the 'new town' is the place to go for cafes and bars.

Hotel Patio Andaluz

Situated in the heart of the Old Historic Centre of Quito, surrounded by churches, museums, and national monuments, the hotel Patio Andaluz offers stylish accommodation in an old colonial setting. Rooms are comfortably furnished and there is an exclusive restaurant, El Rincon De Cantuna, specialising in traditional local and Spanish cuisine.

DAY 15 - QUITO

Transfer to Quito International Airport for your departure flight. (B)

Itinerary Notes

Please note: Our published price is based on the lowest fare available at the time of publishing for a 5d/4n cruise in a Tourist Class Yacht and includes flights to and from the Galapagos. Exact prices depend on the boat used and the time of year and are available on request.

Supplementary Information

Travel Insurance

Fully comprehensive travel insurance is compulsory for all travellers. We recommend that you take out insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, baggage loss or damage, medical expenses, emergency travel, repatriation and personal accident, before you leave home. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully insured to financially safeguard against unforeseen circumstances.

Visas

You will need to obtain the following visas for this tour.

- Peru - Single Entry
- Ecuador - Single Entry

Visa for Peru

Currently EU, US, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand citizens can visit Peru for up to 90 days without a visa. However, the situation does change periodically, so you should always check with your local Peruvian embassy before departure. All nationalities need a tourist or embarkation card ("tarjeta de embarque") to enter Peru. This is issued at frontiers or on the aircraft before landing. Tourist cards are usually valid for between 60 and 90 days (60 days for US citizens). In theory you have to show an outbound ticket (by air or bus) before you'll be given a card, but this is rarely checked. For your own safety and freedom of movement, a copy of the tourist card together with a copy of your passport must be kept on you at all times - particularly when travelling outside of the main towns. You must also retain this card for when you exit Peru.

If the visa application form for Peru requires a contact address in the destination, please give your meeting point hotel. This is;

Hotel Antigua Miraflores
Av. Grau 350
Miraflores
Lima
Peru
Tel: +51 1 241-6116

Visa for Ecuador

Most nationals, including citizens of the EU, North American and Australasia do not need a visa to enter Ecuador. Entry is granted on production of a passport valid for more than six months, a return air/bus ticket and proof of

funds to support yourself for the duration of the stay. You'll be issued with a T-3 tourist card on arrival, which you should keep safely with your passport as it will be collected when you leave the country. The tourist card can allow up to 90 days stay, although it's up to the immigration official to decide whether you're allocated 30, 60 or 90 days on arrival.

Visa requirements do change periodically so you should check for the latest information on your specific visa requirements with your local Ecuadorian Embassy or Consulate well in advance of your planned date of travel.

If the visa application form for Ecuador requires a contact address in the destination, please give the address of your hotel in Guayaquil. This is;

Hampton Inn (Premium Tour)	Palace Hotel (Standard Tour)
9 de Octubre 432 y Baquerizo Moreno	Chile 214 between Vélez and Luque
Guayaquil	Guayaquil
Ecuador	Ecuador
Tel: +011 593 4256 6700	Tel: +011 593 4 2321080

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of the correct visas for your holiday and onward travel. The Imaginative Traveller cannot accept responsibility for anyone who is refused entry to a country because they lack the correct documentation.

Staffing

Throughout the tour you will be provided with all the assistance that you will need. Representatives will meet you at the airport on arrival and will drop you off and pick you up from train stations and airports during the course of the tour. These representatives will be able to answer any questions that you might have about your tour. In addition you will also have the use of local specialist guides at many sites.

Hotels

We have selected some of the finest hotels that Peru and Ecuador have to offer so that you can be confident that you will experience only the highest level of comfort. Whilst each hotel retains its own character, they all offer superb service and international standards of cuisine.

The hotels that we have listed in the itinerary will be booked subject to availability. If we are unable to secure a booking at the selected hotel we will suggest a suitable alternative; however please be aware that some of the places that we visit have only a limited selection of accommodation and the alternative may not be of equivalent standard. Where this is the case, we may be able to offer a small discount off the cost of the trip to reflect the lower standard. Please discuss this with your travel consultant at the time of booking, if appropriate.

We offer both a standard and premium level honeymoon; on the premium tour you will stay in deluxe rooms in each hotel and will stay in more luxurious accommodation in the Amazon, Guayaquil and in the Galapagos.

Laundry

A laundry service is available in the hotels we use.

Arrivals

On your flight into Peru you will be given a customs form to complete which you must give to a uniformed officer on departure from the baggage hall just before entering customs. You will also be asked to press a large button which will either show up as red or green. If it lights up red, then you will have to open and show the contents of your baggage; if green, you can continue.

Tour Transport

Road transport on this tour will be in private air-conditioned vehicles. You will also travel by train, boat and plane.

Local Transport

Taxis are recommended for all journeys within a city. In Peru, taxi meters are not normally in evidence, so you will find yourself engaging in a bit of haggling with the driver to agree upon the fare. This can be fun, but it is a good

idea to find out in advance, from your guide or the hotel receptionist, approximately how much the fare should be. It will also help if you can speak a few words of Spanish. You will almost certainly have to accept that you will pay more than the Peruvians do.

We do not recommend that you use local buses. Although these are cheap, you really need to be able to speak reasonable Spanish to get by and there are some bus stops/stations, especially in Lima, that are not recommended for tourists.

In Ecuador, taxis are also the best way to get around. They are usually yellow and, except in Quito, do not have meters. A long ride in a large city should not cost over \$3. A short ride will be under \$1. In smaller towns the fare should be about \$0.50 to \$2. Fares tend to be 25-50% higher at night and on weekends.

Border Taxes

International departure tax when leaving Peru – US\$30

International departure tax when leaving Ecuador – US\$40

Domestic flight tax, payable before each domestic flight – US\$5

These must be paid locally, in either US dollars or local currency.

Money

Local Currency

The monetary unit in Peru is the Nuevo Sol (PEN) which is divided into 100 centavos. Approximate exchange rates (as at Dec 2007) are as follows:

- 1 Pound Sterling = 6.16 PEN
- 1 US Dollar = 3 PEN
- 1 Euro = 4.4 PEN

In Ecuador, the local currency is the US Dollar. This has been the case since 2000 when the government decided to 'dollarise' the economy due to the instability of their own currency, the Sucre.

XE.com is a useful site for currency conversion.

Changing Money, Credit Cards & ATMs

We recommend that you bring a combination of cash / travellers' cheques in US Dollars only. There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that you may bring into Peru, however very large sums should be declared on arrival. There is often a general lack of small change and we recommend maintaining a supply of small denomination notes and coins. On arrival at Lima International Airport we suggest that you withdraw some Sols at the ATM the other side of immigration (passport control), or change some money at the bank ("Cambio") which is on the far side of the baggage hall. It is best to do this while you are waiting for your bags to avoid the inevitable queue later. Change enough money to see you through the first few days of your trip – particularly if it is a weekend. Please note you can only change cash (not travellers' cheques) at the Cambio and there are other ATMs in the city (and in Cuzco) where you can get money out 24hrs a day.

In Ecuador, it is possible to withdraw US Dollars from ATMs in Guayaquil and Quito using most international credit and debit cards provided you have a four digit PIN number. Please note that on the Galapagos Islands, there is an ATM available but it only takes MasterCard.

Important Points to remember

- Although bank cards are often the easiest way to go, there are times where they will not work for you even if your bank at home tells you it will! Do not rely on your card as your only source of money and always have a few back-ups with you.
- Do not bring US\$ notes which are torn or marked even slightly. If your notes are at all damaged you may not be able to change them in Peru.

Entrance Fees

These are included for all sites listed as part of the itinerary. However, there are a number of other sites which you may like to visit such as the excellent Museo de Oro del Perú y Armas del Mundo (Gold Museum) in Lima.

This costs approximately US\$8.50 and, as it is on the outskirts of the city, you will need to take a taxi. Many of the churches charge a nominal fee to enter, for example Santo Domingo and San Francisco in Lima cost approx US\$1.50 each. One of the best value places to visit in Lima is the Museum of the Inquisition as it is free and very interesting with magnificent carved ceilings. There are a number of other museums in Lima, most of which have minimal entrance fees. Please bear in mind that most museums are closed on Mondays.

Entrance fees for the Galapagos National Park are not included and must be paid locally. These are US\$100 per person.

Tipping

Tipping is discretionary but some general guidelines are given here;

10% can be added to restaurant bills
US\$1 per bag for hotel porters
US\$3-5 per day for a guide
US\$3 per day for a driver

On the Galapagos cruise we suggest approx US\$40-50 per person for the nature guide and a combined tip of US\$40-50 per person for the rest of the staff.

Note: It is not necessary to tip drivers/representatives who are transferring you from hotels to airports or stations.

In general tipping should be in accordance with the service received.

Food and Drink

As a guideline a simple snack (e.g. a sandwich) can cost as little as US\$0.70, a light meal will cost around US\$3-6, and even a meal in one of the best restaurants in Cuzco or Lima costs very little in comparison to what you would expect to pay at home (usually around US\$20-30). Obviously this depends on what you eat and, if you order wine/spirits, the price will of course increase. In cheaper restaurants where Peruvians and backpackers eat, you can get meals for as little as US\$1.50.

All drinks such as water, soft or alcoholic drinks are at your own expense at all times. The following is a guideline for drinks bought in a shop in the street. Prices in restaurants and hotels can sometimes be more than double the prices specified below:

- 1 litre of water - US\$1
- 30cl bottle of soft drink - US\$0.70
- 30cl bottle of beer - US\$1.20
- 50cl bottle of beer - US\$1.70

Clothing

As a general guideline, clothing should be lightweight, loose fitting, hard-wearing and easily washed. In the hot summer months, cotton clothing is much more comfortable than man-made materials like nylon.

In the Andes (the area around Cuzco) it can get extremely cold, particularly in the evenings and in the winter. Please bring suitable clothing (a good quality fleece, jumper, hat and gloves).

Water resistant jackets and trousers are essential during the rainy season between November and April.

Other recommended luggage requirements for this tour:

- Binoculars
- Sturdy walking shoes or boots
- Swimwear

- Insect Repellent
- Sunscreen
- Waterproof Jacket
- Sunhat
- Daypack
- Camera
- Health

Vaccinations

It is now mandatory for all tourists travelling into the jungle area of Peru to carry an up-to-date Yellow Fever vaccination certificate with them. The vaccination must have been had at least 10 days before departure, and you will be required to carry your vaccination certificate with you as proof.

Please may we remind you that it is your responsibility to ensure that you obtain any vaccinations and precautionary or preventative medicines for the countries you are visiting. We strongly advise that you check with your doctor or a medical centre for specific health advice.

Culture

Begging

Begging is not common in Peru or Ecuador but has started to appear at some tourist destinations. Ultimately donations are a traveller's personal choice, however our recommendation is NOT to give money, pens, gifts or sweets as this encourages a begging mentality and is largely ineffective. If you do want to help it is probably better to give to a recognised charity. If you choose not to give, simply say no with a smile and keep on walking. If you learn nothing else of the local language, try to learn to say 'no thank you'.

Shopping

Haggling is expected in both Peru and Ecuador and hunting for bargains can be a real highlight.

For up-market, designer goods visit the coastal suburb of Miraflores in Lima. Here prices are usually fixed unless you are buying from a street vendor. There are also some good quality handicraft shops but the prices do tend to be a little higher although you may sometimes be able to bargain. Another good area for handicrafts is La Feria Artisanal in La Marina. This is the biggest craft market in Lima and bargaining is certainly expected.

You'll find good handicraft markets in all of the touristy towns. San Pedro, near the train station to Machu Picchu, is one of the best markets in Cuzco but beware of pickpockets. The touristy Pisac Market in the Sacred Valley of the Incas is especially is good for variety, if not necessarily price.

Your best buys are wall-hangings (tapestries), hand-woven textiles, alpaca and llama woollen products, hats, blankets, furry slippers, coats, ceramics, papier-mâché ornaments, gold and silver objects and jewellery.

Safety

The introduction of tourist police and the closure of many street vendors in areas notorious for thieves and muggings have greatly improved the security situation in Peru. However like anywhere in the world, you can be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In general, care should be taken, especially whilst walking around the larger cities. Try to keep away from dark quiet areas if on your own, particularly late at night and always try to take a taxi. If you have had a few drinks and are returning to your hotel at night, it is always best to take a taxi direct to the hotel. We suggest that whenever possible you leave all your important documents in the hotel safe. However you should always carry some form of ID or a photocopy of your passport.

It is not advisable to wear expensive looking watches or jewellery and don't carry a wallet in your back pocket or carry loose hanging bags. Keep your camera concealed when not in use. Remember that most thieves don't use

violence but rely mostly on diversionary tactics which can take place at any time of the day or night. Do not be paranoid, but just be aware that it could happen at any time. Always be vigilant and the chances are nothing will ever happen to you. The safety of our passengers is our number one concern and you will be provided with all necessary local information.

Local Food & Drink

Food

In Peru and Ecuador the basic diet focuses around chicken, beef or seafood, mostly with french fries or rice (or both) and possibly a little salad. Soups are also common and good value. Coastal dishes are seafood based and include “ceviche”, which is fish marinated in lemon juice, onion and hot peppers, traditionally served with corn on the cob, cancha (toasted corn), yucca and sweet potatoes. “Escabeche” is fish with onions, green and red peppers, prawns, cumin, hard boiled eggs, olives and sprinkled with cheese. The most common fish is “corvina” (sea bass) which can come simply grilled or fried or with sauces. “Chupe de camarones”, a prawn stew, is another delicious dish certainly worth trying.

Corn and potatoes are the main vegetables – particularly in the highlands. “Causa” is a dish made from yellow potatoes, lemons, peppers, hard-boiled eggs, olives, lettuce, sweet corn, sweet potato, cheese and onion sauce. “Choclo con queso” is a large corn on the cob snack with very salty cheese. Other local favourites include “tomales” which is like a boiled corn dumpling filled with chicken and wrapped in banana leaf and “lomo saltado” which is a kind of stir-fry beef with tomatoes, onions and fried potatoes on a bed of rice. An interesting local speciality is cuy (pronounced: cooee). This is roasted guinea pig which some people say tastes like chicken whilst other report that it is more like cooked cardboard!

In most of the larger cities and towns you will find an array of international cuisine. There are pizzerias on every corner and Chinese (chifas) food is very common. In places like Cuzco even Indian and Japanese restaurants have now opened. A cheap, filling three-course lunch (normally called a “menú económico”) can often be had for about US\$1.50.

Drinks

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available and are generally safe to drink. Please note however that fruit juices are sometimes made with unboiled tap water and could upset your stomach. An easy way around this is to order juice “con leche” (with milk) instead. The choice of different juices is incredible e.g. mora (blackberry), piña (pineapple), naranjilla (mixture between mandarin and orange), maracuya (passion fruit), tomato de arbol (like a tomato but with a harder texture and sweeter), guanabana (custard apple) and curia (which has a great taste – just try it!).

On this tour most of the hotels we use have bars or serve alcoholic drinks. If there is not a bar in the hotel then there is sure to be a bar within walking distance. In more up-market hotels, imported beers and spirits are available but usually at a high price. If you are happy to drink the local spirits then there is an array of rums, pisco (white brandy) and even palatable wine. All of these are very cheap, e.g. a bottle of rum could be as little as US\$5 in a local shop. Quite often the mixer to go with it is more expensive! There are various brands of beers including Cuzqueña, Arequipeña, Cristal and Pilsener.

Special Dietary Requirements

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a lack of variety in the food available and you might find that you are eating a lot of omelettes and other egg dishes. However, something will always be available so you should not be too concerned.

Communications

Email

As with everywhere in the world, the easiest and cheapest form of communication is via the Internet. You will find

Internet cafés in every major town/city. The average cost is approx. US\$0.40c per hour. Connection is generally slower in the smaller more remote places, so try to do your emailing in Lima, Cuzco, Guayaquil and Quito if possible. These bigger cities are now starting to offer internet phone calls which can cost as little as US\$0.15 per minute to anywhere in the world.

Telephone

Another option is to go into one of the many phone offices and pay approx. US\$0.60- 0.80 per minute, or buy a phone card which will cost about the same but will allow you to call from any phone in Peru (it has a free phone number on the back of the card with a pin number and instructions in Spanish and English).

Telephone systems are a little unpredictable in Ecuador and although long distance calls can be made easily from big cities, calling from the Galapagos Islands can be difficult. Andinatel and Pacifictel are the two major service providers for international connections and are open from 8am – 10pm. International calling cards tend not to be accepted by local agencies in Ecuador. Local phone cards are printed in English and are available everywhere.

Post

The postal service is good and stamps are available everywhere.

Cameras

Camera film is widely available and generally of good quality in Peru. This is not the case in Ecuador so you should stock up before arriving there.

Weather - Peru

Peru is unique in its wide variety of ecosystems including the driest/hottest desert in the Americas, the high Andean peaks (over 7,600m above sea level), a 2000km long belt of cloud forest, rich in flora and fauna and a vast area of lowland Amazon jungle, covering more than half the country. The three main zones of Peru are known as La Costa (the coast), La Sierra (the mountains) and La Selva (the jungle).

Over the last few years, the Peruvian weather has been rather unsettled possibly as a result of global warming. However, it still rarely rains on the coast, although the Lima region does experience substantial smog, coastal fogs or mists and even drizzle, particularly between the months of May and November.

The climate in the Sierra and Selva regions can be divided into a wet season (Nov-April) and a dry season (May-Oct). There is, of course, some rain during the dry season, but it is much heavier and much more frequent in the wet season. Don't be put off by the expression "rainy season" however, as this normally means a couple of downpours each day rather than continuous rain. Again, weather conditions have been quite unsettled in these regions over the last ten years or so, with the Altiplano zone around Puno being affected by serious droughts, which have left the water level of Lake Titicaca at its lowest for years. The Andean region (around Cuzco) is very high and can get extremely cold at any time of year.

Weather – Ecuador

In the lowland areas it can get particularly hot on clear days, with temperatures easily topping 30°C. The coast has the most clearly defined wet and dry seasons, with the best time to visit being from December to April, when you'll get frequent showers but also clear blue skies and warm weather. From May to November, the southern coast, in particular, is often overcast and relatively cool, with less chance of rainfall.

Weather on the Galapagos Islands is defined entirely by the arrival and departure of the sea currents. The hot season is from December to May when conditions are tropical, with calm seas and occasional tropical showers, which turn the islands green and lush. Temperatures range from 26-30C, with a water temperature of around 26C and good underwater visibility. The days are sunny and warm and wildlife is not so active under these conditions. From June to November, the trade winds bring the cooler ocean currents and a thin layer of cloud. During this dry season the seas become a little choppier and the air temperature is cooler, ranging from 23-26C, and sea temperature is around 19-23C. The islands take on a barren/volcanic appearance and wildlife is at its most prolific.

Suggested Reading

Guidebooks

Rough Guide to Peru
Lonely Planet Guide to Ecuador

Background Reading

Bel Canto (By Ann Patchett)
The Bridge of San Luis Rey (By Thornton Wilder)
The Panama Hat Trail (by Tom Miller)
Living Poor (by Moritz Thomsen)
Tropical Nature (by Adrian Forsyth & Kenneth Miyata)
Galapagos (by Kurt Vonnegut)

Useful Phrases in Spanish

Hello - Hola
Goodbye - Adios
How are things? - Que tal
Please - Por favor
Thank you - Gracias
Yes - Si
No - No
Excuse me/sorry - Permiso
How much is it? - Cuanto cuesta
Too expensive - Es demasiado caro
Spanish Numbers
1 - uno
2 - dos
3 - tres
4 - cuatro
5 - cinco
6 - seis
7 - siete
8 - ocho
9 - nueve
10 - diez
20 - veinte
30 - treinta
100 - cien
1000 - mil

Contact Details

Local Office 24hr Emergency Contact
Tel: 51 8424 3508 Tel: 51 84240427 or 51 849652116
or 51 1 2417537/2417538

Local Office (Ecuador)
Tel: 593 2 2901883/2901885

General information

Price includes:

- Staffing as shown in the 'Factfinder'
- Accommodation, meals, transportation, and sightseeing excursions as per itinerary.

Price does not include:

- Visa costs
- Border Taxes
- Entrance fees not part of the itinerary eg Galapagos fees
- Drinks, tips, laundry and other items of a personal nature.
- International flights (except Lima to Guayaquil)
- Meals other than those listed

Are You Ready To Go?

Before you travel it is essential that you read all of the following documents which you can download from our website www.imtravdossiers.com or obtain from your booking agent:

- Trip Dossier (this document)
- Peru Country Dossier
- Ecuador Country Dossier
- Pre-Departure Information

The itinerary and supplementary information has been compiled with care and provided in good faith. However it may be subject to change, and does not form part of a contract between the client and The Imaginative Traveller.