



INFORMATION ABOUT PERU

LOCATION - DESCRIPTION

Peru borders the South Pacific Ocean in western South America, and is located between Chile and Ecuador. Its total area is slightly smaller than Alaska.

The western coastal plains are separated from the eastern lowland jungle of the Amazon Basin by the high and rugged Andes in center. On the border with Bolivia lies Lake Titicaca, the worlds highest navigable lake. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru)

Weather: When it's summer in the U.S., it's winter in Peru. Weather during this time is usually damp and cool (low 70s daytime temps, 40 at night). You will sleep with a warm blanket and it is good to dress in layers.

PEOPLE, CULTURE & RELIGION

The indigenous people of Peru are descendants of the Inca, who ruled an extensive South American empire centered in the highlands before they were conquered by Spaniards in the 16th century. The Incan population is estimated to have been between five and eight million.

Attracted by the gold and silver mines of the Andes, the Spaniards quickly converted Peru into the seat of their wealth and power in South America. Lima, the capital city, was named the "City of Kings" by the Spanish conquistadors in 1535.

Peru has a divided society in which the wealthy and mainly European elites (15%) have long dominated its more numerous population of indigenous people (45%) and mestizos, those of mixed European and Indian ancestry (37%). The sharp class and ethnic divisions that developed during the colonial period persist to this day. Peru's official languages are Spanish and Quechua, and Aymara (unofficial). Architecture of the Spanish colonial period, a fusion of Spanish and Indian forms, is called Creole. Indigenous influence is very evident in art. The primary religion in Peru is Roman Catholic (90%) although many are not practicing Catholics.

GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

Peru is a republic governed by a 1993 constitution and a unified legislature. An elected president may serve two terms. The Peruvian economy has become increasingly market-oriented, with major industries in mining, electricity, and telecommunications. Thanks to strong foreign investment and the cooperation between the government and the World Bank, growth was strong in 1994-97 and inflation was brought under control.

Currency: Nuevo Sol - (the exchange rate in March 2009 is 3.1 Nuevo Soles to One U.S. dollar)

Population: 27,544,305 (July 2004 estimated)

Age structure: 0-14 years: 32.1% (male 4,496,146; female 4,340,580)
15-64 years: 62.8% (male 8,709,098; female 8,594,351)
65 years and over: 5.1% (male 660,734; female 743,396) (2004 est.)

Ethnic groups: Amerindian 45%, mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 37%, white 15%, black, Japanese, Chinese, and other 3%

Average Annual Income: \$1,980 U.S. (World Bank, 2001)

Time Zone: Same time zone as central standard time.