



Since 1972
Xperitas
Nonprofit Immersion Travel

Peru Handbook

CLIMATE

- Peru's weather is unpredictable. It's not uncommon to experience all four seasons in a single day. Peru's rainy season is typically November – April. The daily temperatures are typically mild with slightly cooler nights. Dry season is from May – October with sunny and dry days and cold nights, often hovering just above freezing, particularly in June and July.
- As many of the places you will be visiting in Peru are located at a very high altitude, the temperature varies throughout the day, and even depending on whether you are in the sun or the shade.
- The coast, where Lima is located, has a warm, temperate climate of around 70-75F, without extreme heat or cold but with high humidity and dense fog called *La Garúa* that makes it feel cold at times.
- Be sure to apply high grade sunscreen regularly as, due to the altitude, the sun is very strong.

CLOTHING

- Reference the Xperitas Peru packing list for advice on what to bring. There is a noticeable difference between day and night temperatures, especially in the mountainous regions like Cusco. At any time of the year we recommend bringing warm clothes.
- Dress in layers to accommodate the changes in weather, and always bring your raincoat with you in your day pack regardless of when you travel.
- In Peru, the dress is more formal than here in the U.S., and people tend to wear pants, even in warmer temperatures.
- If you are going to visit a school or church, you will need to wear more formal clothing, such as dress pants, a collared shirt, long shirt/dress, blouse, etc.
- Be sure to wear comfortable shoes that are already broken in prior to travel, as you will do a lot of walking each day. Many homes and hotels do not have central heating, bring warm clothes to sleep in.

CULTURAL TIP

In Peru air conditioning is not as common as in the US. Don't be surprised if your hotel and/or host family don't have AC. The best way to cool down is to wear lightweight clothing and try to stay out of the sun!

ELECTRICITY

- You will not need a converter or an adapter, as the outlets are similar to those in the United States.

MONEY

- The currency in Peru is called the *sol* (plural: *soles*).
- Contact your bank to alert them of upcoming travel plans and ask about international fees.
- Bring a combination of cash (about \$100-\$200) and cards. Be sure to bring a debit card with a 4-digit numerical pin number to be able to take out cash from ATM machines.
- Exchange your dollars for *soles* upon arrival in the country or use your dollars at almost any store and receive change in *soles*. If necessary, your guide will bring the group to a bank on the first full day of travel so that you can exchange or take out money. Some hotels also can exchange money at a good rate. Though you can exchange money at the airport, the exchange rate is higher there than at local banks.
- Be sure to carry your cards and most of your money in your money belt or neck pouch!
- Try to use small bills as oftentimes large bills are not accepted at small shops or in markets. Credit cards are accepted in hotels and larger restaurants and stores.
- There may not be many places to take out money in your family stay community. Plan to arrive with enough cash to get you through the week (at least \$50 USD).
- While in country, only walk around with the money that you need and a copy of your passport. The rest can be left in your hotel safe.
- A backup, emergency card is a good idea in case one card is lost or stolen.

CULTURAL TIP

Electricity and gas are expensive in Peru. Be conscious of how long your showers are and make sure to turn off the lights behind you.

CULTURAL TIP

*Restrooms often cost 1-3 soles and do not always provide toilet paper, be prepared!
In some places in Peru, you will need to dispose of toilet paper in the garbage. Check with your host family, hostel or hotel to see what their process is.*

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Cusco is 11,152 ft (3,400 m) above sea level and **Lima** is 528 ft (161 m) above sea level at its highest points. Mild altitude sickness, or soroche in Spanish, may be experienced by some that travel to high altitudes, due to a decreased amount of oxygen available as elevation increases. Symptoms may include dizziness, headache, nausea, and fatigue.

The following are ways to help your body adjust to the elevation and avoid altitude sickness:

- Stay hydrated - drink plenty of bottled water.
- Take it easy and don't overexert yourself for the first couple of days of the program.
- Eat light meals as you adjust to the altitude.
- Consume more easily digestible foods such as carbohydrates, fruit, and vegetables than heavy foods like meats.

TIPPING

Tipping is very important as many in the tourism industry depend on tips as a part of their regular income. Here is a guide to tipping in Peru:

Restaurants: A 10-15% tip is customary.

Hotel Staff: If hotel staff helps you carry your luggage in to or out of the hotel, it is customary to tip them \$1 USD for each bag that they carry for you. Please leave \$1-\$2 USD per night for the maid if you think they have done a nice job cleaning your room. It is nice to leave the tip on a daily basis rather than at the end of your stay, as it might not be the same person cleaning your room each day.

Local Guides: Tips for guides are included in your program price. Feel free to tip additional money if you think the guide did a great job.

Drivers: Tips for drivers are included in your program price. Feel free to tip additional money if you think the driver did a great job.

If you have any other questions about tipping, ask your guide!

FOOD

- Breakfast is included daily, and all meals are included during the family stay. Any other included meals are noted on your itinerary.
- Peruvians typically eat around 1-2 hours later than the United States. Generally, lunch is the largest meal of the day, and dinner may be on the lighter side.
- Breakfast in Peru is typically small and simple, composed of bread and butter (often with ham or jam) and oatmeal or quinoa. On the weekends it is common to eat a reheated mix of dinner or lunch from the previous days and it's called "*calentado*."
- Drinks include coffee, fruit juices and herbal teas.
- Lunch consists primarily of rice and potatoes with meat (such as chicken, seafood, or fish) and a variety of veggies. It's common for lunch to include a major protein with soup and a side dish.
- Around 5.30pm, some Peruvians eat a quick snack or meal known as *lonche*. It may involve bread with butter, ham, cheese or jam eaten with a cup of coffee or tea.
- Dinner is usually lighter. It can be a repeat of breakfast, with bread accompanied by cheese, ham, eggs or olives. Freshly prepared dishes are also common but are normally smaller and lighter than their lunchtime equivalents.
- The water in Peru is just fine for taking a shower, but it is not good to drink. We recommend drinking bottled water to avoid sickness.
- Most restaurants have a set menu, called the *menu del día* for around \$10 USD. It will typically include a starter, main course and dessert and is not only a great deal but is an excellent way to sample delicious, typical Peruvian food.
- Travelers can find food for every budget! Most restaurants are comparable in price to the United States, though there are smaller, more typical restaurants and *cafeterías* that are more economical. Buying snacks at kioskos, local *comida rápida* restaurants, or the grocery store is usually the cheapest way to go!

CULTURAL TIP

Be ready to try new foods and always offer to help in the kitchen during your family stay.

In-Country Transportation & Lodging

- Greet the driver.
- Keep buses clean and loud noises to a minimum.
- Remember that smells intensify in small places.
- Be on time and don't make the buses wait for you.
- Student hotel sleeping arrangements may involve sharing beds, as some hotels utilize a single large bed for their double rooms or two large beds for their triple/quadruple rooms. During the family stay, students may share a room with a host sibling (if applicable), but they will have their own bed.

CULTURAL TIP

In general, the lifestyle in Peru is slower and more relaxed.

Peruvians tend to place more emphasis on people and relationships than they do on a strict adherence to a set schedule. It is not uncommon for someone to be 5-15 minutes late.

Health & Safety

- Be sure to keep your passport (and other visas, green cards, or documentation), most of your money, and your cards in your money belt or neck pouch!
- If there is a safe in your hotel room, lock your valuables in it while you are out. If there is not a safe, hide money and valuables in your suitcase. **Don't forget to check the safe before you leave the hotel!**
- Pickpocketing is common in large cities, and they are very good at what they do. Pay extra close attention to your belongings and be sure to keep your valuables close to you at all times, especially when in crowds of people or walking on the street.
- If you have a purse/bag, bring a cross-body purse/bag that zips shut. If you are carrying a backpack, be sure that valuables are not located in easily-accessible pockets. We also recommend wearing your backpack in front of you versus on your back as you may normally do.
- Always travel in groups of three or more.
- Remember, the Xperitas emergency line is available 24 hours a day, but please only call it when you are experiencing a true emergency.
- Review the travel and vaccine recommendations for travelers provided by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC). See Current Health and Safety Updates for information about current world events and illnesses.
- Keep printed insurance card on you at all times.

Communication

- Check with your cell phone provider regarding any international fees. At least one leader needs to have an international phone plan in order to be in touch with Xperitas if needed.
- For students, we advise using WiFi. There is often WiFi (or a computer for public use) available in your hotel, but keep in mind that the connection is often weak. You can download messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, to communicate with people at home for free while connected to WiFi.
- Ask your leader(s) about their policy around technology use while on the program.
- A great way for the entire group to stay in communication with parents/guardians back home is via a blog, WhatsApp group chat, private Facebook group, or group email.
- During the family stay, you may or may not have access to internet. You will have the contact information of both the local Family Stay Coordinator, as well as your group leader(s). If you do have internet, please be mindful of the time spent on your phone and try to focus on engaging with your host family.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

Peruvians are socially engaged people and are open to political discussions.

Don't feel offended if they start a conversation about a topic that you may otherwise avoid in the United States, they are just curious!

Peruvians greet each other with a beso, or a kiss on the cheek. Males greet each other with a handshake.

When entering a room or a store, it is very important to greet the other people around with an "hola," "buenos días," or "buenas tardes." When leaving, don't forget to say "hasta luego," "ciao," or "adiós."

Personal space is viewed differently by Peruvians. They are comfortable standing close to one another. Touch and affection are very common.

Xperitas-Arranged Family Stay Experience®

- Your family is excited to meet you! The family stay is a great learning experience. Be sure to keep an open mind, do your best at practicing your Spanish language skills, and have fun getting to know your family.
- Try to be proactive and engage with your host family, such as asking to help cook a meal, offering to go with them to the local market or grocery store, playing a game of cards (Spot-it or Phase 10 are good options), bringing a scrapbook of your family at home), asking to go explore a nearby park, etc. These simple actions can go a long way in breaking the ice, helping with the language barrier/facilitating conversation, and learning about the local culture.
- Try to disconnect during the family stay by not using your phone all the time, and embrace the time to connect with your host family. Disconnecting and truly being present for the experience will allow you to notice more about your surroundings and be more intentional in your observations. We encourage parents/guardians to allow space for their children to disconnect as well.
- If you have any questions or concerns while staying with your host family, please contact your group leader(s) as they can best assist you and work with the local Family Stay Coordinator and Xperitas as applicable.
- If you submitted your family stay applications by the deadline, you should receive your host family's information about 2 weeks prior to departure.
- Respond as soon as possible when your host family contacts you. Keep your social media profiles clean and try not to judge your host by their profiles – better to get to know your host family through talking to them.
- It is nice to bring your host family a gift from your home state and/or a scrapbook or photos to show them what life is like where you live.
- In Peru, toilet paper is usually thrown in the trash can to avoid causing problems with the plumbing. If you have any questions about this, please ask your host family.
- Electricity and gas are much more expensive in Peru than in the United States. Be conscious of how long your showers are and make sure to turn off the lights behind you.
- Leave a thank you note for your hosts at your house on the last day of the family stay, as sending it via mail can be complicated.