

# LIMA

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### *The City of Kings and Surrounding Areas*

From the beginning Lima, the city of kings and viceroys, was an oasis of culture and elegance in the American Indies. Just a few decades after its foundation, Lima already rivaled Mexico as the most important metropolis in the Spanish-American empire. Baroque and Renaissance churches, mansions, palaces, universities and archdioceses filled Lima. The cultural scene positively hummed as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Lima had but a population of just 25.000.



*Inside the Government Palace, Lima  
PromPerú*

The ancient Rímac Valley, “the speaker” in the Quechua language, was originally settled by fishermen and hunter-gatherers, ruled over by a local chieftain, Taulichusco. It was here that on January 15, 1535, Spanish Conqueror Francisco Pizarro founded the city of Lima. In less than 70 years, Lima was to concentrate all the power and wealth of all trade and cultural activity in the Vice-regency: it had become, in effect, the most important city in the Americas.

In the eighteenth century, Lima fell into decadence and instability due mainly to the creation of the Vice-regency of Río de la Plata, who took over the great mines of Alto Perú (now Bolivia). Things came to a head in 1821, when Peru declared its independence as a Republic. At the start of the twentieth century, during la Belle Époque (1915-30), the city enjoyed a privileged position once more as one of the most modern cities on the continent.

In the 1940s, as growing waves of migrants left the countryside bound for Lima, the capital became a miniature replica of the country itself, – a melting pot of people and cultures. Today, with a population of 6.5 million, Lima is home to a quarter of the country's population and nearly two-thirds of Peru's economic and industrial activity.

More than 460 years have passed since its founding as a Spanish city, and Lima today has become synonym of Peru's mestizo or mixed-blood heritage, one that baffles those in the know and first-time visitors alike. In fact, this quandary is one of Lima's greatest features. This alchemy of influences is most clearly seen in the city's innovative cuisine, which gourmets rate as one of the world's finest. UNESCO meanwhile, ranks Lima's architecture as a world heritage site, while the city's inhabitants, fun-loving and skillful, have become experts at adapting to change. Furthermore, Lima offers tourists superb museums, dozens of art galleries, theater productions and every kind of top-notch cultural exhibition, modern shopping malls and recreational areas, in addition to archaeological and natural attractions.

#### **Climate and Access**

Lima overlooks the Pacific Ocean, and is subject to two well-defined seasons: winter, from May to September, with temperatures dipping to



*San Francisco Church, Lima  
Domingo Giribaldi / PromPerú*

18° C and humidity running off the charts, making it feel extremely chilly, especially when a light drizzle sets in; and summer, from December through March, with sunny days and temperatures often topping 30° C. It rarely rains in Lima.

The city of Lima is easily reached overland and by air. The capital is linked to all the cities on the coast by the modern Pan-American Highway, that runs along the coastline; the northern stretch runs for 1,370 km from Tumbes, on the Ecuadorian border, to Lima, while the South Pan-American Highway runs 1,291 km from Lima to Tacna, on the Chilean border. The capital is connected to the Andes via the Central Highway (Carretera Central) and the Paramonga-Huaraz route, both paved, and via rough-grade roads running from Cañete-Yauyos-Huancayo, Huacho-Oyón-Huánuco and Lima-Canta. As the gateway to Peru, Lima features an international airport which has regular flights to major cities around the world as well as dozens of domestic flights.

### **The Historic Center**

#### **Plaza Mayor or Main Square**

The site of the Spanish founding of Lima by Francisco Pizarro, the Plaza Mayor, has witnessed some of the most important historic events in Peru. The Plaza Mayor, or main square, was originally surrounded by small shops and businesses. It was also used as a bullring and scaffold to execute those condemned by the Holy Inquisition. More than a century later, a bronze fountain, built in the center in 1651, still stands today. It was in this plaza that Peruvians declared their independence in 1821. The Presidential Palace sits on the northern side of the square, while the Cathedral and Archbishop's Palace are on the east side and the City Hall is located to the west.

#### **Lima Cathedral**

Built in 1625 in Baroque Renaissance style and rebuilt after an earthquake in 1940, the Cathedral is a veritable work of colonial art. While its façade is somewhat austere, the Cathedral houses magnificent Churriguera altars, beautifully-carved wooden choirstalls and gold-leaf altars, in addition to a unique collection of oil paintings and sculptures from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

#### **Iglesia de San Francisco**

This is a striking colonial complex consisting of a church, the convent of San Francisco and the chapels of El Milagro and La Soledad. Built in the seventeenth century, the complex's cloisters and patios are decorated in blue Sevillian tiles, while there is also a well-stocked library. This complex houses the Religious Art Museum and the Zurbarán Room. The church is built on top of a network of underground tunnels or catacombs which were used as a cemetery during colonial times, and today is open to the general public.

#### **Iglesia de Santo Domingo**

Construction of this church, which features three naves, got underway when Lima was founded, however it was not finished until the late



*Archaeological Site of Pachacamac, Lima  
PromPerú*



*Rafting, Lunahuana, Lima  
Aníbal Solimano / PromPerú*

sixteenth century. The church has superb choirstalls, carved in cedar, as well as an imposing dome. The convent cloisters are lined in Sevillian mosaic tiles, while the chapel is filled with Baroque sculptures. It was here that San Marcos University, the first in South America, was founded in 1551.

### **Iglesia de La Merced**

Built in the eighteenth century, this church is an excellent example of the splendor of Spanish colonial architecture. With a Churriguerra façade, the church is filled with works of art, such as the main altar dedicated to the Virgen de las Mercedes, patron saint of the Peruvian armed forces, and a beautiful sacristy decorated with Arabesque tiles. La Merced houses one of the finest collections of colonial oil paintings and carvings in Lima.

### **Casa Riva Agüero**

Built in the nineteenth century, the house was donated to Lima's Catholic University by the last of the original owners' descendants, Don José de la Riva Agüero. Today it houses the Riva Agüero Institute, which in turn features vast historic archives and a fine library. It is also the site of the Museo de Arte Popular, the Folk Art Museum.

### **Palacio Torre Tagle**

Built in 1730 by the Marquis of Torre Tagle, treasurer of the Royal Spanish fleet, the palace is one of the finest examples of colonial architecture to be found in Peru. Its façade features two superb carved wooden balconies and a Baroque stone doorway. The interior, decorated with Moorish arches, Sevillian tiles and soaring coffered ceilings, is particularly noteworthy. Today it is the seat of the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

### **Casa Aliaga**

Built on top of the foundations of a pre-Hispanic temple, this mansion has been inhabited since 1535 by the descendants of the Aliaga clan, one of Lima's well-established families, and is the oldest standing mansion in Lima. It features huge, luxurious salons, coffered ceilings and a beautiful inner patio, a characteristic of great colonial mansions in Lima. Today, it is used for a variety of cultural events.

### **Other Tourist Districts**

#### **Rímac and Plaza de Acho**

Known as the district "under the bridge", this is one of the most traditional areas of the downtown Lima and features streets that are notably Sevillian in style. Located on the banks of the Rímac river, on the other side from the original city center, Rímac was known in colonial times as the Barrio de Indios San Lázaro (Indians' quarter), and is linked to the city by centuries-old bridges. The cradle of Creole culture, Rímac is home to some of Lima's best-known Creole clubs, or peñas, and traditional restaurants. The district features some extraordinary spots like the Alameda de los Descalzos, the Paseo de Aguas, the Quinta

Presa and several squares and churches. In addition, Rímac is home to the Plaza de Acho (1768), one of the oldest bullrings in the Americas. Every October, Acho hosts the famous Señor de los Milagros bullfight season, which draws many of the world's top bullfighters to participate.

### **Barrios Altos and Barrio Chino**

One of the most traditional quarters of downtown Lima, this district was home to composers, intellectuals, musicians and Bohemian types, who took criollismo to new heights. Here one still finds some of the best examples of colonial and republican architecture that includes the Quinta Heeren, an area with its own plaza; the Casa de Trece Monedas, a majestic nineteenth-century residence; the Iglesia de las Trinitarias and the Molino de Santa Clara. Lima's Chinatown, bordering the Mercado Central, is home to oriental tea rooms, and restaurants serving up exquisite varieties of Chinese food.

### **Callao and La Punta**

Located 14 km west of Lima, Callao is the country's largest port. Founded in 1537 to serve as a site for loading the treasures of ancient Peru on to galleons headed for Spain, Callao features the pentagon-shaped fort of Real Felipe, built in the eighteenth century to fend off attacks by pirates and corsairs. Later, the fort was to play a major role in the war of independence. Callao tapers off in the district of La Punta, a long peninsula that juts out into the Pacific Ocean and is home to the Navy base, a few pebble beaches, the old beachfront drive and residential areas in vogue in the 1940s and 1950s. A few kilometers off the coast lies Isla San Lorenzo an island featuring pre-Hispanic burial grounds, and the islet of Frontón, once the site of a maximum-security prison.

### **Barranco and Chorrillos**

Together with the neighboring district of Chorrillos, Barranco, a few decades ago, was the fashionable seaside district for Lima's aristocracy. Today it is Lima's premier Bohemian quarter. Over the past 15 years, Barranco has made a comeback. Its parks and Republican mansions have been refurbished, with frequent concerts and cultural shows along its tree-lined streets. A must-see is the Bridge of Sighs, a favorite hang-out for courting couples, and its seaside drive overlooking the Costa Verde. Further south lies Chorrillos, famous for beach resorts like La Herradura, featuring restaurants and eateries known as picanterías. The area has had a rich Republican history, that can still be seen today in the sweeping mansions still found there. Chorrillos is also home to the astronomical observatory on top of the hill called the Morro Solar, scene of major battles in the war against Chile (1879-1883). This spot provides visitors with an unrivaled view of Lima's coastline, stretching from Chorrillos to Isla San Lorenzo off Callao.

### **Miraflores**

Lima's foremost tourist and hotel district is without a doubt Miraflores. This district features spacious modern shopping areas, well-manicured parks and gardens. Miraflores is known for its many flower-filled parks,



but is also famous for its beaches, that are part of the “Costa Verde” area, which draw thousands of beach-goers and surfers in summertime. The district also puts on many cultural events at theaters, cinemas and art galleries, and boasts a pre-Inca mud-brick temple called the Huaca Pucllana, one of many archaeological sites still found in Lima. The district teems with cozy cafés, pubs, restaurants and shops, while its freshly remodeled parks and gardens attract thousands of Lima inhabitants every Sunday who congregate to visit art exhibitions, take in open-air concerts and browse through flea markets.

### **San Isidro**

This is Lima’s “garden’ district, as it stands out for its green zones and exclusive residential areas. San Isidro also features many of the city’s finest restaurants, hotels and concert halls. Despite the building boom, San Isidro has kept something of the aristocratic atmosphere for which this suburb was known for at the beginning of the century. This can be still felt clearly seen in the area of El Olivar, the centuries-old olive grove that has kept many of its original trees that stud this popular park. In recent years, the district has become a major financial quarter as many banks and businesses left downtown Lima to set up their headquarters in modern office blocks. The district features a pre-Hispanic temple, Huallamarca, where concerts and exhibitions area held occasionally.

### **Environs South and Southeast**

#### **Pachacámac**

Just 31 km down the South Pan-American Highway, the ancient Columbian temple of Pachacámac rears over the fertile valley of Lurín. Built largely from adobe mud bricks, the temple housed an oracle that was considered, along with Cuzco, to be the main ceremonial center in pre-Hispanic Peru. Pilgrims flocked here from far away to render homage to the god Pachacámac, believed to be the creator of the world and its creatures. The Inca section (1440-1533) is the best-preserved part of the archaeological complex. The site includes palaces, plazas and temples that have been painstakingly restored, and even includes an on-site museum that houses an interesting collection of pre-Hispanic relics.

#### **Pantanos de Villa**

The Pantanos de Villa (Wetlands), a marshy area 18 km south of Lima, features a sprawling zone of totora reed-lined pools that are one of the main havens on the coast for more than 150 bird classes, including 30 migratory species that fly here from all over the continent. Lima’s last remaining natural reserve, the Villa Wetlands spread across 396 hectares which are an obligatory stopping-point for the world’s ornithologists and nature lovers. Many of the birds can be spotted during a three-hour stroll down signposted trails and strategically-located look-out towers. The wetlands can be reached by car along Huaylas Avenue.

#### **The southern beaches**

The summer hotspot for Lima inhabitants. Starting at around 35 km of the South-Pan American Highway, a string of beautiful beaches

stretches down 100 km along the coastline to the city of Cañete (135 km south). Beaches are either sandy or pebbled, while some feature perfect waves for surfing (Señoritas, Peñascal, Pico Alto, Punta Rocas), others (El Silencio, Embajadores) enjoy calmer seas. Many beaches have become seaside resorts (La Quebrada, Santa María), while others provide services such as hotels, restaurants and discos (Punta Hermosa, San Bartolo). Other beaches have preserved their natural surroundings, something which appeals to campers (Chepeconde, Gallardo, Cerro Colorado).

### **Cañete and Lunahuaná**

The Valley of Cañete is located 135 km south of Lima on the South Pan-American Highway. The area is blanketed in sweeping, fertile and well-irrigated croplands, especially cotton fields, sweet potato, asparagus and marigold. The valley is blessed with a pleasant climate that has made it a popular spot with Lima inhabitants. During the summer time, the local beaches (La Ensenada, Cerro Azul and Cerro Colorado) fill up with swimmers and surfers. Just 40 km east, along a recently-paved road, lies Lunahuaná, a pleasant farming town that in recent years has become a Mecca for adventure-sports lovers, offering rafting, mountain-biking, parasailing and hiking. But not everything is adrenaline in this usually sleepy area, which also features archaeological sites, vineyards and outdoor restaurants.

### **Environs North and Northeast**

#### **Chancay and Huacho**

Chancay, 87 km north of Lima, features an odd castle sprawling across 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> that houses an interesting exhibition of mummies, textiles and huacos (pottery) dating back to the Chancay culture. Further north, the province of Huaura features a string of beaches, its main natural attraction. Moreover, 5 km south of Huacho (149 km north of Lima) lie the El Paraíso lagoons, a haven for egrets, coots, flamingos, pelicans, ducks and other migratory species such as the Arctic tern, which flies over from France. Further north, at 175 km of the Pan American Highway lies the Albufera de Medio Mundo, wetlands nearly 7 km long which are very popular with canoeists and fishermen. A few kilometers north, after crossing through a clutch of towns and fishing coves, one can visit the pre-Inca fortress of Paramonga (Chimú culture), located in the province of Barranca.

#### **Lomas de Lachay**

Nestled in the Andean foothills off kilometer 105 of the North Pan-American Highway, this national reserve is a unique eco-system known as coastal foothills (lomas costeras). Stretching across an area of 5,070 hectares, these desert hills turn bright green in winter thanks to the condensation that forms from the rolling mist. The area, a haven for a varied range of animals and plantlife, features signposted trails, picnic areas and a visitors' center. All in all, it is an ideal spot for nature lovers, and should be visited from August through October, when the hillsides are completely carpeted with bright green undergrowth and brightly-colored flowers.

### **Churín**

Some 210 km northeast of Lima, up the North Pan-American Highway and then branching off a detour heading east, lies Churín, a picturesque inter-Andean village famous for its hot springs. Every weekend, hundreds of visitors flock here in search of fresh air, spectacular highland landscapes and the health benefits from taking a swim in the thermal baths. From Churín the road climbs further up into the Andes, winding its way through countless traditional highland villages. These include Andajes, which is famous for its manjarblanco cream, and the archaeological sites of Ninash, Kukun, Antasway and Kuray. At the village of Huacho sin Pescado (at 3,200 meters above sea level), that lies at the foot of the imposing peak of Mount Yarahuayna, one can find the pre-Inca ruins of Antamarca and Chaulín, both of which are well-preserved. Fishermen will delight in Lake Wayo, that is well-stocked with trout, while mountain climbers can tackle the awe-inspiring peaks studding the Cordillera Raura range, that rise above 5,700 meters.

### **Environs Central Highlands**

#### **Forests of Zárate**

At kilometer 56 of the Central Highway (Carretera Central) lies the town of San Bartolomé, from where a six-and-a-half hour hike leads to the forests of Zárate (3,100 meters), a highland grazing area. The trail is narrow and zig-zagging, but crosses through several picturesque villages until it reaches this balmy forest teeming with wildlife. The area has given life to native tree species including the San Pedro cactus, used by medicine men for its hallucinogenic effects. The ideal time to visit the forest is from April through June.

#### **San Pedro de Casta and Marcahuasi**

San Pedro de Casta, a pretty little town in the Lima highlands, (3,350 masl) is famous for celebrating the traditional Fiesta del Agua (water festival) on the first Sunday in October, and also for being the starting-off point to visit the archaeological site and natural rock formations at Marcahuasi (4,000 masl), a center for new age mystics who believe it to be a magnetic center. Marcahuasi spreads across 4 km<sup>2</sup> of high plateau, featuring colossal rock formations such as the well known Monument to Humanity, a rock with the shape of a human face. The site is ideal for astronomers and those seeking spirituality.

#### **Canta and Obrajillo**

These picturesque towns lie between 104 and 106 km east of Lima up the valley of the Chillón River. Surrounded by fields of crops and green hills, the area is ideal for camping. Canta, at 2,800 meters and linked to the capital by a paved road, is famous for its breath-taking scenery and dairy products. Obrajillo, 3 km from Canta, is smaller and quieter, and is popular with campers for its peaceful countryside by the banks of the river, an area carpeted with wildflowers. Its main square features superb colonial houses with ancient wooden balconies. Some 15 km from Canta lie the pre-Hispanic ruins of Cantamarca (3,500 meters), built by the Atahuallos culture. The locals gather here to celebrate the

Fiesta de la Cruz (Festival of the Cross), held from May 1-3. Near Canta, between the Yanacocha gorge and the town of Huaros grow two groves of the Puya Raimondi, a cactus-like plant. The Puya Raimondi, which can grow more than 10 meters high, produces around 17,000 flowers, a world record. It flowers just once in its 100-year lifetime, before releasing its seeds and dying.

### **Festival Calendar**

#### **The Founding of Lima (January 15).**

Civic and cultural activities attended by authorities and the general public to celebrate the foundation of the city of Lima in 1535 by Spanish Conqueror Francisco Pizarro. Art exhibitions, guided tours, night-time parades in the main square, open-air concerts and fireworks.

#### **Carnivals (February).**

Festivities where carnival-goers play around with buckets of water and confetti every weekend of February, while floats are paraded through Miraflores and cortamontes (fiestas around a tree laden with gifts) are danced in neighborhoods and provincial clubs.

#### **Adventure Sports Festival (First week of March).**

Lunahuaná, 170 km south of Lima (Cañete) is a veritable paradise for sports like whitewater rafting, parasailing, trekking, gliding, mountain biking and fishing, apart from being the main wine producer in the department.

#### **Wine Festival (Second week of March).**

The Fiesta de la Vendimia includes an entire program of celebrations in the traditional district of Surco, including trade fairs, dances, beauty pageants and visits to wine cellars to taste the local vintages.

#### **Easter Week (March-April).**

A movable feast when the faithful visit the city's colonial churches in downtown Lima to affirm their religious devotion. Visits are also organized to Lima's main attractions.

#### **National El Paso Horse Tournament (April 15-20).**

This is a superb occasion to admire the Peruvian Paso Horse and its elegant gait (the simultaneous trot of fore- and hindleg on the same side) directed by the chalán or rider. Held in Mamacona in Lurín.

#### **Independence Day (July 28 & 29).**

Fiestas Patrias is celebrated through solemn activities to commemorate Peru's independence from Spain in 1821. A military parade is held around the downtown park of Campo de Marte, and the Te Deum religious ceremony is held in the Lima Cathedral, with the country's main authorities in attendance. There are also colorful parades, concerts and the Feria del Hogar, the home appliance trade fair, which hosts musicians from Peru and abroad.

#### **Cañete Week (Fourth Week of August).**

The Semana de Cañete highlights the local cuisine and folk music and dance that have originated in the town of San Vicente de Cañete, 135 km south of Lima and the cradle of Afro-Peruvian culture. Also a great time for adventure sports.



**Santa Rosa de Lima (August 30).**

Religious ceremonies are held in churches in downtown Lima and the highland town of Quives to remember the life and miracles of seventeenth-century saint Isabel Flores de Oliva, patron saint of the Americas and the Philippines. Santa Rosa dedicated her life to caring for the sick and reputedly working miracles.

**Fiesta del Agua (First Sunday in October).**

Communal tasks such as canal dredging held to celebrate the festival in honor of the Pachamama earth goddess, in the town of San Pedro de Casta (Canta) in the Lima highlands.

**Lord of Miracles (October 18-28).**

Processions that gather the largest number of followers in South America, dressed in purple, to render homage to the colonial painting of the Crucified Christ. It also heralds the kick-off of the famous bullfight season, while visitors can also try their hand at turrón de Doña Pepa.

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