Peru

Location

Peru is located in South America and is the third largest country after Brazil and Argentina. The nation of Peru has a surface area of 496,225 square miles. Peru lies between 10°S and 76° W latitude. Peru is the largest in area of the Andean countries. The country has 1500 miles of long coast on the Pacific Ocean. It is bordered by Colombia and Ecuador on the north, Brazil and Bolivia on the east, and Chile on the south. Peru is the only country that borders all the other Andean states.

Geography

The highlands (Andes) in Peru consist of two parallel ranges, the Cordillera Occidental and the Cordillera Oriental. These parallel ranges extend in a northwest to southeast direction. The basins and valleys are high in between the Peruvian Andes. Historically, most of Peru’s population has concentrated between the Peruvian Andes.

In Peru, there are three regions. One is the costa (coast), which is 1900 miles of Pacific Coast line. The second region is Sierra (Andes), which is the central Andean highland. The last region of Peru is selva (Amazon Basin), which is the remote eastern vastness of the Amazonian jungle. The coastal zone is a misty hill region that lies between the mountains and the Pacific Coast. The costa region makes up ten percent of Peru. Lima, the capital of Peru is located in the costa region. The Amazon Basin is drainage from glaciers and run-off from rain. The cloudy forest on the eastern Andes creates a huge river system that culminates in the Amazon River, which is the longest and largest river in the world. The Amazon Basin covers 60 percent of Peru. The Cordillera Blanca contains the highest of the Peruvian Andes, narrow gorges, crystal
lakes, thermal springs and pre-Colombian ruins. The selva covers three-fifths of Peru, and is made up of Amazon jungles and rain forests. The Sierra makes up one-fourth of Peru and this separates the costa from the selva. Lake Titicaca is the world's highest lake and Peru shares control of it with Bolivia. This lake is so large that it contains waves similar to a sea.

Climate

The climate in Peru varies from tropical in the east and dry desert in the west. The Earth contains 32 different kinds of climate and Peru has 28 of them. The climate in Peru can range from hot deserts, dry forests, humid savannas, plain rain forest, cold plateaus, cool steppes, and icy mountains. Peru is broken into two regions, the Andes Mountain range and Humboldt Sea current. The Andes Mountain range climate is desert coast and Amazon jungle. In the Humboldt, the cold currents come from southern seas. The Amazon jungle climate is tropical all year round and the rain season in the jungle lasts from December to April. The winds from the jungle are unable to reach the coast so it remains dry.

In North Peru, the winds mix with warm currents. This is called El Niño. El Niño created a variety of temperatures and conditions. The weather on the coast was generally temperate and dry. In the Andes area, the climate is cold and dry on average and Andean rain causes harsh land slides. The Amazon rain forest has tropical weather where it is hot, humid, and rainy especially in the summer. During the rainy season in the Amazon, rain forest flooding occurs in the low areas. The climate in the coast region is damp and cloudy in the winter, which is from June to September and the average temperature is 14°C. In the summer, the temperature peaks to 28°C or over. The sun shines all year round in the mornings in the highlands and the temperature decreases at night to an average of 5°C. The costa region of Peru is a dry, cool area and is made up of desert and plains. The selva region climate is always above 75 degrees
and has an average rainfall of 100 inches. Snow capped peaks in the highlands are very common in the winter. In Lima, the climate is moderate. The summer months are warm and in the winter there may be a light drizzle. The average temperature for Lima from mid December to mid March, is 25 to 28°C. The winter months have overcast skies and high humidity, with temperatures ranging from 10 to 16°C.

History

Today, Peru is considered the richest country in South America. Archaeological sites are widely spread all over Peru, especially in the coast and highlands. Peru is best known as the heart of the Inca Empire. It is home to numerous diverse indigenous cultures long before the Incas arrived. The Vice royalty of Peru was rich and powerful and had to fight against colonists who were tired of abuse and exploitations of the Indians.

An Inca Noble named Túpac Amaru II rebelled in 1780, but was then defeated and put to death with other leaders of Cusco. This event only fueled the desire of emancipation in Peru. Argentinean General José de San Martín, who declared Independence of Peru on July 28th of 1821, helped the emancipators. The Indians soon became slaves to the Spaniards. The Indians would work in fields and mines. After the Independence of Peru, the Spaniards were defeated and Peru’s government fell apart. Then a Venezuelan liberator, Simon Bolivar, took charge of the liberation of Peru with the Battle of Ayacucho on December 9th of 1824.

The government of Peru goes back to 200 A.D. The two main cultures were Moche and Nazca. These two cultures could not expand because of warfare between Moche and Nazca. The Moche and Nazca were skilled in making ceramics, detailed metal work, and very complex weaving designs. The Inca culture came after the Moche and Nazca. The Inca contained the same skills because it was developed from the Moche and Nazca cultures. The Inca spoke Quechua and their religion revolved around the Sun God. Lord Inca was from the Sun God, and
owned everything in the Inca culture. The Incas lived together in family clans and the animals and farms belonged to everybody in the family.

Machu Picchu was located near Cuzco and was built around the 1420’s. The term Machu Picchu means old peak. These were built for religious ceremonies and where specially chosen Indians took part in sacred rituals. The rituals involved special dances. There was 1,000 people living here and 75 percent of the people were females.

A Spanish explorer by the name of Francisco Pizarro was in search of riches. He landed in Peru and saw the Incas had been covered in gold. Francisco Pizarro took over the Incas by capturing Lord Inca. Pizarro killed the Lord and in 2 to 3 years all the gold and Indians were gone.

In the years of 1864 to1869, Peru went to war against Spain with the help of Chile, Ecuador, and Bolivia. In 1879, Peru got into another war with Chile. This war was known as the War of the Pacific, and this war was very disastrous for Peru. The war ended with the Treaty of Ancon, but Peru lost land to Chile. Peru was then in debt from borrowing so much money from other countries.

Important Dates

The important dates on Peru’s calendar are January 1-New Year’s Day, April 14th-Good Friday, April 16th- Easter, May 1st-Labor Day, June- Corpus Cristi, June 24th-“Inti Raymi”(Adoration to the Sun) in Cusco, June 29th-St. Peter and St. Paul, August 30th-Santa Rosa’s Day, October 8th- Battle of Angamo, November 1st-All Saints, November 2nd- All Souls Day, December 8th-Immaculate Conception, and December 25th- Christmas Day. In the highlands of Peru main festivals are held. In February the festival of La Candelaria held in Puno, is the best of Peruvian folklore and dance. This festival also includes the magnificent “Devils Dance.” In the month of July in Cusco, is
the celebration of Virgen del Carmen. The Great Commemoration of Lord of Miracles takes place in October in the city of Lima.

Population

In 1990, the population of Peru was estimated at 22 million. In the last 50 years the population of Peru has nearly tripled since the census in 1940 of 7 million. The average annual rate of increase for Peru’s population has been 2.6 percent.

The ethnic population of Peru is estimated as Mestizos-32-37 percent, Indian-45-47 percent, Blacks and Mullattos-2 percent, the unmixed Europeans-12-15 percent, and the Asian that includes the Japanese and Chinese is at about 1 percent. The basins and valleys located in the highlands are primarily Indian.

Peru is sparsely populated, with the large areas in the Andes and eastern lowlands. On average, the population density for the country is 43 inhabitants per square mile. The coastal region and the high level surface of the Andes are densely populated in Peru. Large amounts of Peru’s people have migrated from the higher and poorer settled areas of the highlands to the coastal region and the eastern lowlands. At the end of the nineteenth century 70 percent of Peru’s population lived in the highlands, 25 percent in the coastal region, and 5 percent in the eastern lowlands. In 1990, only about one-third of the population lived in the highlands. The middle class in Peru is very small and the biggest group is the lower class. The unemployment rate of Peru is high because population is getting higher and so is the life expectancy. More and more of Peru’s population is moving to the cities and making them become overcrowded.

Currency

The official currency of Peru is the Nuevo sol (PEN). One Nuevo sol is broken down to 100 cèntimos. (Cents). One U.S. dollar (2006) is equivalent to 3.29038
Peruvian Nuevo sols. One Nuevo sol (PEN) is equal to 0.30392 of the U.S. dollar. The banknotes for the Nuevo sol currently includes 200, 100, 50, 20, and 10. The coins for Nuevo sols are as follows: 1, 2, and 5. The coins are equivalent to 50, 20, 10, and 5 cents in the U.S.

**Education**

Education in Peru has been improving over the years, but still not the greatest. Children start school in Peru at the age of 6 and go until the age of 15. The children can go further in education if they would like to. The children under the age of 6 usually attend a preschool or day care. There are three basic education cycles in Peru; once you complete one, you advance on to the next cycle. The children of Peru being school by learning in their native language and when they get older all the classes are taught in Spanish. The children that do not live in the cities, but live in the Andes or another small village, do not have schools. They have nucleos, which are like schools but much smaller and serve nearby communities. The literacy rate for Peru is currently 85 percent.

**Language**

Peru has two official languages, which are Spanish and Quechua. Two-thirds of the population’s official language is Spanish. The Indians that still live in Peru speak Quechua and Aymara. All the government officials of Peru know Quechua so they can communicate with the Indians. Ten million of the people in Peru speak Quechua and one million speak Aymara. Peru also contains a very large number of minor Amazonian languages.

**Religion**
Peru’s official religion is Roman Catholic with 93 percent of the population practicing it. Since 1970, Protestantism has had a rapid increase in the rate among the urban poor and certain Indian populations in Peru.

**Agriculture**

The main commercial crops of Peru are coffee, sugarcane, cotton, and rice. In Peru, peasant farmers produce crops locally. To this day peasant farmers in Peru still practice subsistence agriculture. The peasant farmers grow potatoes, corn, barley, wheat, manoc, sweet potatoes, fruits and vegetables.

Agriculture is concentrated mainly in the valleys of the coastal region, the basins and valleys of the high level surface of the Andes, and the western margins of the eastern region. The total work force employed within the agriculture field in 1988 was 35% and in 1958 it was 58%. Only 2.8% of Peru’s land is agriculturally utilized. In Peru, 21% of the land is for permanent pasture and 54% is covered by forests and brush. In 1987, livestock included cattle, sheep, goats, alpacas, llamas, and vicunas. Peru produces large quantities of wool because it is used in local handicrafts.

**Trade**

In November of 2003, the United States began free trade negotiations with Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. The tariffs apply to all of the goods exported from the United States to Peru. The tariffs in the past few years have lowered. The government of Peru contains trade barriers on agriculture products including poultry, live animals, and animal genetic material. Peru put a ban on poultry imports from the United States because of the Avian Influenza and Newcastle disease. The beef and beef products that are imported into Peru now require the products to be certified and the cattle had to be born, raised, and slaughtered in the country of origin. Peru also
contains a ban on paddy rice that is imported from the United States. Peru’s major exports consist of minerals, fish, and coffee. Peru’s cotton production satisfied local demand and exports 100,000 to 150,000 bales.

**Food**

Peru has a large amount of oriental restaurants. There are over 2000 Chinese restaurants in Peru that are called “chifas.” Peru has the most Chinese restaurants in Latin America. Peruvian cuisine is the best in South America, not only for the taste but for incorporating the influence of different times and culture. Peru’s three regions have great quantities of markets that offer fresh ingredients.

**Landmarks**

Peru has more to offer for a tourist than any other country, from Peru’s mountain ranges, vast deserts, to the beautiful beaches and tropical jungle. All of these features are combined with historical and archaeological past and continuing indigenous cultures. The capital city, Lima, is stuck between the desert and the deep blue sea. The capital of Peru is one place visitor’s need to tour. The Valley of Lima was once dominated by a great deal of pre-Inca temples and palaces. People can take a free guided tour that is operated daily at the Jirón da la Unión. After the tour, people can go outside and enjoy the Changing of the Guards in their elaborate uniforms. The Baroque Cathedral has been reconstructed after being hit by several earthquakes and the present building has been there since 1758. While in Lima, you can see the Casa del Oidor. This is one of the oldest houses that date’s back to the 17th century. While in Peru, people can visit Cerro Azul, which is a traditional spa and cove where it is very crowded with surfing fanatics because of the tubular waves. To the North of Lima in the costa region, is where surfing, deep-sea fishing, and beaches are important. South of Lima, tourists can visit the Paracas National Reserve. The Paracas National Reserve is home to large concentrations of sea fauna and marine birds. In the Sierra region, tourists can see Atahualpa’s Ransom
Room. This room was originally filled with gold so Atahualpa could buy his release from the Spanish captors. Cusco is the capital of the Inca Empire and is a charming mix of Inca and colonial Spanish architecture. Almost every central street in Cusco contains remains of Inca walls, arches, and doorways that once served as the foundation for the colonial and modern buildings. For many visitors, the Inca city of Machu Picchu is the highlight of their visit to the country of Peru. This is the most important archaeological site in South America and, at least, one day should be set aside to be able to explore fully. Visitors can climb the peak of Huayna Picchu that towers over the city and then watch the mist roll back to reveal the architectural marvels of the Inca castle. The Peru Depot was built in 1902. This attraction has served as the major contributor to the development of the city. It offers train travel and hosts many community events. Peru Depot has been a symbol of the community for almost 100 years. These are just some of the most visited attractions in Peru, but there is plenty more for visitors to take pleasure in.

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