



PRE-DEPARTURE PACKAGE
– Peru –
2009

For those who live it!



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Welcome to Máximo Nivel

Welcome to Máximo Nivel. By joining one of our international programs you're starting a small journey to improve your Spanish, better the global community through volunteering, or become a professional teacher through our TEFL/TESOL certification program.

We're very happy that you've chosen Máximo Nivel, and we want your experience to be unforgettable. It's our commitment to quality and service that has made us the organization that we are today. Our staff is available around the clock, so if you have questions or problems, please contact our in-country coordinators and field managers by telephone or email.

This pre-departure package provides you the main information you need to prepare yourself for your upcoming experience abroad. We look forward to seeing you soon.



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Before You Leave

Before you go to Peru you should do the following:

- Leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.
- Make sure your passport is up-to-date.
- Carry your photo identification and the name of a person to contact with you at all times in the event of serious illness or other emergency.
- Keep photocopies of your airline or other tickets and your list of traveler's checks with you in a separate location from the originals and leave copies with someone at home.
- Leave things like unnecessary credit cards and expensive jewelry at home.
- Use a money belt or concealed pouch for your passport, cash and other valuables.

About Peru

Peru is one of the world's greatest centers of Pre-Colombian civilization. Prior to the invasion by the Spanish conquistadors, the country's diverse cultures and civilizations, which culminated in the well-known Inca Empire (Tawantnsuyo), were some of the most advanced in the world, and they left behind one of the richest collections of architecture, metallurgy, ceramics, and textiles known to man.

Some of the most significant archeological remains of Andean culture have been registered in the World Heritage List (WHL) of UNESCO because of their uniqueness, exceptional value and state of preservation. The WHL includes the extraordinary sites of "El Parque Nacional del Abiseo", "El Parque Nacional Huascarán" y "El Parque Nacional del Manu".



Peru is located in the west-central part of South America, and is the 19th-largest country in the world. It shares borders to the North with Ecuador, to the south with Chile and Bolivia, and to the east with Colombia and Brazil. Peru's geography, climates, and cultures are diverse due to the natural variation of its regions, which include the coast, the Andes, and the Amazon jungle.

For current forecasts in Peru, see www.aboutcusco.com/cusco/eng/weather.asp

REGION	ALTITUDE	TEMPERATURE		GENERAL DESCRIPTION
		MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	
Lima	101 m/331 ft above sea level	16°C / 61°F	19°C / 66°F	In May-October cool, foggy days and cool nights. In November-April hot, sunny days and humid warm nights. High humidity.
Cusco	3,326 m/10,912 ft above sea level	01°C / 34°F	21°C / 70°F	In May-October (Dry Season) sunny, warm days and cold, clear nights. In November-April (Rainy Season) intermittent rain and sun during the day with mild, rainy nights.
Arequipa	2325 m/7628 ft above sea level	07°C / 46°F	19°C / 66°F	In May-October (Dry Season) sunny with warm to hot days and cool, clear nights. In November-April (Rainy Season) some rain, but still lots of sun during the day with mild nights. Low humidity.
Machu Picchu	2080 m/6824 ft above sea level	12°C / 54°F	25°C / 77°F	Partly cloudy sky in the mornings. Warm to hot temperatures during the day. Light to heavy rain in the afternoon or evening.

Pickup Information

Please email your flight details in advance, and a staff person from Máximo Nivel will meet you at the Cusco Airport. Please email your flight details to international@maximonivel.com

If you miss the Máximo Nivel representative at the Cusco Airport, please take a taxi directly to:

Máximo Nivel
Avenida El Sol 612
Cusco, Peru

Tel: 25 7200 (local call)

Mobile: 984 70 5818 (local call)

Note: You should pay no more than S/. 7.00 (seven Nuevo Soles) for your taxi.

Food & Accommodation

Máximo Nivel will manage accommodations and food (two to three times a day including breakfast depending on the location of your project) for project participants. Accommodations may include hotel, hostel, private apartment, or family-stay (according to the preference you chose on your program registration). Many project participants stay at the Máximo Nivel Family-House, similar to a traditional family-stay, but with more independence and privacy. Both private and shared rooms are available, as are private and shared bathrooms. Your stay at the Máximo Nivel Family House includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner Monday through Sunday. Guests are given a key to their room and the house and are free to come and go as they please.

Local Peruvian food will be provided three times a day for participants at family stays or the Máximo Nivel Family House. Peruvian cuisine is one of the best in South America and is known not only for its exquisite taste, but also for its variety and ability to fuse influences from different cultures. Thanks to Peru's diverse geographic regions and ocean there are an abundance of markets whose fresh ingredients satisfy not only the housewife but also the most sophisticated chef. Dishes combine elements of culinary traditions from Africa, Italy, France, China, and Spain, flavored by traditional grains (rice, corn, and beans), roots (cassava, taro roots, sweet potatoes), spices (coriander, garlic, annatto, saffron, parsley, oregano, thyme, nutmeg, salt, and pepper), oils (olive oil, vegetable oil, and lard), sauces (Lizano and Soy), fresh fruit, and vegetables. The food is mild to slightly-seasoned.

The most common dishes that reflect Peruvian culture and are served in typical food restaurants are *Ceviche* and *Anticuchos* (roasted and braised meats, including beef, guinea pig, chicken, and alpaca). *Ceviche* consists of fish (often trout or the river fish *pejerrey*) marinated in citrus juices and tossed with sliced onion and Andean *rocoto* (a traditional hot pepper). The mixture is served at room temperature, often with *cancha* (toasted kernels of maize), chunks of corn-on-the-cob, slices of cooked sweet potato and/or white potato, and *yuyo* (seaweed).

Traditional food goes beyond *Ceviche* and *Anticuchos*. Popular main dishes are *Aji de Gallina*, *Lomo Saltado*, *Pollo al la Brasa*, *Arroz Chaufa*, *Chicharon*, *Adobo*, and *Salchipapas*.

Common refreshments are *Chicha Morada* (made from purple corn) and *Chicha Amarilla* (alcoholic; made from white corn). In addition, a number of semi-dry and dry wines are available from Peru's wine country in the southwest.

Common desserts are *Tres Leches*, *Arroz Con Leche* (rice pudding), *Mazamora* (purple corn pudding), and *Suspiro Limeño* (lemon meringue).

Electricity and Hot Water in Peru

Every accommodation is equipped with 24-hour electricity (220V). To operate U.S. and European appliances like hairdryers, electric shavers or portable CD players you may need a voltage converter. Laptop computers and other high-end electronics are often dual-voltage ready and may not require a voltage converter when used in Peru. To avoid damage to your electronic appliances, be sure to check each appliance for acceptable voltages before you plug them in.

You can purchase a voltage converter prior to your departure or upon arrival in Peru. In addition, you may wish to purchase a plug adapter for some appliances. The following plugs will work in most Peruvian homes and hostels:



Plug A: Flat blade attachment plug.



Plug B: Flat blade attachment with a circular grounding pin.



Plug C: Round pin attachment plug.

Hot water is generally available 24 hours a day, however the municipality of Cusco occasionally cuts off the water supply at night.

Passport/Visa

Most European and North American visitors holding valid passports are permitted to stay in Peru for 183 days without a visa. However, travelers from the following African, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European countries must pre-arrange their tourist visas:

All African nations (with the exception of South Africa), Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Bhutan, Cambodia, United Arab Emirates, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Laos, North Korea, Pakistan, Syria, Sri Lanka, People's Republic of China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen, Cuba, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Slovenia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and Serbia & Montenegro.

As in most countries, in order to visit Peru, any traveler must show his or her passport upon entry. The passport must be valid for 6 months following any entry date into Peru.

Visa Extensions

Our in-country coordinator will help you with a visa extension if it is needed. Your visa can be extended by leaving the country for 24 hours. Our in-country coordinators can arrange your travel to Bolivia if you would like to take this option.

Documentation

You should always carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times. It is not recommended to carry your actual passport, as loss or theft of your passport can be a costly and time-consuming problem. It is also a good idea to keep photocopies of other important documents (airline tickets, prescriptions, etc.) in a safe location. An exit ticket is officially required to leave the country and you will be required to pay a \$25 airport tax before your departure. Because entry requirements change frequently, it is always a good idea to call your Peruvian Embassy or consulate before leaving to see if there are any new regulations.

Money, Finances, and Exchange

In 1991, the Peruvian currency was changed from the "Inti" to the "Nuevo Sol", however, in many establishments prices are sometimes given in U.S. dollars. Try to break up large bills whenever possible since change is always in short supply. You can exchange money at any bank, or at "Casas de Cambio" (exchange houses). Usually, the exchange rate at banks and exchange houses is the same. Also, the *Patás* travel agency inside the Máximo Nivel office building is happy to exchange your dollars at favorable rate. If you expect a late-hour arrival, you can exchange money 24 hours a day in the Lima airport (or Miami). NOTE: If you plan to exchange U.S. dollars, try to bring the newest and cleanest bills possible. Most places (even banks!) will NOT accept dollars that look old, dirty or torn. Credit cards are widely accepted in urban areas and you can withdraw money—either soles or U.S. dollars—from your credit card or ATM card at most banks. Banks are typically open 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. weekdays, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm on Saturdays, and are closed on Sundays. ATM access is available in all major cities 24 hours per day.

Taxes

The official sales tax is 19%. Most locals cannot afford to pay this, so they set up small markets where they can buy and sell to each other tax-free. If you are staying in a hotel, your passport exempts you from the 19% sales tax for your room charges.

Tipping

Most hotels will add a 10% service charge to the bill, no tipping beyond this is necessary. Some restaurants include a service charge in your bill and it is not necessary to give an additional tip. However, if someone gives you exceptional service, then a tip is greatly appreciated. Taxi drivers are never tipped. Porters and doormen should be tipped and they rely on tips as a major source of income. Generally speaking, you should use the 1 Sole = 1 U.S. Dollar rule—if you would tip \$1.00 (USD) in your country the tip S/. 1.00 (Nuevo Sol) in Peru.

Safety

As in any foreign country, you should use common sense and your best judgment to avoid becoming the target of petty crime. Cusco is a lively city with a vibrant nightlife. Be on your toes when in crowded places. Avoid walking alone at night. If you find yourself alone and your instincts tell you something is wrong, move to a crowded place. The most common form of crime is committed by fraudulent "travel agencies" that trick tourists into phony services. Make sure you only do business with well-established agencies and businesses, or ones that are recommended by the school. The *Patás* travel office inside Máximo Nivel offers the highest quality of service and is guaranteed by Máximo Nivel. Another common scam is the "no change" excuse given by taxi drivers. While there is a shortage of change in the country, usually drivers do have change—they just want to elicit more money from you by keeping the change from your larger bill. As mentioned above, it's best to pay with the smallest bill possible so that you are more likely to get your change back. That way, even if you do get taken advantage of by the driver absolutely insisting they have no change, at least it will not be as much as if you paid with a large bill.

*Taxi fare is typically S/. 2.50 (Nuevos Soles) anywhere in the city center. After 10:00pm, this rate increases to S/. 3.00.

Health

Peru poses health risks that can be avoided by taking some simple precautions. Do not drink tap water unless it has been boiled, treated with iodine, or purified. This includes ice cubes or anything that has come into contact with untreated water, such as raw vegetables washed in tap water. If you are bitten by a dog (or any animal), get a medical checkup immediately to avoid contracting rabies. Also, mosquitoes in tropical areas may carry malaria, but yellow fever is more prominent than malaria. So, if you plan to visit the Amazon during your trip to Peru, you should always wear insect repellent, long sleeve shirts, long pants, and should consider getting a vaccination against yellow fever and you should consult a doctor about a malaria prophylactic such as doxycycline.

Because of Peru's elevation, altitude sickness can be a potential health risk. Cusco has an elevation of 11,000 feet/3,500 meters and it is best to allow your body to adjust to the altitude for a few days. During this time, get plenty of rest, don't eat heavy meals, and avoid alcohol. Even the healthiest of individuals can be affected by altitude sickness—so take it easy for the first few days! If you feel any symptoms immediately after landing, there is a medical station in the airport, and of course the Máximo Nivel is always available to help you, and we have lots of experience getting participants well again.

Máximo Nivel keeps a number of medications and first-aid supplies on hand at its office. We are more than happy to help treat minor cuts, scratches, headaches and minor stomach issues. For more serious illnesses, we offer reduced-cost doctor's visits to *Urgencias Medicas*, a professional and capable private clinic not far from our office (S/. 60.00 per visit). Someone from our staff will accompany you to the clinic at any time, day or night.

Vaccinations

We recommend you ask your medical doctor for advice about vaccinations. Immunizations for Hepatitis A and Tetanus are very important for traveling to Peru. If you have any sort of allergy please let us know at the beginning of the program so that we can place you in an appropriate setting for your condition.

What to Bring

The key to packing for a trip to Peru is to pack for a variety of conditions. The best way to deal with the extremes that Peru has to offer—the intense sun during the day, the cold mountain nights, and the heat and humidity of the Amazon Basin—is to dress using several layers. Suggested packing list for Peru:

Clothing

- T-shirts
- 2 warm shirts
- 3 pairs of pants
- 2 pairs of shorts
- Fleece jacket
- Rain gear
- Sneakers
- Hiking boots
- Sunglasses
- Hat

Equipment

- Day pack
- Camera
- Water bottle
- Laptop (TEFL/TESOL)

Toiletries

- Bathroom kit
- Sunscreen

All TEFL/TESOL program participants **MUST** bring clothes for teaching classes. Whereas dress code is casual during the TEFL/TESOL course, during the last week while you are teaching English classes professional dress is required—this means well pressed slacks, nice collar shirt or blouse, belt, and dress shoes. Participants that do not bring appropriate teaching attire will be required to purchase it prior to teaching.

Please Contact Us

The staff at Máximo Nivel wants you to have the most enjoyable experience possible in Peru. If you have any questions or concerns not addressed in this package, don't hesitate to contact us by email or telephone.

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