

ICA AND THE DESERT OASIS OF HUACACHINA



South America or the Sahara?

Just a few hours south of Peru, Ica is famous for its agriculture and for being home to the oldest vineyards in South America. However, once you get out of the fertile river valley, you are surrounded by enormous sand dunes that make you feel like you've been transported onto the set of Lawrence of Arabia!

Just 15 minutes from Ica is the genuine desert oasis of Huacachina. Palm trees line a shady lagoon while colossal dunes tower above you in the background. It's a beautiful and bizarre sight that's made even better if you climb into a dune buggy and head out into the desert to see it from above...



Sandboarding at Huacachina

Of course, once you're up in the dunes enjoying the view or the desert sunset then you have the question of how to get back down again. You *could* just take the buggy back down, but where's the fun in that? Far better to hop on your sandboard and surf down the enormous dunes! It's enormous fun - like snowboarding but, well, sandier!

In and around Ica

If that all sounds a bit active for you, then you can just kick back by the pool or in your hammock and enjoy the warm desert climate, or head off to nearby Ica, where a visit to the Maria Reiche Regional Museum is well worthwhile. It traces the area's history right back from the colonial period through to prehistoric times, with particular emphasis on the Paracas and Nazca cultures. It has a large collection of well-preserved textile items (the desert climate has preserved many items which would have perished elsewhere), and a superb collection of ceramics; most interesting, however, is the large number of mummies and trepanned and deformed heads! If you fancy seeing how brain-surgery was performed with stone tools 3000 years ago then this the place for you!

Of course, a lot of people say that the only real way to get to know an area is by its food and drink and in Ica that can only mean one thing... wine! The Ica area is home to the most famous of the Peru's wineries and you can visit several of these bodegas to see both wine and the famous Pisco brandy being made. The Bodega Vista Alegre is probably the most famous and showcases some superb traditional wine-making techniques and is worth a visit just for the free samples...

Ica and the Nazca Lines

In order to see the famous Nazca Lines it has previously been necessary to travel to Nazca itself. However, for people on a tight itinerary this has often meant missing out on the sights around Ica and Huacachina. We can now offer flights over the Nazca Lines direct from Ica so you don't have to miss out on a thing!