



North Circular

The north of Peru is only slowly opening up to tourism and doesn't figure in most people's idea of a holiday in Peru. We can assure you that this isn't for lack of things to see and do but more because when you're up the road, so to speak, from Machu Picchu and Cusco it can be easy to be ignored. Recently, however, the north has begun to be talked about in the same terms as the rest of Peru as people start to realise some of the unexplored gems there are to visit when you travel the "wrong way" up the Pan-American highway!

The north is definitely the place to be for history buffs as the whole sweep of Peruvian history is easily visible here, from pre-Inca Chan-Chan through to colonial Trujillo. The region also contains Cajamarca, the town where the Inca Atahualpa effectively signed over his empire to the Spanish and, perhaps most intriguingly of all, the enigmatic cloud-forest fortress of Kuelap...



Day One - Your Peru Holiday Begins!

Arrive in Lima on an evening flight as you begin your holiday in Peru! You will be met at the airport and driven to your hotel in the trendy Miraflores area of the city in time to take a walk around the elegant Parque Kennedy and perhaps to take in an evening meal on your first night in Peru. Of course, since this is your first night on holiday in Peru, then if you're feeling up to it then Miraflores is a great place for a night out...



Day Two - Cajamarca

This morning we will pick you up and take you for a flight up to Cajamarca. On arrival in this pleasant Andean town, we will take you to the lovely Laguna Seca hotel, where you can relax in the extensive gardens and enjoy the private hot springs and swimming pools. The hotel offers an extensive list of massage and spa treatments, or those of you feeling more active might like to take a horseback ride around some of the lovely surrounding

countryside.



Day Three - City tour of Cajamarca

Today we will take you for a tour of the major sites in the city, such as the Cathedral, the Belen monastery, and the central Santa Apolonia hill, before we head out to the pre-Inca burial chambers in Otuzco. These 'ventanillas' or 'little windows' are chambers carved into the volcanic tufa rock, and acted both as graves and sites of ritual veneration for the pre-Inca Caxamarca culture.



Day Four - Cumbemayo

This archaeological site, located a few kilometres outside of Cajamarca, is generally acknowledged as one of the oldest man-made structures in the Americas, and even today it isn't clear how, in around 1500BC, the inhabitants of this area were able to construct this enormous aqueduct, which brings water from the Pacific side of the Andes across to eventually drain out into the Atlantic. As well as the undoubted historical interest of the site,

the area is also naturally beautiful, with high peaks, lush slopes, and some intriguing rock formations, which we will visit along the way. We will return to Cajamarca in the late afternoon.



Day Five - On to Chachapoyas

Today we will leave Cajamarca for a drive across two mountain ranges and several different ecological zones, as we descend into the canyon of the Marañon river on one of the most amazing road journeys in Peru. From the 2300m elevation of Cajamarca, we will head through lush agricultural land, up into the cloud forest, across arid plateau-like terrain – peaking at around 3000m - and then begin our descent to the riverside town of Balsas: a drop of over 2000m. From here we will climb back up the other side of the canyon on our way to the town of Leymebamba. We will arrive here in the late afternoon, and we will have a quick visit to the Mallqui museum, where over 200 Chapoyas-culture mummies are being recovered for restoration from their original home near the Laguna de los Condores. After this we will head on to the lovely El Chillo hacienda, where we will be staying for the next few nights.



Day Six - Kuelap

In one of the real highlights of your trip, we will have a full-day excursion to the pre-Inca fortress of Kuelap today. We will set off in the morning for the drive from El Chillo to the village of El Tingo Viejo, a little way up the mountain on which Kuelap is perched. From here we will walk up to the citadel itself, enjoying the spectacular views. The fortress is absolutely stunning but is little-visited so after a guided tour you can explore this incredible site yourself in peace and quiet – usually there are just a few llamas for company!



Day Seven - Gocta Waterfall

This morning we will head out from El Chillo to the village of San Pablo. From here, we will walk through the cloud forest to the stunning Gocta waterfall – the fourth highest waterfall in the world. The 783m drop over two falls is an enormously impressive sight and one we can enjoy over a picnic lunch! In the afternoon, we'll head back to El Chillo.



Day Eight - Karajia

Today we will pack up and leave El Chillo as we head down from the mountains to the coast. This morning we will head to the Chachapoyas-culture site of Karajia, where six stone sarcophagi sit on a cliff-top overlooking the Utcubamba river. The 2m-tall statues contain mummies of both men and women which are known locally as 'purunmachus' from the Quechua 'purun' meaning 'wild', and 'machu', or 'old'. From here, we will head west, arriving in the city of Chiclayo in the early evening.



Day Nine - Sipan

A busy day today and something that most people never experience on their Peru holiday. You will leave the hotel in the morning for a guided tour of the site where the remains of the 'Lord of Sipan' were found. This is probably one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century and the splendour of the exhibits has to be seen to be believed! After lunch, we'll take you by coach a little further down the coast to the colonial city of Trujillo. You'll arrive in the late afternoon and we'll take you to your hotel in the colonial centre of the city so you can have a walk around the Plaza de Armas and get stuck into some of the great northern cuisine!



Day Ten - Chan Chan and Huanchaco beach

Today we will visit the huge Chimu city complex of Chan Chan. In pre-Inca times this was the largest city in the Americas and was the same size as contemporary London - it originally covered over 20 square kilometres and had an estimated population of over 100,000! After a full guided tour of some of the restored sections of the site, we'll head to the nearby beachside Trujillo suburb of Huanchaco, for you to enjoy the freshest of seafood and to spend a relaxing afternoon by the sea.



Day Eleven - Temples of the Sun and Moon

You will have a free morning today, to explore the streets of Trujillo and to get those all-important postcards sent! Then, after lunch, we will pick you up from your hotel to visit the nearby Temples of the Sun and Moon. Built by the Moche culture around 500AD, these 130-foot tall pyramids are thought to be the largest adobe structures in the Americas. In the evening, we'll take you to the airport for a short flight back to Lima and then back to your Miraflores hotel to get ready to head out and enjoy your last night here in Peru!



Day Twelve - Last day on holiday in Peru

You will have a pretty much full day to explore the capital and enjoy its museums (or its shops!) before being picked up from your hotel and taken to the airport for your international flight back to the UK.

Easy upgrades

As we've said, we can tailormake your itinerary to your exact specifications, and you can have a look at our Peru Guide or some of our other Peru Holidays for ideas about how to add to this holiday, but we can also offer you some easy optional extras which fit into this exact itinerary:



Cusco and Machu Picchu - from £550pp

Take a three day trip to see the ancient Inca capital of Cusco and the famous lost city of Machu Picchu - this way you can compare the pre-Inca north with the best of the Inca sites in the south of the country.



Mancora beach - from £250pp

If you fancy some relaxation after all your cultural exertions then why not head just a little further north to the white-sand beaches of Mancora and Punta Sal? Palm trees, warm water and rum cocktails... what more could you want?

Tailormade for you

Of course, what we want you to remember is that we're here to offer you any guidance and advice you need. We're not about trying to sell you more than you want - we want you to have the holiday that's right for you, so give us a call or send us an email and we can start to find out what sort of Peru holiday is right for you!