

Peru : Live the Legend

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Hello everyone!
My name is Angie
and from October
2010 a new Phd. stu-
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Nowadays, I spend

the days working in my lab (I belong to the Division of Anatomy and Cell Biology of the Hard Tissue, also known as Anatomy 1), trying to learn more Japanese and loving each day more this beautiful country. This time, I have received the happy opportunity to introduce my country. I come from a very far far place, South America, specifically from a small country called Peru. Have you heard about it?, maybe yes, maybe you know or have even heard a bit about Macchu Picchu ruins, Nazca lines or the Inca's culture....well, in this article I am going to tell you more of this beautiful place, let's start!

The country : Basic Information

Peru is an Andean State located in South America. Peru is bounded at north by Equator and by Colombia at south by Chile at the east by Brasil and Bolivia, and at the west side its coasts are wetted by the Pacific Ocean

Geographically, Peru is divided in



three regions : The Coastal area next to the Pacific Ocean, featuring deserts, beautiful beaches and fertile valleys. The Highlands area dominated by the Andes Mountain Range, with elevations as high as 6.768 meters above sea level and the Jungle area of lush tropical vegetation forming part of the Peruvian Amazon Region, home to Peru's largest nature reserve areas.

Currently, its population is about of 27,952,100 inhabitants and the 52 % of the population live in the coast side. Only in the city of Lima, the capital of Peru, live nearly 9 millions of people, that's make Lima a very lively and cosmopolitan city. The official language in Peru is Spanish and most of the inhabitants are Catholics practitioners.

City of Lima : “The city of the Kings”



Lima, the capital of Peru is a great metropolis declared Cultural Patrimony of the Humanity by UNESCO. It was founded in January 18,1535 by the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro under the name as “City of Kings” due its relation with the Spanish Kingdom. As I wrote above, its big population makes Lima a cosmopolitan city where is possible to see mixed races, dialects, costumes and of course proud and welcoming people.

The city has many museums that tell the story of a country with a long history that produced a large number of coastal and Andean civilizations (such as the Moche, Chavin, and the Incas) and many local cultures. There are several archeological sites both within and around the city (locally known as “huaca”). During the colonial time Lima was with Mexico City, the central point of the Spanish rule dur-

ing 300 years, it was home to 40 viceroys during the colonial era. The central square (Plaza Mayor) was laid out by Pizarro himself, with the cathedral on one side, the Cabildo (town hall) on another side and Pizarro’s own house (now known as the Presidential palace) which are in still in use until our days.

In 1746, a strong earthquake destroyed the city and although a great number of historic architecture was lost, during the rebuilt of the city many important edifications as wonderful cathedral, churches, colonial houses, Moorish balconies, cloisters and religious architecture and monasteries could remain in the historic center of Lima.

But lima is not only historical places. By itself, Lima constitute an important economic center in the region. Important companies as well high education centers (universities, post graduate institutions) have place there. Also, there are a wide variety of shops, supermarkets and restau-



From left to right : Main Square of Lima city (“Plaza mayor”), old balconies preserved from 16th century, Cathedral of Lima.



Left : View of the modern part of Lima ; right : Coast side of the city (called “Costa Verde”)

rants (you have to know that the city is known as the *Gastronomical Capital of the Americas*) The visitor to Lima will never be bored, as there are so many activities and places to discover and get to know, once there you will notice that time flies while in the “City of Kings”, so, make the best of your time while there!; the modern parts of the city is full of joy with its skyscrapers and the neon lights that enliven its busy nightlife. But if you just want to rest and spend a nice day going along the coast of Lima there are several beautiful beaches with high waves ideal for practicing surfing and sea sports.

The treasure of Inca’s Culture : Macchu Picchu Ruins

The **Inca civilization** (or **Inka**) began



Map of the Inca’s empire and its extension along South America

as a tribe in the Cuzco area, located in the south of Peru, where the legendary first Inca (a Kind of King) Manco Capac, founded the Kingdom of Cuzco around 1200. Under the leadership of the descendants of Manco Capac, the Inca state grew to absorb other Andean communities. In 1442, the Incas began a far-reaching expansion under the leadership of Pachacutec Inca. He founded the Inca Empire or **Tahuantinsuyo**, which became the largest empire in pre-Columbian America (before the discovery of the Americas by Christobal Columbus) and established the center of this empire in Cuzco city.

During Pachacutec age, Macchu Picchu was built as a fortress exclusively for the Inca and his family. Macchu Picchu is a Quechua word (Quechua was the ancient language of Incas) and means “Old Mountain”. Its construction date from 15th century approximately in 1400 AD and is located on the top of a mountain ridge at 2,430 meter above the sea level.



Panoramic view of Macchu Picchu



Views of Macchu Picchu: A whole fortress made of stones and following terraces pattern along the mountain



Left: Temple of the Sun. Right: Intihuatana

Often referred to as “The Lost City of the Incas”, it was unknown to the outside world before being re-discovered by the American historian Hiram Bingham in 1911. Since then, Machu Picchu Inca’s ruins have been an important tourist attraction. Nowadays It is considerate a marvelous archaeological vestige for Peru and the whole world being declared as “Cultural Inheritance of Humanity” by the UNESCO in 1981. In 2007 was voted as one of the New Seven Wonders in the World.

Machu Picchu was built in the classical Inca style, with polished stone walls. The size of some of these stones can be as big as a house, being this the starting point of elaborated theories about how the people who built this fortress could reach and transported those big stones until

the peak of the mountain without know the road. However, in Macchu Picchu can be seen three major buildings and they are: **the Intihuatana** (“sun – tier”) which is belived to be designed as an astronomic clock or calendar by the Incas, **the Temple of the Sun**, which displays some of Machu Picchu’s most superb stonework; it has a window from which the June solstice sunrise and constellation of Pleides can be observed, and **the Room of the Three Windows**, characterized by enormous polyhedrons which have been carved and joined with millimetric precision. These are located in what is known by archaeologists as the Sacred District of Machu Picchu.

Annually, 40,000 thousand of Japanese tourist visit Peru, and more than the 80% visit Macchu Picchu in

Cuzco City!would you like to go ?

Nazca Lines

The Nazca lines are straight lines, geometric shapes and images of animals etched into the ground by the Nazca people, an ancient Peruvian culture before of the Inca's civilization. These enigmatic lines are located in the Nazca desert on the southern of Peru and were also designed as World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1994. The amazing thing of these lines is that they can be seen only from the air flying over the desert although the depth of the lines never passes the 30 cms. Several shapes can be recognized from the air: anthropomorphous figures (human appearance), zoomorphous (animals) phytomorphic (vegetables) and also geometrical figures. There are many

theories about why these lines were drawn and its real purpose. According with the main researcher of the Nazca Lines, Maria Reiche, this place had a purpose related to astronomy and cosmology: the lines were intended to act as a kind of observatory. However, despite of its intrinsic meaning, its beauty makes this place an important touristic attraction for thousands of people year by year.

We are approaching the end of this article and still there are many more things I'd like to share about my country, hopefully soon! Finally, I just want to say that Peru is much more than a country with history, is all an adventure, where magic and legend merge to give rise to an unforgettable experience....Thanks for reading!!!



Left: The "Spider". Right: The "Monkey"



"The Astronaut" one of the most enigmatic figures of Nazca lines