
I. THE COUNTRY

Area and Geography

Peru covers an area of 1 315 600 km² (506 000 square miles). To the west the country extends along the Pacific Ocean; on the north it is bound by Ecuador and Colombia, to the east by Brazil and Bolivia, and Chile is on its southern tip. Moving from west to east, there are four natural zones running roughly north and south — Costa, Sierra, Montana and Selva.

Lima, the largest city, has a population of eight million and is situated in the Costa region, a narrow coastal plain consisting of large tracts of desert and fertile valleys. The Sierra, or mountainous region, contains the Andes, which rise to more than 6 100 m (20 000 feet). The Montana is a subtropical fertile area, largely underdeveloped, lying between the Andes and the jungles of eastern Peru. The Selva is in the Amazonian jungle region of eastern Peru.

Climate

The temperature in Peru varies according to region: it is temperate on the coast, tropical in the jungle and cool in the highlands. In Lima, the average daily minimum and maximum temperatures during February, the hottest month, range between 19°C and 28°C (66°F and 83°F). During August, the coldest month, the temperature varies between 13°C and 19°C (56°F to 66°F). Rain, as it is known in Canada, never falls on the coast of Peru — the coastal precipitation is really a form of thick mist known by "Limenos" as *garua*.

History and Government

Historians are unable to pin down exactly when Peru was first inhabited; however, it is believed that the first settlers arrived about the year 10 000 B.C., either from the continent of Asia or by crossing on a natural land bridge from northeast Siberia to Alaska and proceeding south. Archaeological sources indicate that the first highly cultured Andean civilization existed around the ninth century B.C.

Inca Civilization. The Inca civilization (1400-1532) was one of the most organized and prestigious of that era. The empire extended to Colombia in the north, included present-day Bolivia and Argentina and encompassed Central Chile