

Peru: Striking Facts

Biological Highlights

- Tambopata in the Madre De Dios region may be the richest area in the world in terms of biodiversity with numbers like over 1100 species of butterflies and more than 500 species of birds.
- One researcher in Tambopata found more species of ants in a confined work plot than exist in all of the British Isles.
- Peru has over 1700 species of birds, nearly twenty percent of the earth's avifauna on less than one percent of the available landmass.
- The smallest deer in the world is found in Peru, Pudu Mephistopheles or the Pudu grows to only thirteen inches tall.
- Vecunas have a fleecy coat because their hair is only nine microns in diameter, seven times thinner than human hair. They can run over 30 mph at altitudes exceeding 13,000 ft.
- The guanaco and llama are the tallest animals in the neotropics.
- Peru has more than 35,000 species of vascular plants, five times more than the U.S.
- Freshwater bullsharks are found near Iquitos, Peru about 2100 miles from the mouth of the Amazon River at the Atlantic.
- Manu National Park is the largest protected tract of tropical rain forest in the world with over 22,000 sq. km
- Found in only a few isolated pockets of the Andes, a giant bromeliad *Puya raimondii* grows the tallest flower spike in the world. It may take a century to reach maturity when its six meter spike blossoms into as many as 8,000 yellow-green flowers and the neotropics largest inflorescence.
- The Andean condor is the largest bird on earth with a wingspan of over 10 ft., exceeded only by the Albatross. They have been recorded soaring at over 19,000 ft.
- Peru has the largest and the smallest marmosets in the neotropics, Goeldi's and its smaller cousin Pygmy or *Cebuella pygmaea*.
- The Spectacled Bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) emits a haunting cough in its foggy Andean terrain. The native cultures say to ward off encroachment.
- Lake Titicaca has an endemic frog, (*Telmatobius*) which frequents the floor of the large body of water.
- Some primates like the Titi Monkey sleep huddled in troops with tails entangled to warn each silently of impending dangers in the night.
- The blue iridescence wings of the giant morpho butterflies can cover 15 sq. inches of airspace and reach out 7 inches across.
- Bird density is probably higher along the eastern slopes of the Andes within Peru's Amazon than any other place on earth.
- Peru has more species of butterflies than any other county with over 4,000 species and another 20,000 known moths.
- Hawkmoths in Tambopata can visit more than 100 flowers in a ten minute feeding cycle.
- Forty percent of the fish species in the Peruvian Amazon consists of catfish varieties a few reaching more than 100 pounds.
- The largest animal in Peru and the neotropics is the Anaconda, a snake that reaches nearly ten meters in length.

Geographical Highlights

- The Andes occupies 27 percent of Peru's land surface where the densest high-altitude population in the world resides.
- From atop the mountains and deserts of southern Peru, the observer can see between 5,000 and 20,000 stars with the naked eye.

- The first road guide written on the new world was penned in 1545 by Pedro Cieza de Leon who focused his travels of the Inca Highway on Peru.
- Peru's Punta Parinas is the western most point in South America. Lake Titicaca is the world's highest body of navigable water for large ships at 12,500 ft. above sea level and Puno, Peru's lake port is the highest in the world.
- At Iquitos in Peru's Amazon the giant river flows in the same direction as the Gulf stream and at almost the same speed, 3.5 knots
- The Amazon's most distant tributary, the Rio Apurimac is located in the Peruvian Andes.
- Twice a year the Amazon floods, rising as much as forty feet but only one bank at a time. In late March or April the north shore floods and in late May or June the south shore floods.
- The Peruvian coast is over 1400 miles long or about the distance from Moscow to Rome.
- The Nazca Plain or Pampa Colorado is a desert plateau 37 miles long by 15 miles wide and contains hundreds of giant glyphs depicting animal forms. Some forms reach over 2 miles long and may have been completed hundreds and even thousands of years ago.
- The Cordillera Blanca, Peru's Continental Divide extends more than 180 km north and south but never exceeds more than 20 km in width. Its highest peak is also the country's tallest, Huascaran at 22,205 ft. above sea level.

Cultural Highlights

- Oldest archaeological site in South America is probably Pikimachay, the flea cave in Peru dates back to 18,000 B.C.
- Peru had metallic coinage before 1,000 AD which consisted of small copper chips resembling axe blades.
- The Inca Empire began with the founding of Cuzco by Manco Capac in 1150 AD, 50 years after Leif Ericson reached Vineland.
- The Inca never had the wheel but they were able to build structures like Sacsahuaman which is 1500 ft. long containing 200,000 sculptured stones weighing as much as 75 tons.
- The Inca in Peru were the first to build coated highways from tar taken from natural reserves near Talara, Peru.
- The temple of Huaca del Sol at Moche, Peru was constructed using over 120 million bricks made of adobe.
- Peruvians have been domesticating llama since 5,000 BC.
- Ornaments of melted platinum have been unearthed from the Peruvian plateaus in the north which remains a secret since the melting point of the precious metal is 1800°C.

Credits

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