



ROAD TRAVEL REPORT: PERU



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO...

- Travel in Peru can be difficult and dangerous.
- Speeding and driving while intoxicated (DWI) have dropped steadily in recent years but remain a significant problem.
- Many roads are poorly designed and/or poorly maintained. Most are pitted with potholes. Unpaved roads tend to be dusty when dry and impassable when wet.
- Road travel by night is very dangerous due to poor illumination and road markings. Other road hazards include potholes, sudden lane endings, unmarked road works, parked or stalled vehicles and vehicles without working lights.



ROAD REALITIES

DRIVER BEHAVIORS

- Drivers may be impolite and irresponsible.
- Many drivers do not obey traffic laws.
- Drivers often ignore the DWI law; alcohol is a contributing factor in many road crashes.
- Many drivers lack adequate driver training. Drivers do not have to take or pass a road safety course to get a license.
- Most people regard road crashes as inevitable.
- Headlights are often non-functional. Many drivers fail to use turn signals.
- Drivers usually ignore the few traffic signals that exist.
- Both bus and truck drivers tend to drive at excessive speeds and are likely to pass other vehicles, even on narrow mountain roads or under foggy conditions.

GENERAL ROAD CONDITIONS

- The National Road Network is the title assigned to the asphalted roads in Peru.
- There are numerous toll roads.



- Over 50 people per 10,000 motor vehicles die annually in road crashes compared to 2 in the US. This places Peru among the industrializing countries with one of the highest road crash fatality rates.

- Many of the key routes into the mountains and the coastal Pan-American Highway have been re-paved.
- Driving conditions in the Andes are similar to those in alpine areas of Europe, but the roads are not of the same quality.
- Road maintenance is difficult in mountainous regions. Rockslides are frequent due to high seismic activity in the Andes. The mountain slopes often are inadequately stabilized. Mud slides are likely, especially in the rainy season. Check with locals about road closures ahead.
- Peru's varied topography impedes road safety improvements.
- Many roads are designed and/or maintained poorly. Most roads are pitted with potholes. Unpaved roads tend to be dusty when dry and impassable when wet.
- No system exists for warning drivers about upcoming road closures.
- Warning devices (eg, cones, triangles, barrels, danger lights) are not used to alert drivers to upcoming hazards.



- For information on road travel conditions, contact the *Asociacion Automotriz del Peru*, 299 Avenida Dos de Mayo, San Isidro, Lima, Peru. Phone is 51 1 440 0495 (in Spanish only).
- Peru has three geographical regions: the narrow, desert-like coastal plain (called the *costa*); the rugged Andes Mountains in the center (called the *sierra*); and the eastern lowlands (an area of tropical forests/jungles called the *selva*). The eastern lowlands are divided into the Highland Jungle (begins at the foothills of the Andes and has a more temperate climate) and the Lowland Jungle (part of the Amazon plain).

URBAN TRAVEL

- Urban roads are generally in poor condition.
- Lack of urban planning and rapid expansion of vehicle

ownership contributes to congested conditions in cities of any size.

- Avoid driving in Lima if possible. The roads are very poor.
- The streets are not safe at night.
- Park in a guarded lot, and use a steering wheel lock.
- Roads typically narrow as they approach major cities due to extensive development along the road sides.
- Traffic lights and stop signs are generally lacking. Do not rely on other drivers to obey those that do exist.
- Peru has 19 international airports. They are located in Arequipa, Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Chiclayo, Cuzco, Ilo, Iquitos, Juliaca, Lima, Piura, Pucallpa, Puerto Maldonado, Rioja, Tacna, Talara, Tarapoto, Trujillo, Tumbes, and Yurimaguas.

CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
LIMA	Avoid driving in Lima if possible. Traffic jams are common during rush hours. Intersections include roads merging from several directions. Often no traffic lights exist, and the police handle traffic flow. Drivers seldom obey traffic lights. Drivers do not observe lane markings, even in roundabouts. Old, poorly maintained vehicles are a traffic hazard and health risk due to pollution.	Information on Lima’s Jorge Chavez International Airport is available at their website: http://www.lap.com.pe/AIRPORT/eng_home00.asp . Taxis and public transportation are available to the town center and are handicap accessible. Pedestrian injuries and fatalities in road crashes are high. Regulations against jaywalking are strictly enforced.
TRUJILLO		The Carlos Martinez de Pinillos Airport is about 10.5 kms from the city. The Pan-American Highway connects the city to all other major coastal cities and the La Libertad Department.

RURAL TRAVEL

- Rural roads are poorly maintained but are improving.
- Large portions of rural areas lack all-weather access to any urban areas. These roads are being upgraded, especially in the Sierra region.

- Road crashes are common on Peru’s winding mountain roads. Many stretches have steep cliffs and no guardrails.
- Driving through rural areas alone is not recommended, even in daylight.



- Distances between road services are great in remote areas, making it risky to drive without spare equipment and supplies.
- The *Parque Nacional Huascarán* (national park in the Ancash province) lies east of Huaraz in the Cordillera Blanca section of the Andes. It is easily accessible from Lima via paved road (400 km) or from the Pan-American Highway near Pativilca (200 km).
- Manu National Park is located west of Puerto Maldonado. It is most easily reached in the dry season (June-October); even then, travel may be difficult. Arrange travel in advance, whether traveling alone or in a group.

PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

- Often little or no separation exists between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Urban areas lack pedestrian crosswalks, pedestrian bridges, traffic lights, and warning signs in high-pedestrian zones.
- Lax traffic control and lack of attention to pedestrian safety, especially in larger cities, contribute to pedestrian fatalities and injuries.
- Drivers often fail to yield to pedestrians, unless a traffic light or police officer is present.
- Exercise great caution when crossing the street at intersections.
- In urban areas, children are the most frequent victims in road crashes.

NIGHT TRAVEL

- Road travel by night is very dangerous due to poor illumination and road markings. Other road hazards include potholes, sudden lane ends, unmarked road works, parked or stalled vehicles and vehicles without working lights.
- Drive only during daylight hours outside cities.
- Overland travel in or near US State Department restricted areas (listed in the Crime & Security section) is particularly dangerous at night.

SEASONAL TRAVEL

- Traffic is more congested on holidays. The main holidays in Peru are New Year's Day, Labor day (May 1), Battle of May 2, Independence day (July 27,28 and 29), and Christmas day.

- Due to heavy rains, landslides are frequent from December-March.
- Fog frequently causes road crashes on coastal and mountain highways, especially during winter.
- Peru's coastal area is generally arid, but seasonal rains do occur in the northern section, especially during El Niño seasons (every 3-7 years).
- In Peru's lowland jungle, the highest rainfalls occur from November-April. In the highland jungle, the rainy season runs from November-March. The highland jungle's dry season (April-October) tends to be very hot.
- In the area around Lake Titicaca, temperatures commonly drop below freezing from June-August.
- The Canyon roads within the Huascaran National Park may be dangerous in bad weather.
- The roads from Nazca to Abanca can be dangerous during rainy periods.
- In the Madre de Dios territory, the rainy season runs from December-March.
- Peru frequently experiences natural hazards, such as earthquakes, flooding, and landslides.

POLICE ENFORCEMENT

- Police corruption is a problem. Police may overlook unlicensed buses that are overcrowded, in poor mechanical condition and being recklessly driven.
- Speed limits are not enforced where roads pass through towns or villages.
- Speed limits are not adjusted to account for the road's character or condition.



ROAD REGULATIONS

- Traffic drives on the right.
- National driving licenses are valid for 30 days; if staying in Peru longer, an international driving permit (IDP) is required. An IDP is a legal identification document that translates driving license information into 11 languages, including English, and can be used only as a supplement to a valid driving license. Contact AAA at www.aaa.com.
- After 30 days, a permit from the *Touring y Automovil Club del Peru* is required. Their address is Cesar Vallejo 699, Lince, Lima, phone is 01 440 3270, fax is 422 5947, e-mail is touring@hys.compe and website is www.hys.com.pe/tacp.
- The legal blood alcohol level is 0.5 mg/ml.
- All foreign-owned vehicles must display a Customs Duty Payment Voucher.
- Periodic vehicle inspections are not required.



ROAD WATCH

SOME DANGEROUS ROADS

ROAD	CONDITIONS
IN LLOCLLAPAMPA DISTRICT, FROM TOWN OF LA OROYA TO HUANCAYO	Curving road; site of many road crashes; no barriers; no warning signs at site of dangerous curves
AREQUIPA TO COLCA CANYON	Very rough to navigate
AREQUIPA TO ACHOMA	After an hour's ride, road has many rocks, in Achoma, narrow dirt roads
LIMA TO CUZCO	Very poor road conditions
CUZCO TO PUERTO MALDONADO	A long, rough jungle road
CUZCO TO MANO	A 12-hour long drive over rough, rugged terrain
SIETE CUADRONES, FROM CUSCO TO CHINCHERO	Cobble stoned, steep
QUEBRADA HONDA – QUILLABAMBA	Some parts very steep; road surface very rough after crossing the Yanatile River
KUELAP-CELENDIN-CAJAMARCA ROAD	Narrow gravel road hugging side of mountains; sheer drops on one side, and stone cliffs on the other; very sharp hair-pin turns on descent from Barro Negro Pass to Las Balsas; switchbacks are less abrupt up next mountain range and down to Celendin
CELENDIN TO LEIMBEBAMBA	Dirt road with almost vertical switchbacks portions; takes an average of 12 hours to travel 55 miles



ROAD	CONDITIONS
HIRAM BINGHAM ROAD, CONNECTS AGUAS CALIENTES AND MACHU PICCHU	Steep ascent with 13 hairpin curves
ROAD FROM CHICLAYO TO KUELAP (ALSO SPELLED CUELAP)	Major portions are dirt or gravel; navigable only from June-October; paved until reaches coastal mountain range; 27 miles of switchbacks that reaches Porculla Pass; similar conditions on descent; more switchbacks up the second mountain range and down into Utcubamba River Valley; road graveled and one-lane wide, but with enough room for oncoming vehicles to pass each other; from Utcubamba, more switchbacks up and down mountains; motorized travel ends at a well-maintained parking lot about 1 km below Kuelap; remainder of journey must be undertaken on foot



ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

BUSES

- Public transportation safety is poor.
- Driving a bus in Peru requires no special operator's license or training; therefore, drivers lack good driving skills. Buses often are dangerously overloaded.
- Bus road crashes, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries, are common. They are usually caused by excessive speed, poor bus maintenance, and driver fatigue.
- Buses often speed away before passengers manage to get both feet into the vehicle.
- Bus quality varies from modern and comfortable to open-air trucks and antiquated school buses. Safer and more expensive bus service is available (drivers switch more often, decreasing safety risk).
- Safety devices, such as seatbelts, are being installed on public transportation vehicles as restricted budgets permit.
- Buses and trucks often travel at high speeds and, therefore, pose particular hazards.
- In Peru, minivans are called *killer combis*. Last year, 375 passengers were killed while traveling in the 30,000 minivans in Lima.
- Inter-city bus travel is not safe. In 2001, several inter-city buses traveling at night were held up by armed robbers. The passengers were forced off the buses and robbed of their belongings.
- The two types of inter-province buses are the *caleteros* and the direct buses. *Caleteros* buses generally cover Sierra or jungle routes, stop at each city along the way, have arbitrary schedules and generally are not air conditioned. Direct buses generally travel along the Pan-American Highway and some side routes (Huancayo, Huaraz, and Arequipa), are more comfortable, are air conditioned and have bathrooms and TVs. Buy tickets ahead of time, especially on weekends or holidays.
- *Pirate* buses (unlicensed buses often with unlicensed drivers) typically are overcrowded and in poor condition. Drivers often speed, disregard the law and drive recklessly. In rural areas, *pirate* buses serve over 50% of the public transportation and account for 70% of the fatal road crashes.
- Bus road crashes are common in the Andes Mountains, because buses are maintained poorly and fatigued drivers frequently do not safely negotiate the narrow highways.
- Some bus and trucking companies permit mechanically defective vehicles to operate.



- Bus and truck drivers commonly drive more than 14 hours without stopping. The government now requires that long-distance public transportation vehicles have a driver and co-driver, as switching drivers reduces road crashes due to driver fatigue.
- Many truck drivers have inadequate driver training. Truck loads are often unsecured. Truck overloading has been a factor in road crashes and accelerated road surface damage.

TAXIS

- Taxis are available at main hotels, airports and in most towns.
- Taxis do not have meters. Be sure to agree on a fare before boarding. In general, fares relatively are inexpensive.
- Safe taxi service is available by phone in the main cities. Many people who have hailed taxis on the street were assaulted.
- Ask the hotel to call a taxi. The fare will be set by the hotel, and it will not change when taxi arrive at destination, which is a practice common among taxis that are hailed.
- Taxis are not regulated closely. Any car with a taxi sign in the window may function as a taxi.
- In rural towns, small cars and motorcycle rickshaws (known as *mototaxis* or *motokars*) compete with or take the place of regular taxis. *Mototaxis* and *motokars* are more risky.
- Shared taxis (*colectivos* or *combis*) are minibuses that service routes between the coastal towns and larger urban centers in the mountainous regions. *Colectivos* range from older vehicles or newer foreign minibuses and may be overcrowded. Shared taxis have a poor safety record, especially in Lima. Drivers race to pick up customers, leading to frequent crashes and many pedestrians being struck. Sometimes, passengers are injured because drivers do not allow adequate time for boarding or disembarking. Shared taxis have no scheduled stops. State the term *bajo aqui* to disembark from a taxi.

RENTAL CARS

- Rental cars are often in poor condition.

MOTORCYCLES & BICYCLES

- Cars often will honk before passing bicycles.

CRIME & SECURITY

- Violent crime is an increasing problem in Peru.
- Tourists who travel in groups and do not travel to areas that the US Embassy lists as restricted may be safer.
- Security inside major hotels is generally good.
- Street crime danger is high in downtown Lima and other popular tourist areas, including Cusco, Arequipa, Puno and Juliaca. “Choke and grab” muggings are common in Cusco and is a problem on the streets leading off the main square and around the train station.
- Do not accept offers of transportation or guide services from strangers.
- Violent crimes include carjacking, assault, and armed robbery. Resisting criminals often provokes greater violence.
- Government action has reduced but not eliminated the activities of Peru’s two major terrorist groups. The problems these groups present to travelers remain significant. With the exception of Lima, traditional tourist destinations have not been the target of terrorist attacks for many years. In the Lima area, attacks against government offices, embassies, and major commercial interests, including shopping malls, have occurred.
- Contact the US Embassy for current safety information when considering travel to remote areas.
- Landmines and unexploded ordinance make approaching or crossing the Peru/Ecuador border extremely dangerous anywhere other than at official checkpoints.
- Sporadic political demonstrations in urban areas can cause serious traffic disruptions. These demonstrations are announced ahead of time and usually are peaceful but best avoided. Outside high-crime areas, Peru is relatively safe if traveling with a group or experienced guide. Travel by day. Do not walk alone, especially at night or early morning.
- Theft is a considerable problem at the Jorge Chavez International Airport.



- The US Embassy restricts government employee official travel in the areas listed in the table below. Terrorist groups and narcotics traffickers using violence against civilians and local security forces pose a serious problem.

US EMBASSY RESTRICTED AREAS

REGION	RESTRICTIONS FOR EMBASSY PERSONNEL
ANCASH	Restricted: Provinces of Pallasca
AYACUCHO	Restricted: Provinces of La Mar and Huanta (except in city limits of Huanta) and night travel from Ayacucho to San Francisco Permitted: Daytime travel from Ayacucho City to Huanta or Pisco
CUZCO	Restricted: 20-km section along Apurimac River and bordering Ayacucho Department Permitted: Everywhere else, including Machu Picchu area and city of Cuzco
HUANCAVELICA	Restricted: Provinces of Acobamba, Castrovirreyna, Churcampa, Huancavelica, Tayacaja Permitted: Travel within the city limits of Huancavelica city; train travel from Huancayo to Huancavelica City; daylight road travel from Pisco to Ayacucho City
HUANUCO	Restricted: Road travel no longer permitted in this region Permitted: Flying into and staying within city limits of Huánuco and Tingo María
JUNIN	Restricted: Provinces of Satipo and Chanchamayo east of the Mantaro River
LA LIBERTAD	Restricted: Provinces of Pataz and Sanchez Carrión
LAMBAYEQUE	Restricted: Lambayeque Province northeast of Olmos and east of Pan-American Highway Permitted: Daytime road travel on Pan-American Highway
LORETO	Restricted: Section within 20 km of Colombian border and travel on Putumayo River
PASCO	Restricted: Province of Oxapampa Permitted: Flying into and staying within city limits of Ciudad Constitución and Puerto Bermudez
PIURA	Restricted: Province of Huancabamba south of Huancabamba City Permitted: Huancabamba City and areas to north of city
SAN MARTIN	Restricted: Provinces of Huallaga, Mariscal Caceres, Bellavista and Tocache Permitted: Flying into and staying within city limits of Bellavista, Juanjui, Saposoa and Tocache; daytime road travel from Tarapoto to Juanjui and Bellavista
UCAYALI	Restricted: Padre Abad Province, portion of Coronel Portillo west of Pucallpa City, and Ucayali River Permitted: Flying into and staying within city limits of Pucallpa; province of Coronel Portillo east of Ucayali River



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

TOURIST ASSISTANCE

- Roadside assistance is poor.
- If cross-country driving in Peru, take along spare parts (especially tires), emergency water and food and a tent.
- Mechanics generally are reliable. The 95-octane fuel burns cleaner than the 84-octane fuel.
- Wait for police if vehicle breaks down.
- Some hotels have handicapped-accessible accommodations, but public transportation generally does not provide easy access for persons who are handicapped.
- Tourist police are available in major tourist destinations, such as Cusco, Arequipa, and Puno. In Lima, call them at 51 1 225 8698 or 225 8699, and fax at 476 7708.
- A wide variety of tourist facilities are available and vary in quality depending on location.
- Tourism information is available from *PromPerú* (the Commission for the Promotion of Peru), Calle 1 Oeste 50, Edificio Mitinci, 14th Floor, Urb. Córpac, San Isidro, Lima 27 Peru. Phone is 1 224 3279 or 224 3125 or 224 3271, fax is 1 224 3323, e-mail is postmaster@promperu.gob.pe and website is www.peruonline.net.
- A website with maps and information on many Peruvian cities is located at <http://www.calle.com/world/peru/index.html>. This website gives links to cities near desired destinations.

MEDICAL CARE

- Medical care is more adequate in larger urban areas and less adequate in rural areas.
- Urban private health facilities are often better-equipped and staffed than public or rural facilities.
- Local health care providers may not accept US health insurance and are more likely to require immediate cash payment. Many private facilities in Lima do accept major US credit cards.
- If traveling to remote regions, leave detailed written plans and a timetable with a friend and with local

authorities in the region and carry waterproof identification and emergency contact information.

- Rescue capabilities are limited in more remote regions.
- US medical insurance is not always valid abroad. Medicare and Medicaid do not cover medical services rendered outside of the US.

EMBASSY INFORMATION

- The Peruvian Embassy, 1625 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 605, Washington, D.C. 20036. Phone is 202 462 1084 or 462 1085, and website is <http://www.peruemb.org>.
- The US Embassy is in Monterrico, a suburb of Lima, at Avenida Encalada, Block Seventeen. Phone is 51 1 434 3000, after-hours emergencies phone is 51 1 434 3032, fax is 51 1 434 3065 or 434 3037 and website is <http://www.rcp.net.pe/usa>.
- The Consular Section of the US Embassy hours are from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon on weekdays, excluding US and Peruvian holidays.
- A US Consular Agency is located in Cusco in the Binational Center (*Instituto Cultural Peruana Norte Americano*, ICPNA) at Avenida Tullumayo 125. Phone is 51 8 24 51 02, fax is 51 8 23 35 41 and website is icpnacus@telser.com.pe.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact the Association for Safe International Road Travel
(ASIRT)

11769 Gainsborough Road, Potomac MD 20854, USA

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Fax: (301) 983-3663

Website: <http://www.asirt.org>

E-mail: asirt@asirt.org

**LANGUAGE TIPS*****Please slow down.***

Por favor reduzca la velocidad

(por-fah-vor ray-DUZ-ca la ve-lo-see-DAD).

Please stop. I need to get out now.

Pare por favor. Necesito bajarme ahora

(PAH-ray por fah-vor. Ne-se-SEE-tow ba-HAR-may a-ORa).

Let me off at the next stop.

Permitame bajar en la próxima parada

(Per-MEE-tamay sa-LEER en la PROX-eema pa-RAda).

Does this taxi (this car) have seat belts?

Tiene este taxi/vehículo cinturones de seguridad?

(Tee-enay estay taxi/vay-EE-kulow sintu-ROW-nays day segur-eeDAD)?

Call for help!

Pida ayuda por favor!

(Pee-dah eye-YOU-da por fah-vor)!

Is it safe to travel by road at night?

Es seguro viajar por la carretera de noche?

(Ays-se-GUro via-HAR por la car-ay-TAYra day NOchay).

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company accident on the roads of Turkey. © ASIRT 2004

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This report is intended to represent general road conditions, driving environment, quality of public transportation, medical care and emergency response. It may not be totally accurate in a specific location or circumstance.