

# INTRODUCTION

## DISCOVER PERU & BOLIVIA!

Peru is on everyone's lips! Up until a couple of years ago no one would have guessed that the Andean region would become a culinary Mecca which has established itself as a top destination for good food. The *novoandina and creole cuisine* has been declared a national heritage and shortly after became an export hit. There are many reasons for this which are representative of the country. The first being the ingredients that both land and ocean provide: thanks to the Humboldt Current there is an indescribable *abundance of fish and shell fish*. In the highlands, heirloom varieties of grains such as quinoa and amaranth, and about 4000 varieties of potatoes, sweet potatoes, and various other roots are cultivated. These enrich the already impressive variety of vegetables available at the markets. In addition, thanks to the rain forest region, it is also exotic: well known but also far many more unknown kinds of fruit thrive here in plenty. It is also, in large part, due to the variety of people who cook here. Historically, there were *diverse cultural influences*, which left their mark. The first to have mixed things up in the kitchen were the Spanish. Among other things they brought olives and wine to Peru; both of which are still successfully cultivated today. Chickens, sheep and goats as well as pigs and cows were also at one time imported.



A variety of day-to-day life in Peru: Yagua people on the Amazon

After the Spanish the Chinese came, carrying one of the most important foods in their luggage: rice. The Italians, Japanese, and other Latin Americans followed giving their culinary contribution as well...

## Fascinating time travel in the land of the Inca

The cultural history of the country is as full of diversity and variety as its cuisine. The *Inca* is a term everyone is familiar with, but far fewer people are aware that Peru and Bolivia were already occupied by countless cultures with highly skilled artisans. Expert potters of the Mochia and the gold and silversmiths of the Chimú lived in the north, the Paracas culture on the central coast left behind fantastic textiles, and the highlands were home to stone processing cultures like the Chanka, Wari or Tihuanaco, whose ruins still astound visitors today.

**8000 BC–2600 BC**  
From cave men to the first City in the Americas (Caral/Peru)

**1500 BC–1400 AD**  
Local cultures in the Andes and along the coast

**1500–31**  
The height of the Twantinsuyu Incan Empire

**1531–72**  
Beginning of the age of Spanish colonisation: In 1531 Francisco Pizarro first steps onto land in Peru

**1650–1781**  
Indigenous uprisings: in 1781 Túpac Amará II, the leader of a failed rebellion, is executed

**1809–25**  
Period of freedom fighting: Peru frees itself from Spain; upper Peru declares its independence in 1825 and is named Bolivia in honour of the freedom fighter Simon Bolivar

**1850–1912**  
Economic boom through guano, and the export of salpêtre. The so called pacific war with Chile: Peru lost two provinces, Bolivia lost access to the ocean. Rubber tree boom on the Amazon

**1943–64**  
Peru and Bolivia alternate between military dictatorship and democratically voted government

uncovering *untouched Inca cities*, mysterious marks or, close to Caral, the oldest city in the Americas.

Vast parts of Peru are anything but regions richly blessed in nature: The coast is a desert, which in order to attract people, remains green only through artificial irrigation. The Andes that cross both countries, with *mighty cordilleras and ice-capped peaks*, in many cases look like burnt earth during the dry season: bare and brown. Lush green only grows in abundance in the valleys up to the Amazon lowland area and in the rainforest east of the Andes. In rural areas the earth is still ploughed, like during the time of the Incans, in *comunidades* traditional village communities. In the highlands, at 3500–4500 m/11,482–14,763 ft, several of these

## Andean peaks and Pacific coast beaches

*comunidades* are still bordered by stone walls which the village chiefs still pace up and down with their stick. They teach the young people of the village to cultivate the land, mistrust strangers and to fear the spirits.

If you want to discover Peru and Bolivia, prepare yourself to be confronted with *archaic images* and poverty: People live in the icy highlands in huts and children in ragged clothing suffering from malnutrition beg from the tourists. Although in Bolivia more so than in Peru, the backwardness and impoverishment in both countries is shocking. This is the legacy of self-serving governments from the colonial age up until today. In addition the elites in both countries often consider their own well-being more important than the education and health of their poorer fellow citizens.

## Bolivia's society has its roots in the indigenous culture

In *Bolivia*, the country in South America with the highest percentage of indigenous people, there was hope for a more dignified existence for the poor in 2006 when Evo Morales came into power. Fighting poverty and corruption remain

his highest priority even after his re-election which he won with 64 percent of all votes. His biggest opponents however remain the cities, above all the prosperous city of Santa Cruz. In the regional and local elections in April 2010 he only had three of the ten most important cities on his side. There is one thing that Morales has already been able to influence: it finally feels good to be indigenous in the Andes. With more confidence than ever before the *old traditions* are appreciated and encouraged, resulting in delighted visitors and a variety of artisans, whether textile or jewellery.

Due to these social extremes, a trip to Peru and Bolivia can be an emotional roller coaster, an adventure between *fascination and culture shock*. Like in other third world countries where there is such a huge divide between the rich and poor, it is better to avoid social hotspots. At least nowadays, the intense development of tourism has insured that vacationers, even in the most remote corners of the country, are no longer looked upon as intruders.

Peru is almost five times and Bolivia three and a half times the size of the UK. This is why it holds true that whoever doesn't want to be on the road for days at a time in a cross country bus, can usually better bridge the great distances by airplane. These are often flights from one climate extreme to another. At the very latest, at the *4000 m/13,123 ft high Altiplano* it is probable that your body will automatically request you to slow down the travel tempo. The other extreme will be waiting for you only a few kilometres to the east: the steaming hot and humid world of the *Amazon jungle*. The



Salar de Uyuni in the Bolivian Altiplano is the world's largest salt flat

world famous Manu national park in Peru, for example, is located only a hop, skip and a jump away from the Incan metropolis Cuzco but is 3000 m (9,842 ft.) lower. Another good piece of advice: If you would like to enjoy the *capital city Lima*, travel during the first months of the year and not during the European summer. During this time it is winter there and it is reminiscent of London in November. It would be a shame to not be able to see the historical buildings in their full splendour.

1967-90

Left-wing military government under General Velasco Alvarado. Execution of Che Guevara in Bolivia. Hyperinflation and terror from the "Shining Path" militant group in Peru

1990-2000

Alberto Fujimori, son of Japanese immigrants, becomes president and defeats terrorism. His second term is shadowed by scandals involving corruption. He takes refuge in Japan

2001-06

In Peru the indigenous Alejandro Toledo and in Bolivia the leader of the coca farmers, Evo Morales, become president. The ex-president Fujimori, after his return to

Peru, is convicted and lands in prison. Toledo's successor becomes Alan García Pérez

2007-12

A severe earthquake on the Peruvian southern coast. The nationalist Ollanta Humala becomes Peru's president. Heavy rioting against oil drilling and mining projects. In Bolivia, Evo Morales nationalises oil and gas companies and is re-elected in 2009

2013-16

Humala is unsuccessful in his fight against crime in Lima and his reputation suffers. The right-wing liberal Pedro Pablo Kuczynski wins the 2016 presidential race. Evo Morales continues to govern in Bolivia