Peru: Indigenous Peoples and Globalization

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2027

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Republic of Peru boasts a multiethnic population of more than 30 million, including the largest indigenous population within the Americas. Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara are recognized as official languages, although the Spanish language is widely imposed in the public sphere. Other indigenous languages remain strong within the country's twenty-four regions.

Peru is a region with large economic and social contrasts. The country enjoys relative economic 'prosperity' and positive figures that have allowed it to avoid the worst of recent financial crises. However, disparity in the distribution of resources has created growing discontent among the poorest in the country, who reside primarily in rural areas. Lima and the coastal region have benefited the most from recent modernization efforts; agriculture along the coast is largely a dynamic export economy. Meanwhile, the Andes and the Amazon are still dominated by traditional extractive activities.



The program base city of Cuzco was the historic center of the Inca Empire

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and is now the tourist center for the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu. The city itself is layered in ancient, colonial, and contemporary culture.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Peru is situated on the Pacific coast of South America between Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile. It has three distinct geographical and climatic zones: the coastal plain with a truly semi-tropical climate and primarily arid agricultural land; the Andean highlands at about 8,000 to 14,000 feet above sea level; and the eastern jungle in the upper reaches of the Amazon.

[Cuzco]: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
67/45	67/45	67/45	68/42	68/37

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
69/39	70/43	70/44	68/44

The rainy season in the Peruvian Andes and Amazon begins in December and in a normal year continues until April. January, February, and March are usually the months with the heaviest rainfall. However, rainfall, and indeed the rainy season, varies according to the zone. Weather may be unpredictable.

In Cuzco, at an altitude of 11,000 ft, they say that one experiences all the seasons of the year each day. In the early morning it is spring. By the afternoon it is warm enough to enjoy summer clothing. In the evening it is autumn, and there is a chill in the air. Late at night and in the first hours of the morning it is cold, getting down to 40 degrees Fahrenheit and sometimes even lower. You will be traveling to the tropical lowlands in the Amazon region, the Pacific coast, and the extreme elevations of Cuzco and Peruvian Highlands.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Cuzco is a warm welcoming city where people feel very proud of their city and its legacy. Studying abroad in Peru will be different in every single way to your hometown and it will be a lifetime experience that you certainly will enjoy by opening your mind and your heart without comparing lifestyles, just accepting this is a different culture; not better, not worse -- only different.

People in Cuzco are conservative and keep strong and close family bonds. Children normally live with or near their parents until they get married, or they must leave to study or work elsewhere. Since you won't be a tourist in the city, but a student, we suggest that you spend

the first week of your stay with your host family, observing how your family behaves, dresses, interacts with others, etc. This will help you live in Cuzco without being disrespectful and help you feel like part of society. This doesn't mean not to be yourself; it just means it is important to adapt to the local culture.



LOCAL DIET

Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in country. Special or restricted diets may not always be fully understood by your host family, although they may have previously hosted a student with similar dietary restrictions. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture.

In Peruvian society, it is very common for families to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner together whenever possible. The food is very varied and includes vegetarian dishes, almost always with very generous portions, especially at lunch. Although vegan food or food with dietary restrictions is more limited, this can always be an option both in homestays and in specialized restaurants. Peru is a country famous for its gastronomy and has a variety of dishes and options to satisfy dietary requirements even with restrictions. But one must always a tentative to their restrictions are met. Vegan food es more expensive and with less options where you find.

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform the office of Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing prior to the start of your program (studentwellbeing@sit.edu). We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is essential to having a successful study abroad experience.

SIT recommends you do research prior to departure about the health, safety, and security specifics of the country(ies) you plan to visit. Consult the U.S. Department of State website and search their Countries and Areas Archive for international travel information and current travel advisories for each country. Search the Center for Disease Control Traveler's Health page to see travel health notices and vaccine requirements and recommendations for any country(ies) you plan to visit.
SIT recommends doing research ahead of time to stay up to date on It will be critical that you educate yourself about the potential health and safety hazards that may exist in your areas of travel and make informed decisions about what preventative measures to take prior to departure. You should also reference the Health, Access, and Identity information on your program's webpage.

If you have any questions, please reach out to the Student Health, Safety, & Wellbeing Team. Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, health and personal property insurance, and general program tips, please read the Safety, Security, and Health document and Student Handbook on your program's predeparture page.

HOUSING

As many SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question, distinguish, and analyze the host culture vis-à-vis your own culture and come to a deeper understanding of both.

Family structures vary in every culture. SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families, and your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a "home" may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and new priorities, and expectations.

Each program's staff will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: in order to ensure the best fit for students and families, SIT may make final adjustments to homestay placements after student arrival in country. Therefore, SIT will not provide information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.**



We seek to foster increased cross-cultural understanding in students by immersing them in local culture through daily life in a new family and community. Students are expected to assume roles as family members, respecting and following host family norms around communications, visitors, and activities of daily living.

On this program, you will be staying in two homestays. Your primary homestay will be in a residential neighborhood of Cuzco for six weeks. The program also includes one rural homestay – five days with Quechua-speaking indigenous families on Taquile Island in the Lake Titicaca, Puno region.

Homestays in the city are generally spacious and each student is assigned a private room where they are assured that they will have the minimum comfort requirements like those of a college dormitory: desk, safe, internet, and hot water in the shower and bathroom, etc. which may be available privately or shared with the family.

At the rural homestay on Taquile Island (11,000 feet) each student will have a room in a homestay, similar to the urban area. But there are limitations on access to water and it is almost impossible to have hot water. Although solar energy is increasingly reaching family homes as a wifi signal on the island, it is preferable not to go with expectations of having these services. You have to be prepared to live an experience with limited access to basic services, which will be compensated by the days spent on site, which for the vast majority of our participants is the best experience of an experiential education of the program.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Additional accommodations during excursions include stays in small hotels, tourist hostels, and shelters in the Amazon. You may want to bring a sleeping bag (optional) for the Amazon and other excursions. Housing options during your Independent Study Project will vary by location and must be approved by your academic director

TRANSPORTATION



You will use a variety of transportation during the semester, including taxis, buses, trains, planes, and boats. Because students live close to one another in their Cuzco neighborhood, they usually share taxis or mini vans in the mornings. Most homestays will be within a 20- to 30-minute bus ride from the program site. Public transportation (mini vans called *combi* or regular buses) is priced at S/.1 sol (US$0.35 cents) in any major city. Taxis in Cuzco are usually available at S/. 7-8 soles during the day (US$ 2.50) and S/. 10 - 15 soles at night (US$ 3.40).

COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication. It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion. Visit our Contact & Communication page for practices on program communication, emergency communication, and home institution communication.

PHONES AND INTERNET

Cell Phone Policy

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working cell phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls, including a data plan so that your phone is operational when you are away from wi-fi. Consider getting

an international plan from your mobile provider or, alternatively, purchasing an international data service online (holafly, roamless, etc.). You won't be able to buy a local SIM card in Peru. Failure to maintain a working phone capable of making and receiving calls/texts will be considered a conduct violation and a breach of our student code.

Students will be responsible for maintaining minutes on their phones and reasonable phone use will be about $10 - 15 per month.



According to Peruvian national regulations, you must have proof of payment or the box for the cell phone you are bringing from the U.S. with you. Phone calls from Peru to the US are easy to make from phone using apps as WhatsApp, messenger, etc. in urban areas (i.e., Cuzco, Arequipa, Puno, Puerto Maldonado, etc.). Having regular telephone and internet access is somewhat more difficult in the rural areas. Wi-Fi to use calling apps will typically be available from your homestay, the SIT office, hotels, restaurants and/or coffee shops.

The SIT program learning center provides unlimited internet access to students.

MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. Mailing prescription medication abroad is illegal.

For this program, **DHL, FedEx, UPS services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it’s always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

If it is necessary for someone to send you mail then posted letters and packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
World Learning SIT
Calle Fortunato L. Herrera Nro. 220
Urb. Magisterio
Cuzco - Cuzco 08003
Perú



Packages should be sent to the following address via ***DHL, FedEx, or UPS***:

Student Name
World Learning SIT
Calle Fortunato L. Herrera Nro 220
Urb. Magisterio
Cuzco - Cuzco 08003
Perú

MONEY

Most students access funds from their US bank accounts using their VISA or MasterCard debit cards. Any debit card that is linked to the PLUS or CIRRUS networks should also work at ATMs in country. Credit cards (VISA, American Express, MasterCard) will work in major cities. Take into consideration that you will be charged bank fees each time that you withdraw cash using your debit and credit card from ATM which can become expensive. ATMs are very easily accessible throughout Peru. However, even if you plan to use an ATM card you should also bring cash. It is difficult and expensive to wire money from the US to Peru, so bring enough money for the duration of the program. The majority of local shops and businesses accept payment by credit card, but some services will not, which is why having cash on hand, in small bills or change, is important.

The official currency of Peru is the Peruvian sol, which is divided into coins from 10, 20, 50 cents and 1, 2, 5 Sol. Bills of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 soles. Check current exchange rates: http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

We suggest that you budget between US $1,700 - $1,900 for out-of-pocket costs not covered by the Tuition and Housing Fees. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program. Please carefully consider your personal spending habits when creating your out-of-pocket expense budget. Some items to consider are meals not provided by the program, textbooks, Independent Study Project or Internship-related expenses not covered by the program, interpretation services, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Use the average estimates below as a guide to help you plan for out-of-pocket expenses.

Please budget approximately:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	$1,000 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	$50 USD
Up-front medical costs:	$500 USD
Potential ISP travel expenses:	$150 USD
Cell phone costs:	$100 USD
Estimated total:	$1,800 USD

Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Though you are completely covered by SIT's travel insurance Blue Cross Blue Shield Global Solutions (BCBS), which you can read more about on our Participant Insurance page, you still may need to pay up-front for medical care and then file for reimbursement.

VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation Policy.

If a visitor does come while a program is in progress, they must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students' guests.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

Please read our full Independent Travel policy for our definition, guidelines and how to access our independent travel notification form. Please note that independent travel is only allowed during program free time and students will not be excused from program activities to travel. SIT is not responsible for any costs of student independent travel including logistics, preparations, cancelation fees, change fees, and any other costs associated with independent travel. We highly recommend you wait to book any independent travel until AFTER arriving on program and receiving the final academic schedule from your program.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season,

or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist.



CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICIES

SIT maintains a Code of Conduct and clear institutional policies regarding student behavior through a commitment to mutual learning and respect for others. Visit the policy page for detailed policies around academic integrity, alcohol and drug use, anti-harassment and non-discrimination, attendance and participation, credit hours, equal education opportunities, grading, housing, independent travel, prohibited activities, religious holiday observance, sexual harassment and misconduct, and withdrawal among others.

Packing Guidelines

LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad. We

recommend a small daypack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the "General Health Tips" section in the Safety, Security, and Health pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (http://www.tsa.gov) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

It is important for women to avoid clothing that is revealing. In Peru, gender norms tend to be quite conservative and traditional; therefore, this type of clothing can create misunderstandings and may invite harassment. In Cuzco, young women tend to wear jeans or leggings, and young men wear jeans. T-shirts are fine – bring both long-sleeved and short-sleeved. The usual clothes you wear to school.

Bring a variety of clothing – for cold, rainy and sunny days. A warm jacket is very important in the Andes and light clothing for the Amazonia. It is recommended to have three changes of clothing and bring something that will keep you dry, such as a good quality raincoat or poncho. You should also make sure to pack a sturdy pair of walking shoes, sneakers or hiking boots for hikes (sandals are not allowed for field work, but you can wear them in the city). You should be prepared for cold temperatures and have practical clothing for layering and being outdoors.

EQUIPMENT

You can bring a small digital voice recorder or use your smartphone for recording interviews during your ISP research. If you wear contact lenses, the dust and dryness can make them uncomfortable, so bring back-up eyeglasses. If you wear eyeglasses, bring an extra pair. The sun is another factor to take very seriously at this altitude and latitude. Bring strong sunscreen and a good pair of dark glasses to protect your eyes, along with a hat or baseball cap.

You must use insect repellant for our Amazonia excursion. A flashlight or headlamp is absolutely essential during the rural family homestay (sometimes you will have to walk at night

to the bathroom located outside of the home with no electric light to guide you). Do not plan to use your smartphone as a flashlight; you should bring a battery powered flashlight that will work for up to a week without access to electricity for recharging.

During our excursions to Taquile Island and to the Amazonia, as well as in some ISP sites, there will be limited access to electricity for charging personal devices. We recommend that students bring a small, lightweight, power bank for charging any necessary devices (cellphones, cameras, etc.).

If your Spanish still needs a lot of work, we recommend that you record lectures, since most will be in Spanish. If you need to review Spanish grammar and vocabulary sources in digital or book by the Real Academia Española de la Lengua. It is also important that you bring a personal water bottle that you can refill, instead of buying new bottles, which is time consuming and not environmentally friendly.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer, smartphone, or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft (SIT insurance does not cover personal property).

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/. In Peru, the voltage is 220. Outlet adapters can be purchased in Peru if necessary.

GIFTS

As you might imagine, it is best to be prepared with a gift to offer your homestay family in gratitude for their hospitality and as a means to share a part of your culture with them. We suggest one or two gifts that the whole family can enjoy. You may also wish to consider gifts for people outside your homestay family. Try to choose gifts that represent you or the part of the country and/or community you live in. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas. Pack a couple of small gifts for children, such as small games, bubbles, or a Frisbee. Even if your homestay family does not have small children, chances are that you will engage with children in your homestay community. Once you are on the program and learn more about the local culture, you will

discover other ways to thank your family. Remember to bring pictures of your friends and family to share.

Former students have recommended calendars, picture books, postcards, stickers, music, or souvenirs from your college bookstore as gifts. Once you are on the program and learn more about the local culture, you will discover other ways to thank your family. Remember to bring pictures of your friends and family to share. Some examples of gifts include: T-shirts, calendars, bumper stickers, key chains, etc. Songbooks or games to play are also useful. You will find that a few extra presents are always welcome. Avoid fancy food items that people may not appreciate.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Imported (North American) brands of toiletries, medicines, vitamins, etc., can't always be bought in Cuzco. Toiletries are widely available in a variety of local brands, which are usually fine for most students. You should bring enough of any medicine, prescription or over the counter, that you take daily in the US to last the entire semester given potential difficulties in obtaining the same brand, dose, etc. locally. For women, there are local as well as US brands of tampons available.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admissions-aid/application-process/contact-a-former-student/.

Don't miss the Packing List on the next page!

Packing List

These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director.

GENERAL

- 1 nice outfit suitable for a social event
- Lightweight clothes including pants, long-sleeved shirts, light T-shirts
- Underwear and socks (10-day supply)
- Warm pajamas or nightgown
- Slippers or flip flops (for use inside house. Flip flops not recommended for use outdoors because of the cobble stone sidewalks and roads.)
- 1 pair comfortable close-toed sneakers
- 1 pair sandals
- 1 pair nice shoes
- Rain gear (waterproof jacket, poncho, or umbrella)
- 2–4 pairs pants or jeans
- 1 skirt and/or dress
- 5–6 mixed long and short-sleeved t-shirts
- 2–3 blouses or button-down shirts
- Sweater
- Jacket or fleece
- Scarf
- Bathing suit
- Optional – workout clothes

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa
- 2 passport photos
- Any relevant vaccine records/documents

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly
- Small first aid kit (most supplies can be bought here)

- Extra eyeglasses and/or contact lenses
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 45)
- Sunglasses
- Wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap (for sun protection)

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Medium-sized (36L for example) day pack (to pack clothes for 6 – 10 days for academic trips)
- Small, quick-drying towel
- Flashlight
- Portuguese/English dictionary
- Reusable water bottle
- Small luggage lock
- Laptop computer *(please insure it)*
- Students are encouraged to bring a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector