

5-5-2017

International Business Guide to Peru

Mark Kingsmore

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University of South Carolina

International Business Guide to Peru

SCHC Senior Thesis

Mark Kingsmore
5-2-2017

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About the Author

Mark Kingsmore



Mark is an International Business and Finance student with a Spanish minor at the University of South Carolina. He is a local student from Dutch Fork High School in Irmo, SC, but enjoys traveling all around the world. He chose to study abroad in Lima, Peru after learning about the culture of Peru, the Incans, Machu Picchu, and the

Nazca Lines in every Spanish class since middle school. He was also drawn to the opportunity to stay with a host family and improve his Spanish in a way that is difficult to do when English is a fall back option. After hearing about the IBA Guide to Chile, he decided to document his experiences so that future IB students that travel to Peru will have the best experience possible and USC can have a great partnership with *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru* in Lima.

Introduction

Every study abroad adventure is unique, exciting, and scary in its own way. When I chose to study abroad in Peru, I was selecting a university that had a brand new partnership with USC and no older students to give me advice. I embraced the opportunity to be a trailblazer to a new school instead of walking a path that had been walked hundreds of times before, but I still felt nervous at times that I didn't have the same information as my peers going to universities with more established partnerships. As a junior at the International Business student meet and greet, where juniors meet seniors who studied at the school that they will attend, there were no former students to answer my questions. Fast forward a year, and I've been there and back, and look back on my study abroad experience in Peru as the greatest experience of my young life. By writing this guide, I hope to ease some of the nerves of future students as they prepare for a life-changing journey.

Looking back on my semester, I wanted to summarize and analyze my time abroad in a logical way to answer future students' questions. I determined that all of my experiences abroad fell into one of three categories: being a student in Lima, living in Lima, and traveling through Peru. By dedicating a section of my thesis to each of these categories, future students should be able to familiarize themselves with what they will see while in Peru and most effectively plan out their adventure. By breaking everything down into small sections, students can search the table of contents for topics that pertain to their questions, and receive quick answers. I hope that by documenting my experiences in Peru, I can help future students maximize their experiences, and therefore establish a great relationship between USC and PUCP in Lima.

Being a Student in Lima

Lima is a fast-paced and wonderful place to live, and has much to offer to exchange students. Home to more than eight million people, Lima has more than twenty universities. The most popular universities that I encountered while in Lima were *Universidad de Lima*, *Universidad del Pacífico*, *Universidad ESAN*, *Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos*, *Universidad Ricardo Palma*, and my university, *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú*. PUC-Peru, known locally as “la Católica” or “la Cató,” is recognized as being the top university in all of Peru, and is very popular among the locals. The local “limeños” are extremely nice to foreigners, and will frequently ask what brings you to their country. Responding that you are attending “la Católica” will be met with many questions, like “how did you get in?” or “what do you study?” This is a great way to start conversation with the locals.

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú



“La Católica” was established in 1917 by a Catholic priest as Peru’s first non-profit, private university. It is a comprehensive university, offering over fifty majors and serving more than 25,000 students. There are

many benefits to attending “la Católica” during an exchange semester, the first being that international exchange students can register for classes in any department, so there is a wide array of options to choose from. Of my five classes while at PUCP, I took two business classes, one engineering class, one

music class, and one philosophy class. The local students are often jealous that exchange students have this option because they have to take classes offered through their department. Another benefit is that “la Católica” has a similar infrastructure for extracurricular activities as USC, due to its size. There are dance classes, sports opportunities, theatre and improv clubs; the opportunities are endless.

Semester Calendar

As everyone who has travelled to South America knows, the seasons flip when you cross the equator. It’s extremely nice to leave the winter months in the USA and arrive to a Peruvian summer of mid-70 degree Fahrenheit (mid-20 degree Celsius) weather, but it’s worth noting that their semester is not on the same schedule as the American semester. When exchange students leave for study abroad the spring semester of their junior year, they arrive in Peru for the fall semester of the Peruvian calendar. This is an exciting time to be on campus because everyone is back for the first time after a long summer break, but this also means that the winter break of an American student headed to Peru becomes a three-month break instead of a one-month break. When I arrived in 2016 (referred to as the “2016-1” semester), classes started on March 15th and exams ended on July 7th. Luckily, all of my professors allowed me to take my exams early so I finished on June 30th, but this is the first reminder that nothing about this semester abroad will be “normal.” It feels like the best thing in the world when your friends start back class at USC in January and you still have two months of break, but that feeling quickly vanishes when your friends are finished with exams in the spring and you have only been in class for a few weeks. More importantly, you should consider how this will affect your internship search. Most summer internships start the first week of June, and “la Católica” students will still have a month

left of school. There are a few options available:

- 1) Secure an internship during the winter before leaving.
Not all companies offer winter internships, but those that do will have fewer applicants, thus improving your likelihood of receiving an offer.
- 2) Travel South America before starting your semester abroad. This was a fairly common among the friends I met abroad (mostly the Europeans), and is an intriguing one. During the semester, it is difficult and expensive to travel to different countries. During the three months vacation before your semester, you can see another beautiful country in South America like Colombia, Argentina, or Brazil. An added benefit of this option is the opportunity to practice your Spanish before arriving in Peru (unless you go to Brazil, but then you have the chance to learn Portuguese).
- 3) Find a short-term internship for the summer after you return to the USA. Not many big companies with structured internship programs will allow this, but it's a great opportunity to work for smaller businesses or non-profits that are eager for help. There is time to squeeze in a month internship between the semester abroad and fall of your senior year, and this will add to the professional experience section of your resume.

I fully believe that my experiences in Peru were far more meaningful than any I could have gained in an office for ten weeks over the summer after my junior year, but it is important to keep in mind how the different schedule will affect you. Starting an internship search in September with specific internship dates in mind (winter or late-summer internships) will ensure the opportunity to gain professional experience and have the best experience studying abroad.

Compañero PUCP

Before arriving to campus, you will receive a “Compañero PUCP”, or a PUCP partner. Usually they will contact you via email first to introduce themselves, but **I highly recommend downloading WhatsApp** and asking for their WhatsApp number (Peru’s country code is +51, so an example Peruvian number would look like +51 123 456 789). Your “Compañero PUCP” will be your resource to answer any questions you have upon arriving to Peru. They are selected by the university to help the incoming exchange students, and on average they are extremely nice and eager to help. Before arriving, my partner gave me advice about living in Lima, told me the best and worst places to live, and recommended classes and professors. After arriving, she met me at my host-family’s house and took me for a tour around the area, teaching me how the bus system works. I did not hear a single negative review about any of the PUCP partners, so utilize that resource to the best of your ability. These students are your age and eager to meet international students, so they are a great way to develop a network of Peruvian friends instead of exclusively hanging out with internationals. Also, most partners speak some English, so they can help when you don’t understand a slang word or phrase that is unique to Peru.

Campus Area – Safety and Dining

“La Católica” is located in the San Miguel district, and also borders Pueblo Libre. This is a decently nice area of Lima, but it is still important to always have regular safety practices, i.e. don’t walk places you’ve never been before by yourself, don’t go too far from campus at night, always try to have a partner with you. I never had any safety problems near campus, but it’s always best to be safe. The campus is surrounded by a large wall and has two gates with security that check student ID

cards, therefore is extremely safe.

There are great lunch places just outside of campus' gates, as well as a few options inside campus' walls. A few recommendations would include:

- Tio Bigote (a hamburger stand just across the street from the main gate, famous among students for the "Hamburguesa Royal" for 5 soles, ~\$1.50)
- Aula 101 (a restaurant packed with students that offers an appetizer, entrée, drink, and dessert for 8 soles, ~\$2.50)
- Any other restaurant out of the main campus gate, across Avenida Universitaria, and to the left
- The dining hall inside campus (cafeteria style meal for 6 soles, ~\$1.75)
- Tinkuy building on campus (contains restaurants that serve pizza, burgers, and sandwiches for around 15 soles, ~\$4.50)

Transportation to Campus

There are many ways to get around Lima, but there aren't many good ways. The traffic in Lima is some of the worst in the world, and the public transportation is lacking. My first time in a car in Lima, I thought I was going to die. I also thought I was going to die my last time in a car in Lima. Despite the craziness, you will eventually get use to it. Options to get to campus include: bus, micro, combi, or taxi. Quick descriptions of these are:

Bus – typical public transportation, moves slowly through the traffic of Lima. Having a seat on the bus is rare; having personal space is almost impossible. Cost ~2 soles

Micro – a smaller, privately run bus. Usually they are more

efficient at getting through traffic, and have better routes because of their better ability to turn. They will frequently have their routes painted on the side of them. Cost ~1 sol

Combi – similar to a micro, but smaller. Privately run, and the size of a big mini-van. Certainly more efficient at getting through traffic, but designed for people that are 5’4” or shorter, so don’t expect room for your legs. They have two workers, a driver and a doorman, with the doorman hanging out the door and yelling the destination. Many travel all the way up and down the longer avenues, so the doorman will yell “Todo Arequipa” to say that this combi will take you all the way to the end of the street called Arequipa. Cost ~1 sol

Taxi – The quickest way to get where you need to go, but slightly more expensive. Yellow taxis with black checkers on the sides are official, but there are no meters so **ALWAYS negotiate the price before entering the taxi.** The taxi drivers will want to rip you off because you’re a gringo, so negotiate hard and always be willing to walk away (another taxi will come in the next five seconds). My friend and I would frequently ask two taxi drivers beside each other the price for a trip and yell to each other in Spanish what the other guy was offering to make them compete.

Other options for taxi are apps like EasyTaxi (pay cash to the driver that picks you up) or Uber, which are much safer and highly recommended if you’re traveling after dark.

When I was first shown the route from my home in Miraflores to campus by my “Compañero PUCP,” I was shown the bus route. The buses in Lima are decent, but the trip took over an hour in rush hour traffic. I quickly found three friends that lived near me and wanted to go to campus at the same time, and we started splitting a taxi four-ways. The cost of a taxi

from Miraflores to campus was 15 soles, so each rider ended up paying just less than 4 soles (~\$1) to get to campus. The taxi ride took about 25 minutes, so by paying an extra 2 soles, I saved myself the extra half hour I would have spent on a bus. Time is money. Each person should make their own decision, but I highly recommend finding friends to split a taxi if you live in the Miraflores/San Isidro area.

The university also has a free shuttle that runs to Plaza San Miguel, a shopping area with many restaurants that is about two blocks from campus. Additionally, there is a bus stop and a line of taxis right outside the main campus gate waiting to take you where you need to go, so there are never too few options to travel around Lima.

Class Registration and Information

Class registration at PUCP for international students will make you feel like you're in the 1950s. It was a fairly stressful process because no one knows exactly what is going to happen. Hopefully by walking you through my experience, you will be less stressed as you prepare to register for classes.

The master class schedule is on the PUCP student website. During the first week of classes, you can attend any class without being signed up. It is effectively a syllabus week where you can learn more about the class, meet the professor, and ask any questions you have about the class. I created a list of eight classes that I was interested in and attended all of them during the first week. After learning more about the work associated with each class, I selected my top five classes to create a schedule. The Monday morning of the second week of classes, international students register for their courses. The system is as follows:

- 1) Arrive early in the morning to receive a number. The first

- student in line will receive number 1, the second 2, and so on. This number on a small piece of paper determines at which point you register for classes. It is extremely important to arrive early to make sure you register early. Arrive when campus opens (around 6:00AM) and you should receive a good number.
- 2) After receiving a number, there will be directions on where to go (we went to a room in Mac Gregor) and you will get in line based on your number. You will fill out a form with the classes that you want to take.
 - 3) Follow the line, and you will be led into a room with dozens of people representing each department. You walk around the room to find the department of the class you want to register for, and they sign your personal class form to show you are in the class and handwrite your name on the class roster. There is only room for a few international students in each class, which is why it is so important to arrive early and get a good number.

The class blocks are different in Peru than at home. Many of the classes are three-hour class blocks that meet once a week. There are also many options for Tuesday/Thursday classes that meet for an hour and a half twice a week. It is relatively easy to create schedules that only have classes three days a week, and I highly recommended that so you are able to maximize your ability to travel over the weekend.

Very few of the classes have homework assignments or participation grades. The majority of classes determine grades through two exams, a midterm and a final. Some classes will also have a periodic “control,” which is basically a reading quiz. The grading scale is 1-20 in Peru, and an 11 is a passing grade. If you’re going through the IB direct exchange, your credits will transfer back as Pass/Fail and not affect your GPA.

Very few classes will require a textbook. Instead, the professors will send the readings to the printing shops around campus. Once the readings are there, there will be a list outside of the printing shop with every professor's name that has assigned a reading. By telling the worker in the shop the number next to your professor's name, he will print out your reading. There is a very small printing fee for each reading (usually comes out to less than 1 sol). It can be annoying to pay for readings, but it is much better than paying hundreds of dollars for textbooks like in the USA.

While abroad, I took the following classes:

ECO 388 - Pobreza y Políticas Sociales – Alejandro Granda

Challenging class that is rooted in econometric methods and utilizing STATA software. Alejandro was a nice man, although not overly helpful to the international students.

ING 310 - Sustainable Energy – Ramzy Kahhat

Course in English offered through the Engineering school. Very fascinating to learn from an expert on sustainable energy. Ramzy attended Arizona State for his PhD and is a great teacher.

MUS 213 – Historia Musical 1 – Marco Mazzini

Very interactive class that covers the entire history of music. Be prepared to speak in front of the class; Marco loves making you research a topic and present your findings to the class. The first class of the semester, I had to present in front of the class and was very nervous, but I adapted quickly. Great man who is extremely passionate about what he teaches. The class is full of music majors, but ability to play an instrument is not required. No final exam in the course.

POL 206 – Pensamiento Político Clásico – Laura Balbuena

Exceptional professor who is passionate about philosophy and relates it to modern times. Doesn't force students to present in front of the class, but participation is heavily encouraged. The class has a lot of reading (Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, etc.), but all of the readings are available in English online if you are short on time (although you must be prepared for the quizzes in Spanish).

SOC 381 – Sociedad y Economía en el Perú – Juan Narvaez

Great class about economic theory and its effects in Peru. Asks about current events (USA and Peru), but understands when you aren't aware of everything going on in Peru. Juan was my favorite professor that I had in Peru.

Extracurricular Activities

“La Católica” offers many extracurricular activities, including university affiliated sports teams for which you can try out (basketball, soccer, rugby). There is an on campus gym, but it requires a membership that costs about \$50. Next to the gym, there are basketball courts and soccer fields that are open to all students. Additionally, there is an interdepartmental Olympics in which all of the departments compete against one another in different sports. The university also offers dance classes on certain nights of the week to learn how to look competent in a Peruvian club. If you pay attention on campus and make some Peruvian friends, you will constantly hear about events going on around campus.

Living in Lima

Lima is the largest Spanish-speaking city in South America, and that is not surprising to find out once you have spent time there. It is a loud, fast, busy city with horrible traffic. Lima has a lot to offer, though, and is a wonderful place to live. From the historic center of Lima, to the more affluent areas of Miraflores and San Isidro, there are many options for places to live and things to do.

Host Family vs. Apartment

The biggest decision to make when moving to Lima is deciding whether to live with a host family or in an apartment. In the winter, before the semester abroad, PUC-Peru will send an email with information on housing in Lima. The list includes apartments in the area, student houses, and host families with room openings. There are important things to consider when determining which will be best for your personality.

Host families offer a better cultural experience. Arriving to a host family is helpful because they can give recommendations about how to get around the area as safely as possible. Most host families will include meals with your stay, which gives you the opportunity to learn more about the incredible Peruvian cuisine. All host families will speak Spanish with you, giving you one more avenue to practice and improve your language while abroad. It is also nice to have a mom when you are so far away from your real family in the United States. The negatives of a host family come from the lack of freedom. It can be weird returning to a family setting after living independently in college for two and a half years. All host families will have their own rules about how late you can come home, who you can have over to the house, etc. If a limit on your ability to go out or have people over is a deal-breaker, then a host family may not

be right for you. If it's something that you can handle, you should have conversations before arrival about curfew rules so that you have a common understanding with your host family.

Living in an apartment, or more commonly in Peru, a student-house, is the opposite of the description of a host family. There will be less of an immersion experience, because most of the students that you will live with will not be Peruvian. It is extremely common for the language of the house to be English, because most Americans, Canadians, and Europeans speak better English than Spanish. This can be frustrating if your goal is to speak Spanish while abroad, but it does make for easier interactions and opportunities to make friends. Student-houses have practically no rules, so you can stay out as late as you want and have anyone over. The three student houses where I spent time had pre-games about five nights per week and were rarely quiet before 1:00am.

I chose to live with a host family for the immersion experience, and had an incredible experience. Each person should evaluate their personality and their desires for study abroad before selecting, but if you are unsure, my recommendation is to find a good host family to start the semester. The best host families frequently get booked early for the entire semester, but there is always a rotation in the student houses and apartments. By arriving to a family, you will have the opportunity to hear their advice, learn from them, and practice your Spanish early on. There are no semester-long leases in Peru, so you can decide at any moment that you want to move. I received three offers from different student-houses to move in within my first month of being in Peru. I chose to stay with my host family, but two of my friends moved into student houses after starting with host families. It can also be nice to delay picking a student-house because you will know you get along with the students that you will live with, as opposed to taking a gamble

and potentially being with people very different from you. If you can decide which you prefer between cultural immersion (host family) and freedom (apartment/ student-house), you will be able to answer this difficult question.

Also, it is worth noting that PUC-Peru does not have any student housing options through the University. The University makes recommendations based on connections and previous reviews, but does not offer any rooms for students.

Neighborhoods of Lima

Lima is a giant city composed of many “distritos,” or districts. Selecting one to live can be difficult, but I will give descriptions of each area according to my personal experiences.



Lima Centro – in the center of the city, contains the historic “Plaza de Armas.” It is a nice place to visit and be a tourist, but not a place for an exchange student to live.

San Miguel – home of “la Católica,” San Miguel offers the best proximity to campus, but not much in the way of university student nightlife. There are a few casinos in the area, but not many clubs. It does not have the reputation of being extremely

safe.

Pueblo Libre – Next to San Miguel and very similar in style. It is slightly more popular for students to live in than San Miguel because it is safer, but there is not much nightlife in the area.

Magdalena del Mar – A nice, quiet district in between the University and the popular living areas of San Isidro/Miraflores. A short cab drive from campus and from nightlife; relatively safe.

San Isidro – the high-end financial district of Lima. There are many student-housing options here, as it is nicer and safer than the previously mentioned areas.

Miraflores – the safest area in all of Lima. Security guards are on the streets around the clock, and the area near “Parque Kennedy” is very well lit. The most popular area for expats and exchange students. Walking distance to many popular clubs in Miraflores, short cab ride from the clubs in Barranco, and a 25-minute (15 soles) cab ride from campus.

Barranco – a hipster, bohemian area that has a very cool feel to it. Home of the best clubs in Lima, which are very popular among college-aged people. Home to a plaza that frequently hosts cultural events, like music or dancing.

Chorrillos – the furthest South of the listed districts, relatively nice, but very far from campus. The best beaches in Lima are in Chorrillos or further south.

There are many options for living arrangements in Lima, and similar to host family vs. apartment, it depends on your preference. If you prefer proximity to campus, Pueblo Libre is best. If you prefer a nicer area with proximity to clubs, Miraflores/San Isidro are better. I recommend living in Miraflores because the commute to school and back during the

day is much safer than a drunk commute to the clubs and back in the middle of the night. If you live closer to campus, you will probably go out less often, because it is more challenging and expensive to do so. My most memorable moments abroad were with nights spent with new friends, not time spent in the classroom.

Money, Money, Money

The Peruvian currency is the Nuevo Sol (marked using “S/”), commonly referred to as the “sol” or the plural, “soles.” Young people use “sol” and “luca” interchangeably. While the exchange rate fluctuates, the past few years the rate has been around \$1 = S/3.30. The cost of living is much cheaper in Peru than in the USA, so you will feel rich upon arrival. Lunch usually costs around S/7, but it varies depending on where you eat. I lived in the nicest area of Lima (Miraflores) with a host family and had two meals per day included in my rent, and I paid S/1200 per month, or ~\$350. Always keep in mind that Peruvian prices should be much lower than the US, because street vendors and salesmen will try to rip you off, affectionately called “the gringo tax.”

The best way to survive in the Peruvian economy is to deal in cash, and the best way to get cash is through an ATM. In addition to the ATM, there are city workers in blue vests all around Miraflores that will exchange USD for Soles on the spot. Usually they don't give the best exchange rate, but if you're only exchanging a small amount of money, this is an option. When getting cash through an ATM, locate the ATM with the lowest fees. If you bank with Bank of America, withdrawing from ScotiaBank will avoid any extra fees. BBVA is a popular bank in Peru that charges a relatively low ATM fee. Investigate to see if your bank has any partner banks in Peru.

Cell Phone

Communicating with your friends and family back home is extremely important, as well as communicating with your new friends in Peru. The cell phone is a tricky subject, because while they are important to have with you, they are also the targets of pickpockets all throughout Lima. (Seriously, my American roommate lost two cell phones in one semester to the pickpockets).

International plans vary based on your cell provider, but it is usually very expensive to purchase data internationally. Luckily, Wi-Fi is widely available throughout Peru. Every home has it, campus has it (it's much better than what we have on campus at USC), and most restaurants have it. Instead of paying for an expensive international plan, I only used my smart phone when I was in a Wi-Fi zone (which was most of the time). It was actually refreshing to not be able to respond at times. Being disconnected is a freeing feeling that is rare now-a-days, and it gives you a good excuse when you don't text back quick enough.

Despite the freedom of not being connected to everyone you know all the time, it can be a safety problem to have no way to contact your friends or host family. In an effort to fix this problem, I purchased the absolute worst, lowest quality, prepaid phone that I could find for less than S/ 100, or ~\$30. The two major cell providers are "Movistar" and "Claro" and both have stands in every mall, grocery store, etc. Once you use all of your texts or minutes, you can "recharge" your phone at almost any convenience store by paying the cashier and giving your phone number. This method allows you to leave your expensive smart phone at home when you go out drinking so that it doesn't get stolen, and still leaves you with a way to communicate with your friends. Most pickpockets won't waste

their time with cheap, flip phones, but even if they do, you didn't lose much.

When calling home, it's best to not use your smart phone's minutes because the international call will be extremely expensive. A few alternatives are Skype, Google hangouts, or FaceTime, but my personal favorite was using the WhatsApp call feature. I tried to use Skype, but it rarely worked well unless I was on a very strong Wi-Fi connection. WhatsApp is the most effective on a weak to moderate Wi-Fi connection, and feels just like you're talking on the phone. Note that if your parents are incompetent with technology, you may have to download WhatsApp for them and show them how to use it before you leave to go abroad.

WhatsApp

You've heard me mention WhatsApp a couple times now, so I wanted to take time to emphasize the importance of it. I don't just have an odd obsession with the app (although it is better than iMessages), WhatsApp is how everyone communicates in Latin America. If you get a cute girl or guy's number, you will talk to them through WhatsApp. If you need to text your professor for some reason, it will be on WhatsApp. If you met a cool cab driver and want him to pick you up from the airport, WhatsApp. Don't be the person that doesn't have WhatsApp because you won't be able to communicate with anyone. Also, get ready for the Peruvians to use the voice message feature instead of texting, they love it for some reason.

Food

Peruvians lack a good soccer team that gives them national pride, so they have instead turned to their food. Peruvian food is arguably the best in the world, so Lima is a great place to be if you're a foody. Peruvian food is a combination of seafood,

different meats, and Chinese type food. “Ceviche” is the most popular Peruvian dish, which consists of raw fish soaked in lime juice, with onions and peppers. The Peruvians will argue that the fish isn’t actually “raw” because it is cooked in the lime juice, but I’ll leave that up for you to decide. In addition to ceviche, my favorite dish was “lomo saltado” which is sautéed loin, served with vegetables, rice, and French fries. The Chinese influence is evident in their “chifa.” There were many Chinese immigrants who came to Lima and brought their cuisine with them. “Arroz Chaufa” is a plate with fried rice, while “chifa” refers to the type of food (Peruvian-Chinese).

I would be wrong to leave out “pisco” from the conversation. “Pisco” is a clear alcoholic drink that is very popular in Peru. It was created in Peru (although some drunk Chileans try to claim it from time to time), and is the main ingredient of the most popular drink in Peru, the “pisco sour.” Other great Peruvian drinks include “Inca-Kola” and “Chicha Morada.”



A round of pisco sours, a very common sight in Lima.

As for restaurant recommendations, I have more experience with the quicker, cheaper food due to the fact that I was on a student budget. “La República” is a good diner-style

restaurant in Miraflores, and “Bembos” is beloved by Peruvians (although it’s really just a glorified Burger King). “Rockys” is the most popular restaurant for the famous Peruvian “pollo a la brasa,” aka Peruvian rotisserie chicken. Arguably the nicest restaurant in Lima is “Central Restaurante,” as it is one of the top ten restaurants in the entire world. Unfortunately, I did not get to try it because the only way to eat there is to make reservations three months in advance. If you are interested in fine dining, I would recommend making that reservation when you arrive, and you might be able to try it before you leave.

Attractions

It’s easy to get lost in the craziness of the traffic of Lima, but there are many places in the city where you can remove yourself from the everyday hustle and bustle. All of these attractions are free (or very cheap), and make for great ways to spend a day in Lima.

Plaza de Armas – Almost every city in Peru has a “Plaza de Armas” in its center. Lima has one of the most impressive Plazas in all of the country, declared by UNESCO to be a World Heritage Site. Lined with shops and restaurants on two sides, the “Palacio de Gobierno”, or Government Palace, is to the north, while a massive Cathedral is to the East. Reconstruction of the Cathedral was completed in 1755 after the earthquake of 1746, and this Cathedral serves as home to Francisco Pizarro’s remains.

Parque Kennedy – Also known as “Parque de los Gatos”, or Park of the Cats, this is the central park for the area of Miraflores. It is situated between Avenida Larco and Avenida Diagonal, and commonly serves as a reunion point for friends before going out to the clubs in Miraflores. Parque Kennedy is

also a cultural spot, with an open-air theatre that hosts musicians, performers, and artists throughout the week.



Parque Kennedy, in the middle of Miraflores.

Biking Arequipa – Avenida Arequipa is the main avenue that runs through San Isidro and Miraflores. On Sunday mornings, from 7:00am-1:00pm, the entire avenue is closed for bicyclers, roller skaters, and walkers. There are various tents set up on these days to rent a bike for ~S/ 10 per hour and ride up and down the avenue.



Avenida Arequipa runs through Miraflores and San Isidro.

Parque de la Reserva – also known as “Parque de Agua,” this beautiful park has water and light shows Tuesday – Sunday until 10:30pm for an entrance fee of S/ 4. It is a must see for tourists and students living in Lima alike. It would be a perfect cheap date spot, or great place to go and be amazed with friends.



The light show at Parque de la Reserva is a must see in Lima.

Parque de Amor – Speaking of date spots, the “Park of Love” is known all around Lima and is famous for the statue of two Peruvians making out. Most college-aged people in Lima still live with their parents, so they resort to public displays of affection in parks. It is part of a stretch of beautiful parks along the ocean in Miraflores.

Barranco – a Bohemian, hipster part of Lima that has a beautiful plaza and frequently hosts cultural events. Home to many of the best clubs for university students.

Larcomar – An open-air shopping mall carved into the cliffs of Miraflores that overlook the ocean. Home to great restaurants, popular clubs, and shopping.

Agua Dulces – A popular beach in Chorrillos that is close enough for an afternoon trip to the beach

Asia – A very popular destination for full day beach trips, about 45 minutes south of Lima

Huaca Pucllana – Archeological ruins of a pre-Incan society. Originally constructed around 200AD, much of the pyramid structure is still in place. Tours are available in English and Spanish for a student price of S/6, and a non-student price of S/12.

“Jerga Peruana” – Peruvian Slang

Like every Spanish-speaking country, Peru has many words and phrases that are unique to their country. If you want to avoid make the best possible effort to understand Peruvian Spanish, you should be familiar with all of these words before you arrive, and even work on including them in your vocabulary.

Jirón – a small street; abbreviated “jr” on street signs and commonly pronounced by Americans as “junior,” be more cultured than your friends and tell them it’s “jirón”

A su madre – frequently shortened to “asu,” this is an exclamatory remark of surprise

Pisco – an alcoholic drink created by the Peruvians, NOT the Chileans (don’t mess that up)

Pata – (informal) guy, used among young Peruvians

Palta – avocado (quit using “aguacate”)

Plata - money

Huevón – can be derogatory to say lazy or jerk, but commonly used among friends as a term of endearment; *como estás, huevón?*

Cholo/a – discriminatory term used to refer to indigenous looking people; can be used as “cholito” or “cholita” among friends

Putamadre – abbreviated in text as “ptm”, means damn

Roche – shame, synonym to “vergüenza;” “*Que roche!*” means “What a shame!”

“ya” – means everything to a Peruvian, do your best to interpret given the context

Causa – (informal) good friend; also a tasty appetizer

Chela – beer (use instead of “cerveza” to be Peruvian)

Bacán – great, cool

Chévere – (extremely common) cool

Paja - cool

Mosca – literally translates to a fly, but used to mean quick, clever, or smart; *estás mosca, mi amiga.*

Flaco/a – boyfriend/girlfriend (novio/a expresses a more serious relationship); *sí, Laura es mi flaca.*

La Jato – house; a word from Quecha (native language of the Incans) that has spread to Peruvian Spanish

Luca – another way to say refer to their currency, the “sol;” primarily used by young people

Moneda – coin money

“No tienes nada más sencillo?” – a request from vendors that you use smaller bills every time you try to pay with a twenty soles bill or higher

Chompa – sweater; *hace frío, huevón. ¿vas a llevar tu chompita?*

Cabeza de Pollo – lightweight drunk; *tienes cabeza de pollo.*

Resaca – hangover

Leche de tigre – the liquid/juice part of a ceviche dish, said to be a hangover cure

Micro/Combi – transportation vehicles

“ito” and “ita” to everything – Forget what you learned in Spanish class, this no longer means “small.” A “casita” can be enormous. Other common uses are “hijito,” “perrito,” “monedita,” “flaquito,” and literally every other noun in the Spanish language. I was “Marquito” to my host mom. It sounds weird, but accept it and you will start sounding more Peruvian instantly.

Traveling through Peru

The landscape of Peru is extremely diverse, which is one of the reasons that it is the best place in South America to live for an extended period of time (in my opinion). Peru is home to beautiful beaches, deserts, mountains, and the jungle. By waking up early on class registration day and fitting all of your classes into three days a week, you give yourself countless opportunities to travel around the beautiful country. At the end of the semester, I was able to see 15 different cities and towns in Peru. I'll highlight some of the best trips I took, and basic information on how to get there.

Machu Picchu & Cusco

By far the most popular tourist destination in Peru, Cusco was the capital of the Incan empire from the 11th century until the 16th century. Sitting at the head of the famous "Sacred Valley" of the Incans, Cusco is the only way to arrive at Machu Picchu, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

While planning your trip to Cusco and Machu Picchu, remember that it is best to buy your tickets to Machu Picchu ahead of time. The Peruvian government only allows 2,500 visitors per day, and you do not want to arrive in Aguas Calientes and find out that you can't go up to Machu Picchu. Go to the website www.machupicchu.gob.pe to purchase your tickets. Also, if you plan to travel from Cusco to Aguas Calientes by train instead of hiking, buy your train tickets through "Peru Rail" or "Inca Rail."

There are two options to arrive in Cusco from Lima: a 24-hour bus ride that circles around the Andes or a 1-hour flight. After arriving in the airport, the best option is to ask for a cab to the

“Plaza de Armas,” and you will be dropped in the middle of the city. From there, you can see the beauty of Cusco and locate your hostel or hotel.



Cusco, the capital of the Incan empire, celebrates with the Incan flag during June.

Arriving in Cusco is commonly viewed as the first step to get to Machu Picchu, but Cusco also has a lot to offer by itself. Cusco is home to about half a million residents, a majority of whom are Incan descendants and still speak Quecha. Despite the influence of Quecha on the Spanish language (words such as *cuy*, *llama*, *cancha*, and *carpa* are rooted in Quecha), there is discrimination in Peru against native Quecha speakers. Cusco's Plaza de Armas is one of the most beautiful in all of Peru, with cathedrals lining two of the sides of the square. June 24th is Cusco's celebration day, but the celebrations go on all during the month of June. Keep in mind that Cusco's elevation is around 11,000 feet, so be careful before exerting yourself physically and be sure to take breaks when climbing stairs, etc.

When you are ready to leave Cusco and head to Machu Picchu, your first stop will be in the town below Machu Picchu called “Aguas Calientes.” The best way to go is by train, and two

services provide transportation, “Inca Rail” and “Peru Rail.” The closest train station to Cusco is called “Poroy,” and you can travel from there to Aguas Calientes. Another option that is usually slightly cheaper is to travel by taxi or van to “Ollantaytambo” and take the train from there to Aguas Calientes. In total, it will be about a 3.5-hour trip.

Once the train stops in Aguas Calientes, you walk through an outdoor market, and cross a bridge (3 minute walk) to arrive in Aguas Calientes. This town exists solely because of tourism, so there are many options for lodging. Any hostel will do since you’re not spending much time there. The only thing to do in the town of Aguas Calientes is to walk up to the hot springs and relax in the waters. Do not bring anything except your bathing suit and a towel, and enjoy the beautiful (and crowded) hot springs. I recommend arriving to Aguas Calientes in the afternoon to have time to relax and get acclimated to the altitude. It is best to go up to Machu Picchu early in the morning, and you can take the late afternoon train back to Cusco after you finish with Machu Picchu.

You should have already purchased your tickets to enter Machu Picchu, so your last decision is whether to hike up from Aguas Calientes or take the bus. You can buy bus tickets on the main street that runs parallel to the river in Aguas Calientes at any time. Whichever you decide, leave as early as you can in the morning to beat the other tourists so you can have a relaxed experience and get the best pictures possible!



Taking pictures with flags is frowned upon, so take it quick before they catch you.

The alternative option is to trek to Machu Picchu, but this involves some planning ahead because most treks are booked months in advance. Treks are usually around 4-5 days and are difficult to do during the school year, but if you are willing to miss a week of class it is a great way to experience this wonder of the world.

Huaraz

Huaraz is a beautiful city in the mountains of Peru. About an 8-hour bus ride from Lima, the best way to travel is through bus company “Cruz del Sur,” who has very comfortable buses with reasonable prices. Huaraz is an outdoorsman’s dream, with incredible treks all around the city. There is a legend that says that the Paramount logo is modeled after a mountain in Huaraz.



The hike and the view of Laguna 69 are both breathtaking, but for different reasons.

Every hostel will have tours of certain treks, but the most beautiful trek is certainly Laguna 69, a crystal blue lake in the top of the mountains. Be careful as you make treks in Huaraz, because the altitude is incredibly high. Some of the treks in the area reach over 5,000 meters in altitude, or over 16,000 feet. By comparison, Cusco is 11,000 feet in altitude, and Denver is just above 5,000 feet. In order to protect yourself against altitude sickness you should hydrate well, avoid drinking alcohol, take as many breaks as you need, and chew cocoa leaves (a natural remedy that is the favorite of the locals). The treks here are not easy by any means; I consider myself very in-shape and these treks were difficult due to the altitude.

Ica

Ica is a city about three hours south of Lima, and is home to the Huacachina Oasis, a pond in the middle of the desert. Also accessible through Cruz del Sur, this is an incredible trip to experience the desert of Peru and go sand boarding on the desert dunes.



Peru has very diverse geography, with a vast desert to the south of Lima.

Ica is also relatively close to Paracas, which is like the poor-man's version of the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador. Boat tours are widely available and you will see penguins, sea lions, and other sea creatures on the excursion.

Trujillo & Huanchaco

About nine hours north of Lima is a major city called Trujillo, with a population of about 1.5 million. Trujillo is an important financial center in Peru that is not very popular for tourists, but has much better beaches than Lima due to its proximity to the equator. In Lima, the ocean current brings water up from Antarctica, so the beaches are not pleasant. The closer you get to the equator, the warmer the water gets. If you enjoy the beach, Huanchaco is a quaint beach town that is famous for its surfing. Perfect for a relaxing weekend trip, Huanchaco is the place to go for drinking on the beach and surfing lessons.



The best beaches in Peru will all be north of Lima, where the water is much warmer.

Arequipa

Mario Vargas Llosa is the only Peruvian to win the Nobel Prize, winning it in literature in 2010. He is from Arequipa, and is one of the reasons that “Arequipeñas” believe that they are culturally superior to the rest of the Peru. After visiting Arequipa, it’s hard to disagree. The city has beautiful architecture and the most wonderful Plaza de Armas that I saw in Peru. Arequipa is also very close to the Colca Canyon, one of the deepest canyons in the world with a depth of over 10,000 feet, almost twice as deep as the Grand Canyon (~6,000 feet). Day tours are available for the Colca Canyon, as well as overnight trips into the canyon, and both are sold by tourism agencies all around the Plaza de Armas in Arequipa.



Arequipa is home to one of the most magnificent Plaza de Armas in the country.

Iquitos

Iquitos is just west of the Amazon River and is the best destination if you wish to explore the Amazon jungle of Peru. Iquitos first experienced an economic boom during the 20th century as a result of the increased world demand for rubber. The city is only accessible by air and water, so there are many more motorcycles and “mototaxis” than cars. There are plenty of reasonably priced flights from Lima to the tiny airport of Iquitos. The most exciting thing to do in Iquitos is take a tour of the jungle or a cruise of the Amazon River. Multiple day excursions into the jungle are available, but keep in mind that it is best to get out of the airport before buying any packages, as they will charge you a premium. Like everywhere in Peru, all prices are negotiable.

Tumbes

Tumbes is the northern-most city in all of Peru, close to the border with Ecuador. Due to its proximity to the equator, Tumbes has the most beautiful beaches in all of Peru. The temperature in Tumbes stays between 78 and 86 degrees

Fahrenheit all year, and the water temperature stays between 72 and 78 degrees Fahrenheit. When the temperature begins to drop in Lima around late May and you need an escape, Tumbes is the perfect place to go. Cheap flights to Tumbes are rare due to its small airport, but bus fares through Cruz del Sur are not expensive (~\$30) if you can handle sitting on a bus for about 18 hours.

A Semester Abroad in Lima

My experience abroad was the best experience of my life, and I want to share the knowledge I gained with future students. It is my hope that by documenting and sharing all of my experiences with future International Business students traveling to Peru, they will be able to have all the same experiences that I had, and more. As a member of the first cohort to Peru, there were many questions that I had with no one to answer them, but I learned along the way just like each future traveler will. I hope every student has the opportunity to create their own memories, and document the best parts of their trip so USC's connection with "la Católica" and Peru only grows with time. By splitting this thesis into three main parts (Being a Student in Lima, Living in Lima, and Traveling Peru), I aimed to make it logical and easy for future students to find the information they need, receive advice from someone who has gone before them, and ease their nerves as they embark upon this life-changing journey.

My closing advice to every student about to go abroad is this: talk to everyone you come in contact with. Enjoy yourself while abroad - there is no reason to be nervous. Every international student is out of their comfort zone just like you are, and most Peruvians are very nice to exchange students. You never know who may end up being your best friend abroad, so don't miss out by being too shy to find out. My host family's bathroom mirror had sticker that stated, "life begins at the end of your comfort zone," and I hope you find that to be as true as I did during your journey to Peru!