

Essential Insights for Planning Your First Trip to Peru [Episode 41]

Today we're exploring Peru with our special guest, Ariana

Tracy: Welcome to episode 41 of the Global Travel Planning Podcast. Today we're exploring Peru with our special guest, Ariana, who called Peru home for years and knows the country inside out. If you're planning your first trip to Peru, don't miss the expert advice on making the most of your journey. Hi and welcome to the Global Travel Planning Podcast. I'm your host, Tracy Collins, who with my expert guests will take you on a weekly journey to destinations around the globe, providing travel inspiration, itinerary ideas, practical tips and, more to help you plan your next travel adventure. Hi everybody. I'm thrilled to have Ariana join us on the podcast today. Ariana's story is one of spontaneity, adventure and falling in love with Peru's mountains, culture and history. We'll start by learning about how she came to call Peru home and then dive into valuable tips for first time visitors. From managing altitude to planning your itinerary, avoiding common pitfalls and even what foods to try. Ariana has it all covered. So let's get started.

You've spent 20, 15, 20 years travelling and things

So I kind of want to know about your background and I was interested to see that you, you did the kind of travel and things. So you're Australian, Are you from Perth or.

Ariana: Yeah, well, I'm, I'm living in the town where I grew up, the village. Like a village. So it's very, it's remote. there's 300 people in the town. We don't call them villages, but yeah, I live, 20 kilometres away from my mum and my brother. So I came back to the hometown but spent 20, 15, 20 years travelling. So, yeah, so tell me about that.

Tracy: So when did you, when did you decide that you wanted to go and do. Because I, I grew up between the UK and South Africa and after university, first thing I want to do was get on a plane and go back to Europe. So I guess you, you got that similar kind of travel bug and decided, right, I'm, I'm going.

Ariana: Yeah, kind of. I know I had a career and I was very, I was in, Yeah, I was in politics and. Oh, no, sorry. So you got to go back. My dad's American and so, when I was growing up in the 1980s, we used to go to America every second year and dad would always go like, oh, let's go via, somewhere else. So we would go to other places. Like we, you know, went to Europe and, and then we'd go to America and visit my grandmother and then come back. And so we did that my whole childhood. My dad's also like, kind of, not settled in one place so much. So we used to always spend time in, the gold fields of Australia, fossicking and camping and moving about. So the moving about kind of thing kind of always happened. So I had a, I got a career and I did the whole, like, I'm going to have a career and be in politics and work in an office and have a suit and be that sort of person until I reached, 25 and went, oh, this is so not what I want to do. So first of all, I spent two years travelling through Asia and, and then did like Russia, like the Trans Siberian, long stints in China and then went back, did some more work in Australia and then went, oh, I'm going to go to the UK and do my UK work visa thing because I think we have a work visa before we turned 30 in order to get my two years work visa in the UK and went via, South America and said, oh, yeah, cool, you know, just do the South America thing. It's called the Gringo Trail. You start in the north

and you work south and you follow the Gringo Trail. So I went to Chile, Ecuador and then Peru and then onto Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil. And so I was in Brazil and, I'd probably spent five months in South America and, you know, I loved it, I absolutely adored it. And I thought, you know, I can go. I had this deadline to get to the UK for this visa and I sort of went, oh, just write to like a whole pile of, English school, English teaching schools across South America. So I did this one weekend got, went to an Internet, you know, cabins. You know how you used to go to the old Internet cabins and you send all your emails and a school in Cusco said, if you can be here on Monday morning, we'll give you a job. And I was like, in Brazil, in the Pantanal. And they. And so I am, like the best. It was. So it was a great adventure because, you know, I took a motorbike to a military airport and then got the military plane into Bolivia and then like had 36 hours of buses and made it to Cusco for Monday morning.

Tracy: Wow.

Ariana: It's just a training day or something stupid. Anyway, that was, that was it.

Tracy: Yeah.

Ariana: So that's how. I wouldn't say that there was a great deal of choice. If I chose, I wouldn't have probably chosen Cusco or even necessarily Peru.

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Ariana: it was, it was really a lottery of like how I ended up there. but I Ended up there. And then very quickly I would go out. I should add that I'm not a hiker, so hiking, wasn't a thing that I had done very much of at all until that point. But on the weekends we

would go out with my Peruvian friends and we would follow these trails. And the thing that I couldn't believe, and I still can't believe honestly, is that those trails are ancient Inca trails. And everything connects you with everything else and so you can explore the entire mountains and you don't see a single person. And so that really is what got me, is that you could be so far away from the tourist crowds in such a little amount of time and finding these amazing ruins that nobody, well, you know, people knew about them, but no tourists knew about them. And, that was it. I was hooked with the mountains and with, Inca history and those kind of things.

Tracy: And how long did you stay in Peru altogether?

Ariana: Well, that was 2002. Well, you know, and I still have a daily relationship with Peru today. So, we moved back here when I had my son, so that was my second child in 2013. Was the permanent, one child you can manage. I think living in different places, two kids is like a whole step up of difficulty. And I think, you know, with my first child, my daughter, I'd had, no scary things happen with her medical treatment. But even when you get a cold or something's wrong with your baby, you suddenly have a massive cultural, cultural things that. Where you realise that you actually need to be in your own culture or your own way of dealing with issues. And, And so, yeah, I came back six weeks before my son was born and that was it. So that's 12 years ago since I moved back to Australia.

Tracy: But as you say, you have strong ties with Peru and you have your own company as well.

Ariana: And M. That's why I've got my daily contact, because that's my, income, I guess. And so every day I'm talking with Peru, emailing with Peru, and friendships and

business colleagues, but, you know, always. So, like, there's rarely a day goes by where I'm not doing something to do with Peru.

Peru Adventure Travel Specialists was founded in 2008

Tracy: and would you, would you like to talk to us a little bit about your company and kind of, you know, who it's for, what tours and things that you do and kind of, I guess who you, I guess is the kind of question.

Ariana: Yeah. M. So, its name's appu. it's Apus, Peru Adventure Travel Specialists. Apus are, ah, the Mountain gods. So the, the, the sacredness of the mountains is the Apus. So it's the Apus of Peru. It's the sacred mountains of Peru. my business partner is a lady named Feli Cayenyopa Gonzalez. She's a Peruvian woman or an Andean Quechua woman. And when we formed the company which was back in 2008, we were like one of the only women owned companies in a very matista like which is a macho society. It still is a very macho society where women don't run companies, especially not in tourism. So we were quite out there when we did that. So when we started the company it was really, well it was kind of funny because I was like, oh yeah, there's this new thing called the Internet and I'll create a website and we'll sell tours on that website. But of course it seems so funny And I'm sure you're also at an age when you. That was really innovative and of course now 20 years later it's not at all innovative. But our market was always selling to people online rather than selling people face to face. And my first iteration of my website was I'm going to offer things that no one else offers in the entire world. Like that's it, it's going to be so out there, it's going to be so innovative and it's really going to connect people with the real Peru. And we sold nothing like that. you know, second iteration was more touristic, had more offerings and

like now our most common offering is the Inca Trail Machu Picchu pictures. So we're very well we're quite mainstream now but we also maintain kind of a secondary offering which is for people who want to experience more authentic Peru than the typical tourist offering. And I also like to say that the companies evolved as I've evolved, changed. Matured. Matured, that's the word. So you know when I was started it I was really hardcore, very you know, I wouldn't spend any extra money. A real backpacker. And then you know, I had children and so then you become much more interested in safety. And of course I am from Australia so I think safety was probably

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Ariana: always the thing that we used to do. And also we are very interested in not exploiting people, protecting the environment. So it's, it's matured. So now I actually think the companies, it's kind of for me and my 50s so I'm about, I'm going to turn 50 this year. but I Mean, I, I had children late, so my youngest is 6, so I'm still very much in my parenting stage. But yeah, so we create things that are more, for me in my current age range or. And I have an understanding obviously of what people are looking for. So I still, I think I still create things that are for people like me in my age range.

You cater for family travel to Peru and solo female travellers

Tracy: So what about like family travel to Peru and solo female travellers or you kind of cater for all of those kind of groups of travellers?

Ariana: We're very bespoke and boutique, so we can cater for anybody wanting anything. And that's where a lot of our strength comes in because, we create things that

people want individually. We do quite a lot of family travel and, I always have a strong hand in organising that to make sure that the family isn't over committed. Solo women travellers, we don't deal with that a lot because we mostly offer private packages. So, pre pandemic, we did work with a couple of companies in the US which were like women for women, women travellers. But, no, we don't have like a solo women traveller thing happening. But if a group of solo women traveller wanted to get together, we can do it.

Tracy: That's what I was going to ask, actually. That kind of guess was that was going to lead it into that, you know, if we had a group of five or six, I mean, how many, like, what's your kind of maximum size group?

Ariana: Well, this is the whole thing. We're not about big numbers, so. Right. we offer. A lot of our clients are two people. So two, two or three people, you know, a couple who have, in their more mature years realised that they don't want to, you know, they want to go on holiday and relax, so they actually just want to go away into the mountains and just have the two of them. And so you'd be surprised at the number of people that just book for two or four people, two lots of best friends. So our minimum numbers to our maximum trekking groups, like between 8 and 12. Like we can obviously cater for larger groups but we don't like to because it really takes away from the experience that we try to offer, which is authentic and personal.

Tracy: Yeah, sounds really, sounds really good. And I will put a link to your company in the show notes as well.

For anyone planning to visit Peru for the first time, what should they

know

So let's kick in and let's talk about. I, I literally. No, it's, it was great to talk about that. It's really good to know. I literally know very little about Peru. Obviously the first thing that comes into mind when I think about Peru is Incas and Machu Picchu. That's, that's about it. So what would be the key things that you. Oh, I should know. Or anybody listening to this podcast who plan to visit Peru for the first time, what are the key things that they should know?

Ariana: Well, obviously they're going to want to visit Machu Picchu, but Machu Picchu is an isolated place in the middle of the mountains and to focus on Machu Picchu is, kind of just like seeing one thing in the middle of Europe when there's a whole lot of attractions around everything. Like you can go to Peru for four or five days and hit a number of bucket list items, but it's also quite an expensive airfare. So most people, I think, try to spend eight to 10 days at a minimum. Fourteen days is better, if they can, because I guess as I've aged, I'm more careful around my body. most people fly into Lima and I like to, I say, stay a night in Lima, get. Or two nights if you can get your sea legs. It's, a really fascinating city. It's very different than, Cusco, which would be your next port of call. Ah, Lima's like the culinary capital of the South America. It's got a lot of, for Americans, particularly, a lot of famous chefs who have got television programmes in America. so they're quite famous. So go and experience the food. And Lima, has a Latino culture, so it's, it's, it's sort of more Spanish, whereas when you get to the Andes, it's Andian culture. It's a, It's a really distinctly different culture. So, you know, I would say you've got to see just a night or two in Lima and that's also really good for your body. After a long flight, you'll then fly up to Cusco. As you fly into Cusco, it's 3,400 metres. That's like 14,000, 13, thousand feet, I think.

Tracy: I don't know. I work in metres as well. That's all I work in.

Ariana: Right, good. Yeah, we're good. 3400 metres. So that's like really, really high.
High.

Tracy: I was going to say it's really, really high.

Ariana: Like one of the highest cities in the world,

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Ariana: with an airport of that size. So the first thing that you struggle with is you. Hits you like the outer tune hits you. And I seriously don't believe that when people say, oh, it didn't affect me and I'm like, you can hardly breathe when you get there because there's little oxygen in the air. So Cusco was the capital of the Inca empire. So it really merits two or three days in its own right. It's, completely charming. It's got lots of cobblestone streets. Basically. When the Spanish conquered Peru, they found that the Incas had built these really amazing foundations and that they, the foundations are, earthquake proof. So they raised the top of the buildings and they built the Spanish churches and the Spanish houses on top of the Inca foundations. So you literally have the bottom part of the city is Inca and the top part is slightly of colonial Spanish. So very charming and attractive. And it's, you know, it's got amazing restaurants, it's extremely cosmopolitan, but yet it is still highly Andian. So people wearing their traditional dress, bringing their fruits, and veggies to the market, they're wandering down the street. Yeah, that's Cuzco. from Cusco, if you were to go directly to Machu Picchu, you're looking at about four hours travel. It's not nothing. It's like if you were to take a car and then the train, you'd be like, looking at four hours travel to get from Cusco to Machu

Picchu. You're going to go through the sacred valley of the Incas, so, so romantically named. It's sacred. It's beautiful. It's, a lower altitude valley in the middle of the Andes, so growing all this amazing vegetation, flowers, birds. It's where the Incan people naturally cultivated their crops. So there's lots of crops. So it's sacred and it's beautiful. So to not stop there is really, a shame if you don't.

Tracy: Yeah.

Ariana: And there's also Incan ruins and things to explore there. So go from Cusco to the sacred valley and then on to Machu Picchu. If you've only got five days, you kind of do an express version. If you've got 10 days, you can do the whole thing, but more slowly and actually appreciate some of the intricacies of the culture, and really learn about why it's so special and how it's so special and they're the top things. If you've got like five or ten days, the rest of Peru, like, there's the Amazon jungle. I could talk, you know, for ages about the Amazon jungle. Lake Titicaca, with the highest navigable lake in the world. Really, iconic looking. You have, ah, Arequipa, which is a white city made out of like, white, sillar rock and has, beautiful Spanish architecture. So lovely, really attractive place to wander around. And then the Colca Canyon, which is like as deep as the Grand Canyon and has condors flying about.

Tracy: Wow.

Ariana: Yeah. So, like, there's. There's so much to do and see.

Tracy: and it's a big country as well. I think that's the thing as well. It's like. It's huge. Is it about the third largest in South America, Peru?

Ariana: Yep. Probably third or fourth, I suppose. Yeah. Yeah. But, yeah, it's massive. And, it's got like the coastal strip, the mountains and then the jungle and within that, I don't know how many different ethnic groups and stuff like that, but there's enormous diversity in ethnic groups where they, dress differently from town to town and place to place in these colourful cultural, dress which identifies who they are. And so like that, from a photographic point of view, is stunning.

Gloss: What's the best way to plan an itinerary for Peru

Tracy: So it sounds. There's so much to do and see in Peru. So you've given. You've given us. I mean, wow. I'm kind of. I kind of knew that there was obviously more than Machu Picchu, but just talking to you, I might go and I need to go for a month, by the M sounds of it, at least. What's the best way to plan an itinerary? Obviously, you've given us a good idea there for kind of like that, 8 to 10 days if you're going to do the kind of Lima, Cusco and then, onto, Machu Picchu. But where would you say for people to go when they want to start planning an itinerary? obviously, kind of. You have a huge amount of knowledge which is sharing with us. I assume you've got, obviously got a website with information as well that we can access, but I guess that local knowledge is pretty invaluable, isn't it?

Ariana: yeah, well, I suppose it all depends on what type of travel people want to do. There's some, you know, there's some good UK companies that offer quality package tours. I always would say look for a smaller company that has, at a minimum, an environmental policy, a social policy. These days, some of it's greenwashing, but I know there's some good UK companies and there's some, and there's good companies around the world. But, I mean, your first port of call is

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Ariana: to travel ethically and responsibly. so that would be a place that I would say is. Because the exploitation in Peru is Quite. There's enormous amounts of exploitation and So by putting our money where we support people that are socially responsible, we give the message that a lot of the really large companies that offer cheap trips need to step up. But that's going to take a lot of time and education. So. So you can go with a UK, US based company but they will then be always dealing with a middleman. So if you can find a Peruvian based company then your money goes directly into Peru. So you're not dealing with a middleman. You know, if you're a confident independent traveller, there's like lots of company. Yeah, that's the thing is if you're, yeah.

Tracy: Because you've got, obviously you've got the company option but if you're an independent traveller and think, right, okay, I'm used to travelling around, I guess like describe myself here, travel around the world independently, but, but I still feel a little bit intimidated when it comes to putting together an itinerary for Peru in terms of, you know, how to start with it, what to know. And I know one thing you mentioned is, is about the start and lower and go at a higher altitude because it's a very important thing to consider.

Ariana: Yes, exactly. yeah. So if you're an independent traveller, first of all I can tell you that Peru's really well organised for independent. So, and it's also very economical for the independent traveller who is capable of organising their own travel. So yeah, I would definitely. Everybody will most likely you'll fly into Lima. So, you know, you're starting low and so yeah, one of the things that hits a lot of people is altitude and if they're a slow traveller and they're moving along the coast and then they start moving up through the mountains, they won't have problems with altitude because they're allowing their

body the healthy and natural way to acclimatise. And so that would definitely be how I would plan it is working low to high. I mean I personally, you know, when I'm going to a destination, I don't know, I get packaged tours and I copy them or like at least study them and go look where they went and that's how I want to do it and stuff. So that, you know, get, you know, in the old, you see in the olden days, used to get the glossy magazines.

Tracy: Yes.

Ariana: And you used to, you know, look, work through them and. Yeah, but you know, obviously you don't need that now. But that's how I would do it. If you're an independent traveller. Get the Glossy magazine if they still have it, or go online and see what companies are offering. Low to high. If you had extra time, I would highly recommend doing a week's worth of Spanish because, Spanish is not a difficult language to learn. So I'm, you know, so I'm told. And a little bit of Spanish also gets you a long way and you know, you, then you get that immersive experience because you do a span. There's a lot of Spanish schools in Cusco. You can get a, you know, some language in, do some activities, immerse yourself and then golf and travel.

Tracy: That sounds great. I love that. I like learning languages. Wherever, wherever I go to. It's always something that I always say to people. Learn at least learn at least the key phrases because it's just, it's just polite just really to be able to communicate at least in, in some of the, kind of, you know, thank you, hello, please, whatever, those kind of key phrases and, and learn a little bit about the culture as well. So you don't kind of make any of those kind of cultural faux pas.

Always not taking altitude seriously is a common mistake on holiday

But I was kind of going to ask you what, what would be the, the kind of biggest mistake that you see people making it and it. Would it be the kind of moving too fast and kind of the altitude sickness kicking in?

Ariana: Yeah, always not taking altitude seriously. You need. I kind of makes people, me smile a little bit when people go, oh. And I don't, don't get affected by altitude or I've been in Colorado at Ah, 2000ft. I'm acclimatised and I'm like, yeah, nah, you know, we don't say, we say the mistake, you know, you know, I constantly see people affect. Affected by altitude. The range of affection can be change. So some people will get headaches, some people will vomit. Like, you know, you're on a sacred valley too and there's like three people vomiting on the side of the road and you think, oh, you know, if they had have just taken an extra day to rest, they wouldn't be having this awful experience. M and then obviously there's also really bad altitude sickness where people have to evacuate. We don't see that much. It's more that they just have a couple of days with shocking headaches and, and vomiting and it's just not a.

Tracy: Great way to start your holiday. No, absolutely not. So, taking that, taking that seriously and adding that extra time in sounds like a, you know. Absolutely.

How do I get around Peru, we get asked all the time

The, the number one tip. How do I get around Peru, we get asked that all the time. So I'm a UK travel specialist, so it's pretty easy in the uk. I can go, well, you can get the

train or you can hire a car. But, but Peru, how do I get, how do I get around?

Ariana: Depends how much money you have.

Tracy: Right. Okay.

Ariana: So

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Ariana: yeah. Really, you know, it means, it honestly means what's your budget and how much available time do you have? Because for example if you don't have a budget and you have plenty of time, it takes 24 hours ish to travel from Lima to Cusco and it'll cost you probably \$30 or \$40. And if you fly it's a one hour flight and it'll cost you \$150 and you're there. So that's the first thing is that Peru does have a pretty efficient bus system and it's, it's cheap, it does have some accidents, but probably not or you know, about the same as everywhere else in South America.

Tracy: Yeah, yeah.

Ariana: And so if you don't have any budget then you can get around comfortably. They have they've also now got hop on, hop off buses which are also designed for foreigners or back, you know, economic travellers to get on in Lima, they get off in Arequipa, they, they join that same bus. So you're not actually going on public transport where you're going to possibly also you don't get robbed that often anymore but there's always those risks. So they're a higher quality sort of bus. You meet like minded foreign travellers on the bus. Yeah. So that's called Peru hop. We have them in Australia too. Hop on, hop off

travellers, buses.

Tracy: Yeah.

Ariana: So you've got, so there's those sort of options, there's public transport and then there's flying which in such a big country can obviously speed up your holiday a lot. It costs more but then you know, \$50 versus \$150. It depends how you value your money and your time.

Tracy: Oh, I'm, I'm a bit of a, if I can avoid getting on a plane I will. And also you see a bit more. I just think you kind of, you just see like when you're on an aeroplane you don't see that much. But when you're on a, a bus or a train you get a chance to like see a bit more of the countryside. That's kind of always my, my thoughts.

Ariana: And they've got sleeper buses too which is you have to save money. So you know you, you sleep on the bus. It's a 24 hour bus. And when I say 24 hours, you know, they can, there's, you know, issues they can have. They can take 30 hours or 22 hours. It just all depends.

Tracy: Yeah, so I guess it's, it's as you say, it's kind of looking at your travel style and your budget and your time and kind of figuring out which, which way is the, is the best way for you to, to get around, and then, and then choose. But it's good to know that there are those, those hop on buses that you can do, obviously flights and things like that. So what, what about, I've, I know there's a train, I've heard about this train to match. Now I am not a hiker. I'm going to say you mentioned that before. I am, I am definitely not a hiker. I got to 55 and I got to the point where I said I'm not going to lie anymore about things that I don't like doing. So I, I don't like any sport whatsoever.

That's my first one, which my husband finds absolutely appalling and my daughter. but I also don't hike. I very rarely hike. I did a hike in New Zealand last year, which I absolutely loved and I went, oh, maybe I do like hiking, but, but generally I don't. So if I wanted to go, I'm kind of going to just switch back because of the transport thing as well. If I want to go to Machu Picchu, which obviously I will want to do, can I get there without doing any hiking whatsoever or will I be expected to do some kind of hiking?

Ariana: No, you can absolutely get there without hiking. And the vast majority of people go there without hiking. it's a, misconception that you have to hike the Inca Trail to get there. In fact, only 200 people depart each day on the hike when there's like 2000 tickets a day to Machu Picchu. So it's a misconception that it's a hike. So yeah, there's a famous train which is the train to Machu Picchu. These days it usually doesn't run from Cusco to Machu Picchu. It just runs from the town of Ollantaytambo, which is a little town in the Sacred Valley. For logistical reasons, they've changed that. so it's an hour and a half trip. It's absolutely spectacular. It's got different ranges of categories. So they've also got like they've got a standard train and they've got a middle class train and then they've got a super luxurious \$500 return with you know waiters and you know, gourmet meals and things like that. Very posh. And they do they, that particular train company does very posh. Really well. They have a very elegant luxury train that also runs to Lake Titicaca. so they do that very well. But it's the one that runs to Lake Titicaca I think is one of the greatest train journeys in the world. you'll hear those kind of things thrown around. So no you don't have to hike. and then if you do, if somebody does want to hike there's there's a four day option and then there's just a one day hike option. So there's possibilities there.

Tracy: Yeah, you choose based on how I

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Tracy: guess how fit you are as well and how you know all those sorts of things. Considerations.

The best time of the year to visit Peru is the dry season

I was going to ask as well, is there a is and I didn't. I know I sent you some questions beforehand and I didn't add this one in but I was thinking about it. Is there a, is there like a, a better time of year? I'll put that in. A better time of year to visit Peru or a time to kind of avoid it?

Ariana: Ah, depends on you. The best time of the year to visit is the dry season which starts in May and runs through to end of August loosely which corresponds with the Northern hemisphere summer. So it's the busiest time of year. it's very, very full. There's tourists from all around Europe and North America. Everything tends to be booked out. The days are sunny and dry, the nights are very cold below zero. But it's considered the best time of the year. There's also a lot of really good festivals then. so it's very colourful. But if you're interested in well at ah, low season travel. The rain starts in September but September, September and October, really good shoulder months in my opinion. Not too much rain, nice amount of sunshine and not that like hectic, hectic, super high season feel. November through February, low season. So you will encounter rain every day in the afternoons which isn't too bad if you're not trekking like you can get out of the rain. It's mostly well you know it's, it's more Latin American travellers than, than North American and Europe, European people. Prices can be better. So yeah, it all depends if you're what kind of traveller you are? Because a lot of people are. If you're

like a bucket list traveller that needs the perfect weather then June through August is, is the time to go. It's the best time of the year. But I mean you know, I love Christmas those months because it's green. So the, the dry season is like, it's just dry, it's arid, it's brown. Blue skies, brown mountains in the middle of the wet season. It's, it's vibrant green. Everything's growing but you know, it's sort of cloudy skies and.

Tracy: That sounds good, that's good to know because I know that's a that's kind of a common question that we get. Ah. Like is there a time I should go somewhere or avoid going somewhere? And it's, it's good to always have those considerations now. I kind of touched on it.

Ariana: Oh yeah, yeah. So my recommendations for the very best months are sort of late March, April, avoid Easter, like, avoid Easter like the plague. and then September, October are really good months in my opinion. Yes. So definitely avoid Easter and also avoid the end of July which is the Fiestas Patris, the Independence Day when national tourists are travelling. It's just chaotic.

Tracy: Yeah. extremely busy.

Ariana: Well it is here. Like here in Australia. It's like insane at Easter and Christmas.

Tracy: I'm sure it is exactly same in London. If people want to visit London, I'm going to. Well you need. If you're going to visit Easter, you're going to visit Christmas, you have to. It's going to be even crazier busy than it normally is because all the Brits are also travelling then as well. We also go to London. We'll kind of briefly touched on it before. But things like cultural norms or etiquette, things that are useful to know because for a lot of people it's going to be a completely different culture that they're not used to. So

what sort of things are useful to know before you go?

Ariana: Ah, I think overall Peruvian people are fairly open minded about most things and they're certainly been changing a lot in the last 20 years. So like I don't think there's a lot that you can do to really offend them. Or at least the ones that work in tourism are pretty open minded. You should always carry your own toilet paper. That's a tip. Because they don't always have toilet paper. Well, they don't have toilet paper in toilets. and sometimes you can pay money outside the Toilet and get a piece of toilet paper. Maybe you can't. and the other thing is to not be offended if they kind of lie to you or agree with you. So you might say something like is this the way to the Fred's restaurant? And they go yes, yes, yes, this is the way to Fred's restaurant. But it's not the way to Fred's restaurant because they don't want to disagree with you. right. That sort of. So the truth is flexible. Oh, time's flexible too. They're really not good at time. But again, but again I think the tourism industry's developed a lot like since I first arrived in Peru there really understanding now that you can't arrive late when you have. I mean at least in my company too we work really hard on those things. You can't be late. Yeah. You know you need to say you are there at the time you are there. but yeah I don't, I mean it's a strongly Catholic country so I think I would avoid

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Ariana: some of the, any topics that are contentious with Catholic people. But apart from that. But even then like you know I think people are quite open minded these days.

Tracy: Cool.

The second language in Peru is Quechua which is the main language

And obviously learning a few words at the least of Spanish is really useful. As I said before, it's always a good thing to do to prepare yourself.

Ariana: Absolutely. Keep in mind that the second language in Peru or the main language is Quechua which is the language of the Incas. So not in Lima but in Cusco. a lot of people speak Quechua and until recently they were really looked down upon. It was not a celebrated thing. It was a sign of being a lower class or ah, a less educated person if you spoke the indigenous language. as with indigenous cultures across the world they've struggled with their identity and so it's only really recently that they're very proud of speaking Quechuan will do it openly in public. so if you learn a few loads of words of Quechua you'd be particularly particularly popular and you know there's a cultural one. So when ah, my company works we do seek out Quechua speaking people because all of our field team on our treks and our hikes are Quechua speaking and women are still often monolingual so they only speak Quechua instead of Quechua. And Spanish men are pretty much all bilingual because they've been sent to school whereas the girls weren't sent to school. Again that's changing. So these days 30 year old women were educated, but 50 year old women weren't educated. So you know, you have that mix. so we actively employ Quechua speaking people. And so we have porters on our Inca trail. And so the people really want to sit with them and talk with them. And we're like, yeah, but they don't necessarily want to sit and talk with you. They're very, closed kind of in their culture. And it's not that they don't want to. They're not being rude. They just like to be with their own people. And so, yeah, it's Well, I think it's really difficult when you come when you're in, an indigenous culture that has been conquered and then put down over hundreds of years. So yeah, they like to hang out with their own, own groups and people are like, oh, but I want to see, talk with my

porters. I want to sit with them. And they like. I'm like, yeah, they don't really.

Tracy: They don't want to. Yeah, you have to have that respect for what they want at the end of the day.

Ariana: That's right. It's not what we want.

Tracy: No, exactly. It's having that sensitivity, to that.

Peru now has this amazing culinary, uh, renaissance

I'm going to slightly pivot towards, food and drink because I always like my food, I like my drink. That sounds, that sounds wrong when I say it like that. But what, what should I, what should I try when I go to per.

Ariana: well, Peru now has this amazing culinary, renaissance where they've come out and they've got all these famous chefs where they're doing really, really amazing stuff with, ah, Peruvian cuisine. One of the dishes that you must try if you're in Lima is ceviche, which is raw fish. well, it's not cooked in lemon, but that's how you, What's the word?

Tracy: It's like marinated.

Ariana: Marinated in Yemen. Yeah. So ceviche and lima is really good. They make a nice ceviche in Cusco, but, it's better in Lima. The pisco. You can try pisco, which is, you know, Peruvian, brandy, I believe, or like a derivative of brandy, but don't. But it's also

chilli. Chile also claims pisco, so you can't say it's just Caribbean. So don't like that. there's, I mean, for everybody, there's Inca Cola, which is this bright, vibrant, fluorescent yellow soft drink which you've got to try because it's like so insanely sweet, bubblegum like, but really funny. to drink. So do try Inca Cola. And the controversial one is, of course, guinea pig. So cuy is, an Andean delicacy and they, bring out guinea pig on all the special occasions. And so you can eat it in restaurants where it's without its head and feet, which is a more, palatable way of eating it. But how they eat it in their homes is with the feet and head and everything. It's obviously not for everybody. It's quite a gamey taste, but it's certainly something that you must try if you're into that kind of thing. And, of course, potatoes, don't forget.

Tracy: I. I have to tell you, I mean, I. I absolutely love potatoes. I was so excited when I read about how many varieties of potato they have. I was like, wow.

Ariana: Yeah, they. They have so many different varieties of potatoes.

Tracy: Wow. Amazing. I was like.

Ariana: And,

Tracy: Different colours and different. They just. I looked at a photo, I think. I don't know if it was on your Instagram, on your website, and I was like, wow, that's just incredible. And I guess they've all got subtle differences and flavour.

Ariana: Yes. Yeah, but. And it's

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Ariana: still. And, So that's. When you go to these gourmet restaurants and things like that now, they're really good at talking about the different flavours because, I mean, when we're from a culture or somebody is from a culture, they don't recognise it. So. I lived in Peruvian households for, you know, a long time and I didn't realise what I was eating, because you just ate it and, not until you go to a gourmet restaurant and they split the mat. They go, oh, this is this and M this. And you're like, oh, wow, It's. It's really unique. Ah.

Tracy: classic. Classic. So if there are. There's a specific way that they prepare the potatoes, like, I think, you know, roast mash, jacket potatoes, just a variety of ways. Or is this kind of like a specialty way of doing it?

Ariana: Well, this is. This is also where it's difficult because the really typical ways of eating the potatoes in the high mountains with the indigenous people is not particularly palatable to Western taste. So, there's two ways that they prepare them in the indigenous communities. One is that they, freeze dry them when the frosts are coming down. And so those particular potatoes are really not palatable, to us. And they carry them in their bags. And then the other way they is just. They just boil them in their jackets and then they, peel them as a Way of hygiene. So you'll meet, ah, an indigenous lady when you're walking in the mountains and she'll pull out, they carry a manta around their shoulders and she'll pull it out and she'll offer you some hot potatoes and that's how they eat them. So that's the most traditional way of eating potatoes. It's just boiled potatoes. but in rest, that's where I'm saying I didn't really have the appreciation until I went to gourmet restaurants where they were able to jazz them up a bit.

Tracy: Yeah. Do many different things with them.

Ariana: Yeah.

Tracy: Right.

Ariana shares two tips with anyone planning a visit to Peru

Now I always end the podcast with the same question, so I know listeners are going to expect it and I kind of know what you're going to say, but I'm going to ask it anyway. what is the one tip that you would share with anybody visiting or planning a visit to Peru for the first time?

Ariana: Yeah, you did. Yes. It, it's take the altitude seriously. And I mean, my second tip would be like, don't jam it all in. Allow time and discover like what a unique culture it is.

Tracy: Yeah, it sounds amazing. I'm, very excited to. I'm not sure when I'm going to get over there, but it's, it's definitely on my can't wait to go to list at some point. Thanks so much for coming on and chatting to us about Peru. It's been brilliant to chat to you today, Ariana. I meet you for the first time I've actually. First time we've met today, so it was lovely to meet you and chat and we'll share links in the episode show notes to your company and to your website and obviously social media channels and everything like that. So if you want to find out more about Ariana and her company and about Peru, do cheque out the show notes. But thanks so much for coming on today, Ariana.

Ariana: Oh, look, thank you for inviting me and I hope that it was, helpful and you know, message me if you've gotten more questions. I don't know.

Tracy: Well, we actually have a new thing called Speak Pipe where people can actually leave a voice message, if they have a particular question or something they want to know. So I'll let you know if we hear anything back from anybody. So if you listen to the episode and thinking, I've got something specifically I'd love to know about, then I can pass that on to Ariana and hopefully, get back to you with any, anything, anything you want to know. Or obviously you can email Ariana. The information will be in the show notes and on your website. So we can, we can definitely sort that out. So, thanks again.

Ariana: Thank you.

Tracy: Thank you for joining us on this episode of the Global Travel Planning Podcast. For more details and links to everything we discussed today, cheque out the show notes@globaltravelplanning.com Remember, if you enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on your favourite podcast app, because your feedback helps us reach more travel enthusiasts just like you. Anyway, that leaves me to say, as always, happy Global Travel Planning.

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