

Peru & Bolivia unfiltered

A practical guide to independent travel

Lima | Huacachina | Nazca | Arequipa | Machu Picchu | Cusco |
Palccoyo | 7 Lakes of Ausangate | Puno | La Paz | Salar de Uyuni



**Honest tips, real experiences and Andean reality with no
sugar-coating**

Hand-picked places & places to stay



Link to the interactive Google map

ABOUT ME..

My name is Edith, and I've been traveling independently since 2006. From cleaning cabins at a camp-ground in the US on a work-and-travel visa to solo backpacking trips across Central America, I've learned that the best experiences aren't in a travel agency brochure. They come from the courage to follow your gut — with a seriously solid plan tucked in your back pocket.

However, travel doesn't pay my bills. I have a regular full-time job and travel whenever time and life allow. This guide was written in the evenings and on weekends, because I didn't want those experiences to stay buried in my phone. If it helps you plan a trip worth taking – it's done its job.



WHY TRUST THIS GUIDE..

I built this itinerary for myself and tested every bit of it in person. So why should you trust it more than the average guide you'll find online?

- **Independent picks:** I chose and paid for every place and every hotel myself. You'll find direct Booking.com links throughout so you don't have to go hunting, but I only recommend what I actually experienced. If a place was great, I say so. If the hot water only worked for an extra fee, or the walls were sweating with damp, I'll tell you that too.
- **Logistics that actually make sense:** This itinerary wasn't pieced together on the fly. Each day and each transfer was planned to flow logically into the next, so you're not wasting half your trip crisscrossing the map — and you still get to see the best of both countries.
- **Hours of planning, saved:** What this guide saves you is the dozens of hours you'd otherwise spend buried in maps, forums, and reviews. You get a field-tested plan with direct booking links* in hand. And on the rare occasion I did hit a snag — a closed attraction, a hotel with no heating and an upcharge for eggs at breakfast — I'll flag it for you straight up.
**Open the guide in Adobe Acrobat (free to download) to access clickable links.*
- **Saves you reading time, too:** No flowery scene-setting, no full-page photos just to fill space, no long history lectures — just what you'll actually need on the ground. I write so you can take this guide with you and use it, not so you can admire how nicely I describe a sunset.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- **Interactive Google map:** a fully mapped route with every viewpoint and restaurant from this guide, saved to your phone with one click.
- **Peru's coast and desert:** colonial Lima and the dune-bound oasis of Huacachina.
- **Into the mountains:** the White City of Arequipa, Cusco, and the iconic Machu Picchu, plus the hike up Rainbow Mountain (Palccoyo).
- **Crossing the border:** Lake Titicaca and the floating Uros Islands.
- **Into the Bolivian wild:** the chaos of La Paz, and a grand finale on the largest salt flat on Earth at Uyuni.
- **Practical info to wrap it up:** everything on money, safe taxis, apps, and a link to the Facebook community is waiting for you in the final chapter.

WHAT TO (NOT) EXPECT FROM THIS TRIP

This guide is for people who want to travel Peru and Bolivia independently, without tour operators, at their own pace. It's ideal if you're after authentic places, enjoy moving through the mountains, and appreciate real, practical tips from someone who's done it.

Budget-wise, don't expect anything low-cost or twelve-bed dorm rooms — this itinerary is built around a sensible mid-range standard. That means clean hotels with private rooms, good food, and efficient transport.

But if your idea of a vacation requires a porter, five-star comfort, and an itinerary planned down to the minute, this probably isn't the destination for you. In the Andes, you need to be able to improvise. When a strike or the weather changes your plans, you simply adapt on the fly. You won't get far here without a sense of humor.

SOME OF THE PLACES THIS GUIDE WILL TAKE YOU...

Santa Catalina Monastery in Arequipa



Salt pans Maras



Salar de Uyuni



Palccoyo - Rainbow Mountain



7 Lakes of Ausangate



Local markets



DAY 1

Arrival / Transfer to Your Hotel / Getting Cash

We landed in [Lima](#) at around 5:00 a.m., which had one upside: you clear immigration before the [airport](#) even wakes up. If you're relying on an Airalo eSIM, have an offline backup plan ready — my South America package decided to glitch right at the start. Skip hunting for airport Wi-Fi to book an Uber, and skip the touts in the arrivals hall trying to hustle you. Instead, head to the official taxi stand a few yards to the right, just outside the arrivals area. For about 65 soles you get peace of mind, a fixed price, and a card reader — so you don't have to change money at the lousy airport exchange counters. At that hour, you'll be in Miraflores near Kennedy Park within half an hour. Staying in Miraflores or Barranco is a safe bet, and honestly the only sensible choice for your first few nights in Lima.

After a morning skirmish with our eSIM (a phone restart fixed it), we went looking for cash.

Look for [Banco de la Nación / MultiRed ATMs](#) — they're the only ones that won't charge you a withdrawal fee.



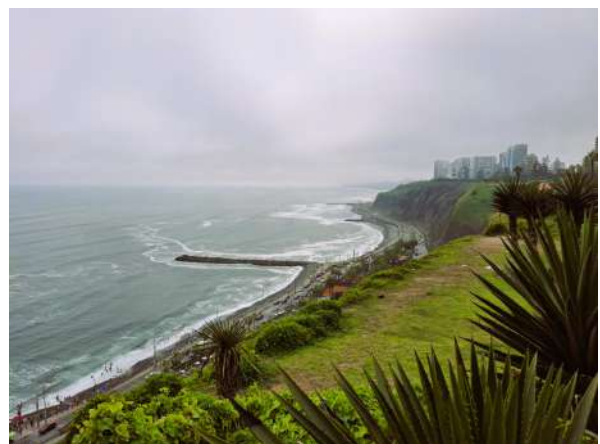
Exploring the City / Lodging / Food

We tried hitting the historic center by Uber, but at 9:00 a.m. Lima is still asleep. [Plaza Mayor](#) is photogenic but small, and sights like [Casa de Aliaga](#) don't open until later. Unless you enjoy staring at closed gates, save downtown for the afternoon. We did a quick lap and turned right back around to Miraflores.

We stayed at [Larga Park Rooms](#). Great location, clean and pleasant hotel — but with one catch: it sits right on the main road, so even on the fourth floor the street noise was pretty loud. If you're a light sleeper, earplugs are a must. I'd also recommend emailing ahead to request an early check-in. I thought of it too late, the hotel was full, and we ended up waiting until the official check-in time. If you'd rather look for somewhere quieter, check out [other places to stay](#) in the Miraflores area.

Lima is famous for its food scene, so after a great breakfast at [Milenaria Cafe](#), we were looking forward to lunch — specifically seafood, like ceviche.

Finding good ceviche in Lima isn't hard. Finding it at a fair price without white tablecloths is. [Rincon Chami](#) is exactly that kind of place — nothing flashy from the outside, but everything right on the plate. Next came “coastline mode”: a walk over to [Love Park](#). The clifftop path is lovely, especially if you break it up with a beer or two while watching the ocean. We wrapped up the day pragmatically, with a grocery run at a nearby [supermarket](#) and an early night. Jet lag was catching up with us, and Day 2 had us booked on a boat trip to see sea lions.



LIKED WHAT YOU JUST READ?

That was one day out of eighteen.

The full guide includes:

- The complete day-by-day route — Lima, Huacachina, Arequipa, Machu Picchu, Cusco, Puno, La Paz, Salar de Uyuni
- Honest accommodation picks I tested myself — including the ones that weren't worth it
- Recommended tours and agencies I actually booked through
- An interactive map with every place from the guide
- The practical stuff: money, safety, altitude sickness, transport, a real budget breakdown from our trip, and more

18 days. 29 pages. No fluff.

GET THE FULL GUIDE →

www.travelsbyedith.com

If you decide to pick it up — thank you, it means a lot.