

## Peru Reading List (By Joe Sedey)

Everyone concentrates on what they know best, and for me that is books. I have put together a list of non-fiction books that deal with Peru. The emphasis is upon antiquities, nature, and travel. There is some nodding acquaintance with political realities, but not very much. The tone is pretty thoroughly mainstream. There is little reference to the spiritual world or to local religious practices and beliefs. My list does not include books of the *Celestine Prophecy* variety (Gabi says it doesn't depict a very recognizable Peru anyhow.) Anyone travelling in Peru is going to want a current edition of a guidebook (Lonely Planet, Insight, etc.), but I have not included those kinds of books in the list. These are not all books to pack and carry along—many are out of print, and some are big, elaborate editions that would live more comfortably on a coffee table than in a suitcase. Most have a fair chance of being findable in a decent-sized library system.

In terms of fiction, pickings are considerably slimmer. People who can pleasurably read Spanish do not need me to explain to them what is available. For the rest of us, there is not all that much out there. The best-known English-language novel set in Peru is undoubtedly Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. A Peruvian author with a fair number of titles available in translation is Mario Vargas Llosa. Ann Patchett's *Bel Canto* is an award-winning contemporary novel built around recent Peruvian political dramas. Occasional mystery/thrillers take advantage of the exotic atmosphere, e.g. Lynn Hamilton's *The Moche Warrior*, which owes a lot to *Lords of Sipan* on the main list. Clive Cussler's *Inca Gold* is a formulaic adventure in the right part of the world. Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* is set in an unnamed Hispanic American country that could be Peru as easily as anything else; I expect it is no longer politically correct, but it has interesting things to say about wealth and avarice and power. And of course, there are the adventures of Paddington Bear, who may be named after a London tube station, but whose origins are found in "darkest Peru."

The optimal time for reading this stuff would have been before the trip, but it all has a place, even in retrospect. We no longer have Gabi on hand to explain things to us, so it becomes increasingly valuable to figure out how to find things on our own.

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### PERU: A READING LIST

1. Anthony Aveni, ***Between the Lines***, 2000  
One of the world's experts addresses "the mystery of the giant ground drawings of ancient Nazca, Peru." Aveni has solicited the input of "archeologists, anthropologists, engineers, and surveyors," and believes he has found a believable *how*, *when* and *where* for the Nazca lines, while having less success with the underlying question: "why move tons of dirt and stone around on a desolate landscape for no apparent reason?"
2. Hans Baumann, ***Gold and Gods of Peru***, 1963  
A good introduction to the civilization and religion of the Incas. Oxford University Press edition, well illustrated.
3. Carmen Bernard, ***The Incas: People of the Sun***, 1994  
Part of Abrams' *Discoveries* series, a very accessible overview of Inca history, achievements, and life. Presented in the popular heavily-illustrated manner that caters to modern readers' distractability. Useful without being either exhaustive or exhausting.
4. Hiram Bingham, ***Lost City of the Incas: The Story of Machu Picchu and Its Builders***, 1948  
Classic lost-city-in-the-jungle adventure by the man who rediscovered Machu Picchu in 1911. The 'discovery' consisted largely of taking the word of locals who were farming some of the terraces. Bingham's tribute plaque at Machu Picchu sidesteps controversy by calling him the "scientific discoverer." But it's still a good story.
5. Barbara Bode, ***No Bells to Toll: Destruction and Creation in the Andes***, 1989  
Anthropologist Bode examines the physical and psychological impact of the 1970 earthquake that took more than 75,000 lives in Peru's *Callejon de Huaylos*. A much closer and more human treatment than you'd expect from something growing out of an academic dissertation.
6. Barry Brukoff and Pablo Neruda, ***Machu Picchu***, 2001  
A beautiful book that combines Brukoff's sepia photographs with Neruda's poetry, in a bilingual format. A good complement to the guidebooks, with more art and atmosphere.
7. W. Byford-Jones, ***Four Faces of Peru***, 1967  
The Inca realm was the Kingdom of the Four Quarters, and Byford-Jones divides contemporary Peru into four sections as well: Lima, the Andes, the desert coast, and the Amazon. A lively travelogue, full of people and incident.
8. Wade Davis, ***One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon***, 1997.

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Davis chronicles the career of his mentor, Richard Evans Schultes, the ‘father of ethnobotany.’ Schultes travels the jungle rivers of the Amazon, collecting information from everyone from local shamans to the Timothy Learys and William Burroughs of the world.

9. Frederic Engel, ***An Ancient World Preserved***, 1977

“Relics and records of prehistory in the Andes.” A narrative of the author’s twelve years of excavation in the South American mountains.

10. Adrian Forsyth and Ken Miyata, ***Tropical Nature***, 1984

Named as one of the ‘essential’ books for a traveler to Peru, it is “a lively, lucid portrait of the rain forest as seen by two uncommonly observant and thoughtful field biologists.” It really is a wonderful book, but it has almost nothing to do with the Cuzco-to-Machu Picchu stretch of Peru that we saw. Fascinating, but hardly ‘essential’ for our itinerary.

11. John Henning, ***Conquest of the Incas***, 1970

*Lonely Planet* contends that this is “undoubtedly . . . the best book on the Incas.” Out of print.

12. Mark Honigsbaum, ***Fever Trail: In Search of the Cure for Malaria***, 2002

Malaria is the curse of the tropics, killing better than three million victims yearly. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, stories began to spread about Peruvian healers with bark infusions of what turned out to be quinine. This book is the bigger-than-life adventure story of the British explorers who traced the drug to its source and made it available to the world.

13. Mark Honigsbaum, ***Valverde’s Gold: In Search of the Last Great Inca Treasure***, 2004.

Largely set in the Llanganati Mountains of eastern Ecuador, the book documents still another series of searches for a portion of Atahualpa’s ransom, which treasure-seekers refuse to believe was gathered up and sent to Spain. The part that relates to our trip (to my mind) is the inaccessibility of the mountains. Before Peru, I simply could not understand how hiking 100 miles through modern-day Ecuador could possibly be significantly difficult or even dangerous. The hikes around Machu Picchu made it clear that cutting your way through a landscape with no trails could easily prove more than one could handle.

14. Ethan Hubbard, ***Journey to Ollantaytambo: In the Sacred Valley of the Incas***, 1990.

A photographer/traveller goes to the last of the continuously inhabited Inca villages, and finds mystics, shamans, and charlatans to catch his own interest and the reader’s.

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15. Ruth Karen, ***The Seven Worlds of Peru***, 1969  
“Interesting travelogue, reconstructing Peru’s glorious past and describing its colorful present.” With photographs.
16. Sidney D. Kirkpatrick, ***Lords of Sipan: A True Story of Pre-Inca Tombs, Archaeology, and Crime***, 1992  
Dr. Walter Alva is called to a Moche site in northern Peru to look into a pre-Inca royal burial that is yielding a wealth of archeological treasure. The account turns into a melodramatic thriller, as the archeologists have armed confrontations with grave robbers and black marketeers. Those of us who visited the gold museum in Lima will have seen a lot of the material that Kirkpatrick discusses. A fascinating book that manages to work up sympathy not only for the archeologists but even for the grave robbers.
17. Edward P. Lanning, ***Peru Before the Incas***, 1967  
The masterwork of an archeologist who spent decades in Peru. Published in the 60s, the book is solid, albeit somewhat dated.
18. Vincent R. Lee, ***Forgotten Vilcabamba: Final Stronghold of the Incas***, 2000.  
A rarity, in that it is a self-published book (Sixpac Manco Press) that has won academic endorsement. Lee can point to approving blurbs from Incan experts Henning and von Hagen. Almost 20 years of following clues to lost cities is combined with training as an architect to produce a graphically attractive and useful book. If a bit expensive.
19. James Lockhart, ***The Men of Cajamarca***, 1972  
An academic but readable university monograph that provides “a social and biographical study of the first conquerors of Peru.”
20. Peter Matthiessen, ***Cloud Forest: A Chronicle of the South American Wilderness***, 1987  
Some who have read hundreds of South American travel books call this one the very best of the lot. Mathiessen is not dismissive of the Peruvian *plano*: “Personally, I am partial to bleak places,” he says. For the rest, we get 20,000 miles of travel, from Machu Picchu to Tierra del Fuego and including a canoe trip down the impossibly named Black Drunken River.
21. Craig Morris and Adrianna von Hagen, ***The Inka Empire and Its Andean Origins***, 1993.  
Spectacularly illustrated with (mainly) items from the collection of the Museum of Natural History, this is a big, gorgeous book. “Excellent overview of pre-Columbian Peru,” put together by some of the better-known names in the field.
22. Michael E. Mosely, ***The Incas and Their Ancestors***, 2001  
The publishers, not surprisingly, assert that the original (1992)

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publication “quickly established itself as the best general introduction to the cultures and civilizations of ancient Peru.” It has now been revised and updated (2001) and should be better than ever. Includes “copious illustrations.”

23. Matthew Parris, ***Inca-Kola: A Traveller's Tale of Peru***, 1992  
“A modern classic of travel and adventure.” Parris narrates, with humor and close observation, the curiosities and wonders he encounters on his fourth trip to Peru.

24. James B. Richardson III, ***People of the Andes***, 1994  
“A comprehensive, up-to-date and illustrated introduction to the culture and archaeology of the Andes.” “Richardson brings clarity to a complex subject,” paying particular attention to the impact of climate and geography in shaping culture.

25. John M. Ridgway, ***Road to Osambre***, 1987  
“The author and his wife and daughter, travel through the more remote jungles and mountains of Peru in search of his old friend, trying to avoid hunger, exhaustion, and the Shining Path terrorists.”

26. Gene Savoy, ***On the Trail of the Feathered Serpent***, 1974  
An archeologist who is something of a cult figure, Savoy writes of his Heyerdahl-like attempt to build and sail a reed boat from Peru to Mexico, hoping thus to establish the possibility, or better, probability, of historical contact between those areas.

27. Tobias Schneebaum, ***Keep the River on Your Right***, 1974  
A 60s cult classic of participatory anthropology. Schneebaum lives with a primitive Peruvian tribe and tags along for experiences of everything from stone age hunting to homosexuality and cannibalism.

28. Tahir Shah, ***Trail of Feathers: In Search of the Birdmen of Peru***, 2001  
In an account described as “rollicking,” Shah tries to track down recurring myths and records that could point to ancient men who flew. Includes shamans, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca, Nazca, and a large helping of Shah himself.

29. John Simpson, ***In the Forests of the Night***, 1994  
A respected world journalist [BBC] travels to Peru to seek out the former leader of the Shining Path guerilla movement. He writes of a brutal regime and a brutal opposition, in which a cocaine-based economy leaves few attractive options.

30. Rebecca Stone-Miller, ***Art of the Andes: From Chavin to Inca***, 1996  
Convenient guide to Andean art with almost 200 (B&W) illustrations.

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Includes more than just the Incas and Machu Picchu.

31. Hugh Thomson, ***The White Rock: An Exploration of the Inca Heartland***, 2003

A very readable, slightly irreverent personal account of archeological exploration in Peru. Thomson speaks not of 'discovery,' but of 'rediscovery': many of the Inca sites have been described over the centuries, only to be 'misaid.' This may be the only book you'll find in which one of the last Incas is compared to the Doors' Jim Morrison, or in which Andean *huayna* music is likened to "country and western music played at 78 rpm."

32. David Tipton, ***A Sword in the Air***, 2003

An Englishman in Peru in the 60s. "The literary scene of the time and the social tensions an 'Anglo' experiences are described with gusto."

33. Adrianna von Hagen, ***Cities of the Ancient Andes***, 1998

Excellent, readable guide to the major archeological sites of Peru, including many of the lesser-known locations. The author is the archeologist daughter of Victor von Hagen, the St. Louis-born explorer, adventurer, and author.

34. Victor von Hagen, ***Highway of the Sun***, 1956

An explorer/adventurer examines the Inca road system: amazingly complex and important to a society that did not use the wheel. Many recent archeological discoveries have been made by people paying close attention to where and why there were roads.

35. Ronald Wright, ***Cut Stones and Crossroads: A Journey in the Two Worlds of Peru***, 1984

Henning calls it "the best modern travel book on Peru." It focuses on everyday life to a greater degree than most of what is available. The author is perhaps excessively pleased with himself for mastering the language that he refuses to call Quechuan, but if I lived in Calgary and taught myself the Peruvian mountain dialect, I'd probably be patting myself on the back a bit my own self.