

## 36 HOURS Lima, Peru



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FROM THE LEFT The Plaza Mayor, Lima's main square, where Pizarro founded the city; the Bridge of Sighs, in Barranco; the Lucia de la Puente gallery, which shows contemporary art.

By **ETHAN TODRAS-WHITEHILL**

LIMA has long been a cosmopolitan city hesitant to embrace its diversity. A capital founded by Spanish conquistadors that subsequently exploded with influxes from Asia and then from Peru's own Andean highlands, it has remained a city of fairly segregated neighborhoods. But led by Lima's cuisine — which is rapidly gaining worldwide renown for its freshness and creativity — that is changing. Sushi and ceviche chefs are learning from one another. The most popular street food is “five flavors” a rice and pasta dish with Italian, Chinese, Andean, Japanese and African influences. Restaurants that once hid their existence from all but the “in the know” are now advertising their presence with Web sites and — gasp — signs out front. For the tourist, it means days of exploring neighborhoods and attractions with distinct cultures and histories, interspersed with the spicy, sweet, and subtle gastronomic experience of how it all comes together.

### Friday

#### 5 p.m. 1 Park It in the Parks

Far from the city center but right up against the beach is the upscale neighborhood of Miraflores, which roughly translates as “look at all the pretty flowers.” Miraflores's parks of irises, cactuses, and palms make for a good stroll and introduction to Lima. Start off at Parque Kennedy at the heart of the neighborhood, which often holds spoken-word poetry and outdoor art exhibitions. Cross the Diagonal to Café Haiti (Diagonal 160; 51-1-445-0539) an old-school hangout of the Lima literati with bamboo chairs and a sidewalk café where you can sample Peru's signature

beverages: a tangy pisco sour for the alcoholically inclined (9 soles, or about \$3.20 at 2.8 soles to the dollar), and the lemony-sweet hierba luisa (4 soles) for the abstainers.

#### 7 p.m. 2 Sins of the Sea

In Lima, food rules. And in the cocina limeña, seafood is king. Just a block or two from the ocean with ceramic tile floors and an open-air foy, Pescados Captales (Avenida La Mar 1337; 51-1-421-8808, www.pescados-captales.com) combines the relaxation of the beach with the European refinement of Lima's upper caste. “Pecados capitales” refers to the seven deadly sins, all of which can be ordered from the menu. Start off with a little Freudian Lust (lujuria freudiana, grilled baby calamari for 26 soles), and then chow down on some creamy, indulgent greed (avaricia sole Rockefeller, 40 soles) or simple infidelity (infidelidad grilled swordfish, 34 soles) if you fear that your stomach may not forgive so easily.

#### 10 p.m. 3 Pyramids and Pie

For dessert, take a quick cab (5 soles) to La Bodega de la Trattoria (General Borgoño 784; 51-1-241-6899), the casual wing of La Trattoria, run by the South American television dessert diva Sandra Plevisani. Get a table out on the patio and order a bocanera de chocolate, a fudge-filled chocolate soufflé (22 soles), looking out at Huaca Pucllana, the complex of Incan structures across the street.

### Saturday

#### 9 a.m. 4 Heart of the City

Start the morning with a stroll up Jirón de la Unión, the pedestrian zone that leads to the Plaza Mayor, Lima's main square. Pass modish shops and colorful 200-year-old colonial facades and emerge into a wide square surrounded by some of Lima's finest architecture. This is the spot in which Francisco Pizarro founded the city in 1535 and in which Peruvians declared their independence in 1821. Tour the gold-leaf altars and paintings of the Lima Cathedral on the eastern edge, and if you have the time, visit the Church of San Francisco a couple of blocks northeast with its 17th-century convent and extensive network of catacombs (Plaza San Francisco; 51-1-427-1381; www.museocatacumbas.com).

#### Noon 5 Chifa, Chifa, Everywhere

From the city center, walk east a few blocks and a full hemisphere to Calle Capón, Lima's Chinatown. As a product of early-20th-century immigration, Peru has a large Chinese population, a fact observable by the proliferation of chifa



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(Peruvian-Chinese) restaurants all over the city. Chifa is spicier than traditional Chinese food, relying more on seafood and sauces and less on vegetables. One of the best spots is Salon Capón (Jirón Paruro 819; 51-1-426-9286), where you can try steamed langostino dumplings with tamarind sauce (7 soles) and spicy garlic-fried calamari (calamar chiu jin, 28 soles). Afterward, stroll through the pedestrian zone with the classic Chinatown arch on either end, stopping to have your palm read, the smell of sandalwood incense filling the air.

#### 1 p.m. 6 X-Rated Pottery

Through December 2008, if you can make it to only one museum in Lima, it should be the Museo Rafael Larco Herrera (Avenida Bolívar 1515; 51-1-461-1312; www.museolarco.org) in the Pueblo Libre district, which showcases pre-Columbian artifacts. The Gold Museum (www.museoroperu.com.pe) is another popular choice, but this year the Larco is featuring a collection of gold headdresses, ornaments and jewelry that rival the Gold Museum's in quality, if not quantity. The Larco's real appeal, however, is its collection of erotic pottery dating from the first millennium A.D., which begins with the expected giant phalluses and moves on to detailed depictions of sexual acts that are otherwise unviewable outside seedy video stores and corners of the Internet.

#### 3 p.m. 7 Desert Worship

Peru is known for the Inca, but Lima is a city built by and for the Spanish conquerors. Still, Inca sites remain, so take a cab to Pachacamac (20 to 25 soles from Miraflores; www.pachacamac.net; entry fee 6 soles), an archaeological site that housed an important oracle for more than 1,500 years with a beautifully restored Temple of the Moon. Skip the tour loop unless you pay your cabbie to drive you around, but shell out the extra 20 soles for a guide, since you can't get into the areas under work (which are many) without one. Bring a hat and sunglasses, because a visit to Pachacamac reminds you that Lima is one of the world's largest desert cities.

#### 6 p.m. 8 Make Mine a Maki

Not many cities offer both a world-class culinary scene and a currency significantly weaker than the dollar, so take advantage by visiting Matsuei (Manuel Bañon 260; 51-1-422-4323), a restaurant in San Isidro co-founded by Nobuyuki Matsuhisa of Nobu fame and Lima's best spot for sushi. The Japanese settled in Peru around the same time as the Chinese, even eventually sending one of their own, Alberto Fujimori, to the presidency (and lately, to the jailhouse). Fish as fresh as Lima's makes ideal ingredients in maki acevichado, a

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[nytimes.com/travel/lima](http://nytimes.com/travel/lima)

Japanese roll with the classic Peruvian ceviche sauce (30 soles), and pick up sushi (fried calamari with shrimp, salmon, and rice tartar, 24 soles).

#### 10 p.m. 9 Discos on the Outskirts

Lima's great population boom came in the 1950s when the Andean people migrated to the city in large numbers, creating scores of young towns, or pueblos jóvenes, on the outskirts. These young towns have grown up and are now sporting some of Lima's best night life in the form of a strip of clubs in the town of Los Olivos. Join the multigenerational crowds at the Karamba “salsoteca” for salsa music in a two-tiered club with dancing coconuts painted on the walls, or Kokus if you prefer rock, both on Boulevard Los Olivos, (www.boulevard-losolivos.com for both).

### Sunday

#### 10 a.m. 10 Bohemian Life

If Miraflores is Lima's Upper West Side, then Barranco is Greenwich Village. Home to Lima's bohemian upper crust like Mario Vargas Llosa, this onetime summer resort neighborhood is filled with art galleries, European style parks and pubs. From the marigold-studded Plaza de Armas, walk west down to the Bridge of Sighs, an old wooden bridge over a bougainvillea-lined walkway that when accompanied by guitar players and women selling single roses, manages to be both touristy and romantic. Wind your way over to the Lucia de la Puente gallery (Paseo Sáenz Peña 206A; 51-1-477-9740; www.gluciadelapuente.com), in Barranco, which has contemporary art exhibitions like an Incan ruin reconstructed out of old computer keyboards, changing monthly.

#### 1 p.m. 11 Getting Crafty

Rather than shopping the Inca Market's repetitive stalls of textiles and figurines, walk across the street from Lucia de la Puente to the artisans' collective Dédalo (Paseo Sáenz Peña 295; 51-1-477-0562), in Barranco. Each room in the labyrinthine century-old mansion houses a different type of craft, from jewelry and picture frames to lamps and leatherwork from more than 1,000 different local artists. A café in the back serves coffee, tea and selections from a decent wine list. It's a nice spot to sit and figure out how to explain to your partner the beautiful but useless blown glass vase you just bought.