

# Peru's Avian and Archeological Wonders

## Main Tour July 11– 21, 2025

## Post-Tour Machu Picchu Extension

## July 21– 25, 2025

### with Naturalist Journeys



**Compiled by guide Stephen Grace with local guide Juan Cardenas Carrasco. Our clients included Barb, Ellen, Ana, Carmen, Dori, Ron, Kathy and Gary.**

Over 15 days, we tallied 242 bird species from 54 families while exploring Peru's astonishing ecological diversity—from sunbaked deserts and coastal waters to the windswept puna and cloud-drenched Andean forests. Highlights included soaring Andean Condors, charismatic Humboldt Penguins, vivid Chilean Flamingos, and dazzling Andean Cock-of-the-rocks, alongside dry forest endemics, highland hummingbirds, and jewels of the cloud forest.

We witnessed conservation in action, observed rare species thriving in community-managed reserves, and felt a deep connection to the landscapes and cultures that sustain them.

Our heartfelt thanks to Juan Cardenas Carrasco, whose expert guiding enriched every moment, and to all who joined us on this unforgettable journey.

#### **BIRDS**

242 species were recorded, of which 3 were heard only, 15 were endemic and 2 were introduced. Details are included below.

The eBird link below details the 242 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

**[Peru's Avian and Archeological Wonders | 11–25 Jul 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)**

Following is a list of the mammals and reptiles we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

#### **MAMMALS (11 species)**

**White-tailed Deer** (*Odocoileus virginianus*) — Seen at Chaparri.

Although widespread from Canada to Peru, this adaptable species reaches the southern edge of its range in northwestern South America. Males shed and regrow antlers each year, using them during the rut for sparring.

**Sechuran Fox** (*Lycalopex sechurae*) — Seen at Chaparri; semi-tame.

This dry-forest specialist is South America's smallest canid and one of the few adapted to extreme aridity. It can survive long periods without drinking water by extracting moisture from food.

**Collared Peccary** (*Dicotyles tajacu*) — Seen at Chaparri; semi-tame.

Despite their pig-like appearance, peccaries belong to a separate family. They mark territory with scent glands near the rump and travel in tight-knit social groups.

**Spectacled (Andean) Bear** (*Tremarctos ornatus*) — Mother and cub observed in a rewilding enclosure at Chaparri; one wild bear spotted outside the enclosure.

South America's only bear species, this elusive cloud forest inhabitant is an important seed disperser. The cream-colored facial markings, which vary in shape and pattern, give the species its name and can be used to identify individuals.

**South American Sea Lion** (*Otaria flavescens*) — Observed along the coast during the first part of the tour.

Males form large harems and defend them with loud roars and physical displays. These pinnipeds haul out in noisy colonies along Peru's rocky coastlines and islands.

**Mountain Viscacha** (*Lagidium peruanum*) — Spotted among Inca ruins at Machu Picchu.

A relative of chinchillas, this high-Andean rodent resembles a rabbit with a long tail. It sunbathes on rocks and bounds with ease across steep terrain.

**Guayaquil Squirrel** (*Sciurus stramineus*) — Seen at Parque El Olivar in Lima.

One of the few tree squirrels found west of the Andes, it is distinguished by a pale underbelly and is often seen foraging in city parks and gardens.

**Piura Squirrel** (*Sciurus pyrrhinus*) — Seen at Chaparri.

This little-known, dry-forest squirrel is endemic to northern Peru, where it thrives in Prosopis-dominated woodland. Its taxonomy and distribution remain poorly understood.

**Black-eared Opossum** (*Didelphis marsupialis*) — Seen at Chaparri.

A nocturnal marsupial known for its adaptability and opportunistic diet, it has a prehensile tail and plays "dead" (thanatosis) when threatened.

**Striped Hog-nosed Skunk** (*Conepatus semistriatus*) — Seen at Chaparri.

Recognized by its bold dorsal stripe, this skunk emits a pungent spray when alarmed and forages by rooting in soil with its elongated snout.

**Long-tailed Weasel** (*Neogale frenata*) — Observed at the Sacred Garden in Cusco.

A sleek and secretive predator, this mustelid can take prey much larger than itself. Agile and fearless, it uses scent glands to mark its territory.

#### **Bat species identified at Chaparri using the Echo Meter Bat Detector:**

**Black Mastiff Bat** (*Molossus rufus*) — A widespread species found from Mexico to northern Argentina. Known for fast, high-flying behavior, often foraging well above the canopy at dusk.

**Greater Dog-like Bat** (*Peropteryx kappleri*) — A member of the Emballonuridae (sac-winged bats), typically roosting in hollow trees or rock crevices. Emits distinctive echolocation calls with frequent low-frequency components.

**Northern Ghost Bat** (*Diclidurus albus*) — A strikingly pale bat that roosts high in palm fronds and other exposed sites. One of the few Neotropical bats with nearly all-white fur, making it unmistakable in flight under certain lighting conditions.

**Big Crested Mastiff Bat** (*Promops centralis*) — A powerful flier that hunts insects over open areas and along forest margins, often high above the canopy. Its loud, low-frequency echolocation calls travel long distances, making it one of the more easily detected species during acoustic monitoring.

#### **REPTILES (2)**

**Boa Constrictor** (*Boa constrictor* sp.) — Seen at Chaparri.

This non-venomous constrictor subdues prey with powerful coils and can detect infrared heat signatures through specialized facial pits.

**Green Iguana** (*Iguana iguana*) — Observed at Playa Eten and Bosque de Pómac.

A large, mostly herbivorous lizard native to Central and South America, the Green Iguana uses its whip-like tail for defense and can drop from trees into water to escape predators. Juveniles are bright green, while adults range from dull olive to orange during breeding season.

## ANCIENT PERU TIMELINE & ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES WE VISITED

### Preceramic Period (Before 1800 BCE)

- **Caral-Supe (c. 3000–1800 BCE)**

Also known as **Norte Chico**, Caral-Supe developed along Peru's central coast. It is one of the **world's oldest civilizations**, emerging around the same time as **Egypt** and the **Indus Valley**.

As a "**pristine**" **civilization** (one that arose independently), Caral-Supe developed monumental pyramids, plazas, and irrigation systems—remarkably, with **no evidence of warfare**. It is often called the "**Mother Culture of the Andes**."

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### Initial Period (c. 1800–900 BCE)

- Marked by early use of **ceramics**—simple red or brown pottery with animal and geometric designs. Ceramics are key for archaeologists, helping to date sites and trace cultural connections across regions.
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### Early Horizon (900–200 BCE)

*Horizon periods* refer to times of widespread cultural unity across large regions, marked by shared art, religion, and political systems.

- **Chavín (c. 900–200 BCE)**

Based in the northern highlands, Chavín is considered a Horizon culture because its religious and artistic influence spread widely across the Andes during this era, unifying distant regions through shared iconography and ceremonial practices. Chavín culture is known for religious imagery of **fanged felines, serpents, and condors**, often combined in stylized, psychedelic designs suggesting trance states and shamanic rituals. Archaeological evidence points to the use of **hallucinogenic plants** in ceremonies. Strongly influenced by earlier **Cupisnique** culture.

- **Cupisnique (c. 1500–500 BCE)**

Located along the north coast of Peru, Cupisnique was a coastal predecessor of Chavín, known for distinctive ceramics—especially **double-spout-and-bridge (double stirrup) vessels** featuring intricate designs of fanged deities, animals, and abstract motifs, including depictions of a **spider deity**. This vessel style became a hallmark of Andean pottery for centuries.

- **Paracas (c. 800–100 BCE)**

Situated along the south coast, Paracas is known for vibrant **textiles**, cranial modification, and elaborate **mummified burials**; shows influence from Chavín.

**We observed the Candelabra geoglyph**—widely believed to have been created by the Paracas culture—from the sea during our boat trip to the Ballestas Islands.

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### Early Intermediate Period (200 BCE–600 CE)

*Intermediate periods* are characterized by regional diversity, with multiple independent cultures flourishing at once.

- **Nazca (c. 100 BCE–800 CE)**  
Located on the south coast, Nazca is famous for the **Nazca Lines**—vast desert geoglyphs visible from the air. **We flew over the Nazca Lines and observed them from above.**
- **Moche (c. 100–800 CE)**  
Based on the north coast, Moche culture is famed for monumental **pyramids, ceramics, and metalwork.**
- **Sites we visited:**
  - **Huaca de la Luna**—pyramid with murals near **Trujillo.**
  - **Huaca del Cao**—tomb of the **Lady of Cao**, a tattooed female ruler.
  - **Huaca Rajada**—tomb of the **Lord of Sipán**, a wealthy Moche ruler.
  - **Museo Tumbas Reales de Sipán**—showcasing Sipán's treasures.
- **Lima Culture (c. 100–650 CE)**  
Located near modern Lima, this culture built pyramids and established **Pachacamac Oracle**, a major pilgrimage site on the coast, **which we visited.**
- Originally built by the Lima, Pachacamac was later used and revered by other cultures, including the Wari, Ichma, and Inca.

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### Middle Horizon (600–1000 CE)

- **Wari (Huari) & Tiwanaku (Tiahuanaco)**  
Wari emerged in the central highlands near Ayacucho, while Tiwanaku was based near Lake Titicaca in Bolivia. Both were highland empires known for cities, roads, and administration.

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### Late Intermediate Period (1000–1470 CE)

- **Sicán (Lambayeque) (c. 700–1375 CE)**  
Located on the north coast, Sicán succeeded the Moche and was renowned for goldwork and pyramids. Later, the Chimú absorbed Sicán territory and cultural influences. **We visited Sicán National Museum and the Túcume Pyramids—the Valley of the Pyramids, later used by Chimú and Inca.** At its heart stands Huaca Larga, one of the longest pyramidal structures in the Americas.
- **Chimú (c. 900–1470 CE)**  
Also on the north coast, the Chimú empire was famed for adobe cities and irrigation systems. **We visited Chan Chan**—largest adobe city in the Americas.

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### Late Horizon (1470–1532 CE): The Inca Empire (Tawantinsuyu)

The Inca rose from the highlands near **Lake Titicaca**, consolidating power in **Cusco**. They unified a vast empire through roads, farming, religion, and engineering—leaving a legacy that endures across Peru today.

### Key Dates

- **c. 1200 CE:** Legendary founding of **Cusco** by Manco Cápac, considered the first **Sapa Inca** (ruler) and the mythical founder of Inca civilization. He is credited with establishing the Kingdom of Cusco, which later expanded into the Inca Empire.
- **1438 CE:** Expansion begins under **Pachacuti.**

- **1470 CE:** Inca conquest of the Chimú Empire, marking their dominance over the coast and signaling the start of their imperial peak.
- **1527–1532 CE:** Inca civil war between **Huáscar** and **Atahualpa**.
- **1532 CE:** Spanish capture of Atahualpa.
- **1533 CE:** Fall of **Cusco**.

### Inca Empire Facts

- The Inca revered **Inti**, the sun god, who was central to their religion and closely associated with the Sapa Inca.
- The Inca called their empire **Tawantinsuyu**, meaning "Land of Four Quarters," reflecting its division into administrative regions centered on **Cusco**.
- Empire stretched more than **2,500 miles**, from **southern Colombia to central Chile**.
- Achieved this without the **wheel, horses, steel**, or a **written language**.
- Used **quipu** (knotted cords) for record-keeping—possibly even for historical records.
- Developed efficient **storage systems** (qollqas) to stockpile food and goods.
- Operated on a **labor-based tribute system (mit'a)** instead of money.
- Developed advanced **terrace farming** techniques to maximize agriculture on steep Andean slopes.
- Practiced the **"vertical archipelago"** strategy—managing resources from multiple ecological zones through seasonal migrations and trade.
- Built extensive **stone masonry** with precisely cut stones fitted without mortar, many of which still stand today.
- Constructed an expansive **road network** (Qhapaq Ñan) covering over 25,000 miles.
- The Inca spoke **Quechua**, a language still widely spoken across the Andes today and recognized as an official language of Peru.

### Sites We Visited:

- **Cusco**—Inca capital with impressive stonework, once the center of the empire.
- **Sacred Valley**—fertile agricultural heartland featuring Inca terraces, ceremonial centers, and traditional villages.
- **Ollantaytambo**—fortress town with massive stone terraces, expanded by Pachacuti as a royal estate and later used by Manco Inca Yupanqui as a stronghold of resistance against the Spanish.
- **Machu Picchu**—iconic citadel perched high in the Andes, likely a royal estate and ceremonial site for Pachacuti and his lineage.
- **Sacsayhuamán**—Inca ceremonial complex with remarkable stonework perched above Cusco.
- **Temple of the Sun** and the site where Manco Inca Yupanqui's forces famously breached the river defenses during the 1536 siege of Cusco—an early triumph in the Inca resistance against Spanish rule.

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### Spanish Conquest (1532 and After)

- Deadly diseases like smallpox, introduced by Europeans, had already devastated the Inca population before the Spanish arrival, weakening the empire and leaving it vulnerable to conquest by Spanish forces with horses, steel weapons, and firearms.
- The Inca Empire was further weakened by a brutal **civil war** between brothers **Huáscar** and **Atahualpa**.
- In **1532**, Atahualpa defeated Huáscar.
- That same year, **Francisco Pizarro** captured Atahualpa at Cajamarca.
- Despite a massive ransom, Atahualpa was executed in **1533**.
- The Spanish founded **Lima** (1535) and **Trujillo**, looting and repurposing ancient sites.

- **Manco Inca Yupanqui**, originally installed as a puppet ruler by the Spanish, led a rebellion against them from **1536 to 1572**
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### **Peru's Independence**

- **José de San Martín** declared independence in **Lima** on **July 28, 1821**.
- **Simón Bolívar** led the decisive campaigns, defeating Spain at **Junín** and **Ayacucho** in the Andes in **1824**.