

Christmas Festivities in Peru

Christmas is celebrated in different ways around the world, and here in Peru, traditional Christmas' have been a way of life for centuries, with the first festivities in South America being documented in 1535. Fast-forward to the current day, and Christmas is celebrated throughout the country with great devotion and traditions.





Nativity scenes, or Retablos, are extremely popular amongst Peruvians, with the manger, or presepio, as the main focus, surrounded by intricately designed figures. Retablos come in the form of paintings, depicting religious scenes and events, and were used by early priests to convert the Indigenous population.

Often, the manger in a nativity scene is carved from wood by the Quechua Indians, and on Noche Buena, Santa, or Nino Jesus, comes to fill stockings left by the manger. La Noche Buena is celebrated on December 24th, the main day for Christmas celebrations, including the market of Santurantikuy, (the buying of the saints), held in the Plaza de Armas in Cusco.



Santurantikuy (a mix of Spanish and Quechua words that mean ‘sale of Saints’) begins at around 4am on December 24th when eager artisans, sculptors and religious image makers from surrounding Andean communities arrive with their colourful wares, lasting well into the evening of December 24th. The Plaza de Armas comes alive, awash with vibrant colours, and in traditional Peruvian-style, the artisans sell a local drink called ponche, a hot (alcoholic) drink to keep rosy cheeks at bay.

Most families buy the pieces for their nativity scenes, while campesinos, or farm people, sell plants and mosses, used in the traditional nacimientos. Families will keep their nativity scenes up until la Bajada de los Reyes (the arrival of the three wise men).





Here at Inkaterra, we celebrate with a special dinner on New Year's Eve and Christmas Day and plentiful decorations, ensuring all of our guests get just as into the festive spirit as we do. Those visiting Cusco for the festive celebrations can stay at [Inkaterra La Casona](#), a cosy 16th century colonial manor, set in the heart of the city.

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