



The exterior of Explora Valle Sagrado in Sacred Valley, Peru – Explora Valle Sagrado

A JOURNEY THROUGH EXOTIC PERU

By Andrew Harper

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Few countries are as endlessly fascinating as **Peru**. A succession of ancient cultures can be dated as far back as 3200 B.C. And in the 16th century, the Incas administered what was probably the largest empire in the world at the time. When their last stronghold, Vilcabamba, fell in 1572, Peru's gold and silver became the foundation of Spanish wealth and power. Today the inhabitants of Lima are mostly mestizo or of European descent, but 45 percent of the country's people are still Amerindians, and in the mountains, indigenous populations continue to speak the native languages Quechua and Aymara. Peru's terrain rises from stark coastal desert to the glaciers of the Andes — Peru has 37 peaks over 6,000 meters (19,685 feet) in height — and then descends steeply to the Amazon jungle.

