GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Examine Peru’s list of exports. How is Senna’s life related to Peru’s primary exports?
- How does poverty affect a child’s opportunity to go to, and thrive in, school?
- Peru has had a number of constitutions. What might this mean for the country’s citizens? In what ways could this impact the country’s poor?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Capital City: Lima

Population of Peru: 30.7 million (2016 est.)
Population of Lima: 8.769 million

Mobile/Cellular Telephones: 34.236 million (2016 est.)

Peru has a long history and was home to the famed Inca Empire. The Inca were conquered by the Spanish “conquistadors” in 1533, putting Peru under Spanish rule until the 1800s. In 1821 the country declared its independence.

Located in South America, Peru is bordered by the South Pacific Ocean, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile. The Andes Mountains, home of La Rinconada, run along the eastern portion of the country. These differences in terrain, from the ocean to the mountains, create a variety of climates, ranging from tropical areas along the coast to the frigid Andes.
GOVERNMENT

In 1980, after years of military rule, Peru returned to democratic leadership. The election of President Alberto Fujimori in 1990 marked a turnaround, and time of increased stability. However, Fujimori’s reliance on authoritarian leadership resulted in his being ousted from the presidency in 2000. A caretaker government was installed until public elections could be held in 2001. Since 2001, the country has continued to work toward improving the living conditions of Peruvians.

Peru is a constitutional republic in which the president serves as both the chief of state and the head of government. The president is elected every five years by popular vote. The people also elect two vice presidents every five years. The Congress of the Republic of Peru, responsible for making the country’s laws, is also elected to five-year terms by popular vote.

PEOPLE

Education

Percent of the population considered literate: Citizens able to read and write over the age of 15.

Females  91.7%
Males  97.3%

Ethnic Group Distribution

Amerindian  45%
Mestizo  37%
White  15%
Black, Japanese, Chinese, and other  3%

Religious Group Distribution

Roman Catholic  81.3%
Evangelical  12.5%
None/Other  6.2%

Languages

Spanish (official)  84.1%
Quechua (official)  13.0%
Aymara (official)  1.7%
Ashaninka  0.3%

Rural vs. Urban

Percentage of the country’s population living in urban areas: 78.6%

ECONOMY

Peru’s economy is a reflection of its varied geography. The coastal waters provide excellent fishing, while the Andes Mountains and coastal lands host a wide range of mineral resources. Peru is the world’s second largest producer of silver and third largest producer of copper, but the country’s reliance on exporting minerals while depending on imports for foodstuffs is a cause for concern. In addition, a lack of infrastructure, including inland roads, slows the country’s growth. The poverty rate in Peru has fallen by 23 percent since 2002, but additional work in this area is still needed. As of 2015 about 23% percent of Peru’s population was living below the poverty line, with rates of 46% in rural areas and 15% in urban areas.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in US$: 1891 billion


Annual Imports and Exports

Peru imports $38.35 billion in petroleum and petroleum products, chemicals, plastics, machinery, vehicles, telephones and telecommunication equipment, iron and steel, wheat, corn, soybean products, paper, cotton, and vaccines and medicines. (2016 est.)

Peru exports $38.09 billion in copper, gold, lead, zinc, tin, ore, molybdenum, silver, crude petroleum and petroleum products, natural gas, coffee, asparagus, fruit, apparel, textiles, fishmeal, fish, chemicals, fabricated metal products and machinery, and alloys (2016 est.)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Copper, silver, gold, petroleum, timber, fish, iron ore, coal, phosphate, potash, hydropower, and natural gas

RESOURCES

• Khan Academy at www.khanacademy.org
• Nations Online at www.nationsonline.org
• The World Bank website at www.worldbank.org

All data was reported in 2015 unless otherwise noted.