

6 drinks you need to taste in Peru

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Thanks to Machu Picchu, the Inca Trail and the burgeoning tourist hotspot of Chachapoyas, Peru is a haven for outdoor adventurers.

And all that trekking, hiking and horseback riding make for thirsty work, so here are six must-try Peruvian drinks to keep you hydrated and help you avoid the altitude sickness all too common at heights that can reach more than 12,000 feet:

Coca Tea



Photo courtesy of Photo via Getty Images/Bonnycaton

Trekking in Peru is an unforgettable experience, but it can also come with the unpleasant effects of altitude sickness: shortness of breath, nausea and headaches.

Drinking tea made with coca leaves helps to clear your head and minimize feelings of illness. Yes, it contains the raw active ingredient in cocaine; no, you're not going to get high (locals have been chewing coca leaves to combat altitude sickness for thousands of years). Instead, "altitude tea" is a mild stimulant that tastes a bit like green tea and is offered by tour guides and in most hotels.

Peruvian coffee



Photo courtesy of Photo via Getty Images/Asaf Salomon

It might not have the cache of neighboring Colombia, but coffee has been grown in Peru since the 1700s, and the country is among the world's top 20 producers. Locally grown beans are ubiquitous. Peruvians take their coffee strong, black or with a little evaporated milk, and a spoon or two of sugar.

Inca Kola

A post shared by [Inca Kola](#) (@inca_kola) on

Inca Kola is just about everywhere you look in Lima: fast-food menus, street-food vendors, and advertisements all over the city. The sugary, lemon-flavored neon yellow soda was invented in Peru in 1935, and has since become a source of national pride. If you're not from Peru, you're just as likely to hate it as love it.

Macerated ant cocktail

A post shared by [Ricardo Temoche](#) (@ricardotemoche) on

Ants are a popular snack for locals (and a great source of protein and calcium), and lately they've made their way into cocktails. The Caspiroleta De Hormigas – made famous by El Batan Del Tayta restaurant in the town of Chachapoyas – is made with rum, chocolate, vanilla and drunken ants. These also happen to be freakishly huge ants that are macerated in rum and used to decorate the glass and flavor the drink.

Pisco sour



Photo courtesy of Photo via Getty Images/Peffan

The unofficial drink of Peru is typically made of pisco (local grape brandy), lemon juice, egg white, and simple syrup. Sipping a eucalyptus pisco sour from a wooden straw out of a coconut shell is a particularly enjoyable experience, as is enjoying the frothy cocktail while admiring the view of Gocta falls.

Muña tincture

At the top of Kuelap ruins, touring the very outer settlement walls, our guide pulled us aside and told us we needed to make an offering. He took small leaves from the muña plant, also known as Andean mint, and rubbed them together between his fingers before inhaling deeply and instructing us all to do the same.

Muña can also make a tincture that helps with altitude sickness – and it was used in mummification burial ceremonies in the ancient time of the cloud forest warriors.