

SELVA IN ACTION

Important Items to Consider When Traveling to Peru



COVID -19 RESTRICTIONS

TRAVELING TO PERU

- It is your responsibility to educate yourself on the latest travel requirements. As of this writing (10-07-2023), there are no COVID-19 restrictions. Be sure you check the US Embassy in Peru (pe.usembassy.gov) and also any airline restrictions.

PASSPORT

- **You must have a valid passport at time of entry that will not expire within 6 months of entry.**
- **US Citizens** do not need a visa. Your entry stamp will be good for 90 days. If you are not a US citizen, please check the requirements for your country.
- Please make a copy of the photo/number page of your passport to leave at home (with a friend or family member) and bring an extra copy to Peru. Keep the copy with you so you don't have to carry your passport.
- Please send a copy of the photo/number page to SIA Volunteer Coordinator, Aryn Yancher, at selvainactionperu@gmail.com

FLIGHTS

- There are currently no flights from the U.S. directly to Iquitos. You must fly to Lima first.
- Some airlines fly non-stop to Lima.
- Some airlines have flights with 1-2 stops between the U.S. and Lima.
- The more stops, the longer (and less expensive) the flight.
- Airlines most frequently utilized (thus far) by SIA volunteers are: American, LATAM, Continental, United, Copa, Delta, Avianca, and TACA/LACSA. Recently, we have also discovered that JetBlue and Spirit have low cost/no frills (luggage restrictions/no meals) flights to Lima, but this can always change.
- Some airlines have reciprocal agreements for frequent flier miles. Be sure to check with your frequent flyer miles carrier.
- Travelocity, Booking.com, Latinoair, and Despegar usually provide good, discounted fares. The flights are not usually non-stop, but the rates are often half of what United or American are charging. You can also check on Hopper.com for the best time to purchase your tickets.
- We have discovered that going on to Travelocity and doing a search from your departure point to Iquitos is often less expensive than flying to Lima and then doing a separate booking to Iquitos. Additionally, you will be booked on airlines with better luggage policies.

- That being said, should you decide to spend time in Lima before you go to Iquitos, you can fly to Iquitos on LATAM, SKY Airlines, or Star Perú. There may be more airlines as travel increases. LATAM has the most flights and both LATAM and SKY are reliable.
- If the most convenient flight from your departure city to Lima does not arrive in time to transfer to Iquitos on the same day, or if you wish to spend time in Lima before (or after) going to Iquitos, there is a Wyndham Hotel at the airport and a Holiday Inn across the street. A less expensive alternative is the LIMAQ, which is about 10 minutes away from the airport by taxi). Two hotels used by Peruvian American Medical Society members in the Miraflores (upscale) area of Lima are Casa Andina and Hotel Monte Real. AirBnB also has some great deals in Lima.

LUGGAGE

- Check **VERY CAREFULLY** with your carrier(s) regarding checked-in and carry-on luggage.
- Your carrier from the U.S. to Perú may allow 2 suitcases, a carry-on, and a personal item (some charge for luggage, some don't). The airlines from Lima to Iquitos may not allow the same amount of luggage unless you pay extra or unless your connecting flight is on the same airline and/or is within 24 hours of your arrival in Lima.
- If you have to pay for an additional or overweight suitcase in Lima, it might be necessary to exit the check-in area, go to a different place to pay, and then return with your receipt before receiving your boarding pass.
- Different airlines have different weight limits for checked luggage and carry-ons, so be sure to check.
- **A head's up about liquids**...on International flights, liquids must be packed in your checked luggage. On domestic flights within Peru, liquids **MUST** be in your carry-on luggage. So, if you are bringing anything liquid to Lima, be sure it gets transferred to your carry-on **BEFORE** you check your bags. Also, if you buy a bottle of Pisco (Peruvian Brandy) or any other liquid in Iquitos, put it in your carry-on when going to Lima and then transfer it to your other luggage **BEFORE** you check in to return to the U.S., otherwise it will be confiscated.
- You may take bottled water on domestic flights (within Peru).
- Keep **all valuables** in your carry-on or backpack/fanny pack and **leave your good jewelry at home**.

MONEY

- Cash or credit card only – No Traveler's Checks
- **DON'T** try and change money at a U.S. bank or your U.S. airport of departure before you leave. The exchange rate at U.S. airports is not as good as what you'll get in Perú. We have found that the exchange rate is usually better in Iquitos than it is in Lima; so, if you go through Lima, do not change more money in Lima than you will need there. US Dollars can be used at the airport.
- For information regarding the (approx.) current exchange rate, go to www.oanda.com, look at the currency converter, and compare U.S. dollars with Peruvian Nuevo Soles. Expect the actual exchange rate to be lower than what's on the Internet. If you have an iPhone, use your Units Plus icon and then check the currency converter. It's a \$ in a green square. As of today, the exchange rate was 3.8 soles to the dollar, which means it will be about 3.7 or lower in Peru. In the past few months, the exchange rate has fluctuated between 3.8 and 3.65.

- There is a money exchange booth (2nd floor – all the way to the back) and several ATMs at the Lima Airport. If one ATM doesn't recognize your card (and that could happen), try another one. We have had the best luck with BNP, BCP, and ScotiaBank. Be aware that you will be charged a fee (usually \$3-\$7, but it's worth it for the convenience).
- Some banks limit the amount you can take (400 soles, 700 soles) per day.
- You will be tempted to use the GlobalNet ATM. There is a high fee connected with using this ATM, but I have never had a problem with a card being rejected.
- There is a group of ATMs located on the 2nd floor of the Lima airport. Go up the escalator and turn left. The ATMs are located down the corridor and to the right of the Starbucks.
- It is easier to get cash (in *soles*) from the ATM than it is to go into the bank and try and change your U.S. dollars. Going into a bank takes forever and the bank will ask to see your passport to conduct the transaction.
- You may find that your best bet is to keep the majority of your money in your bank in the U.S., and use your ATM card to withdraw it, as needed.
- In Iquitos, there is an ATM at the airport and there are several ATMs near the main plaza and the surrounding area. Many ATMs have guards and secure, enclosed environments in which to withdraw funds. Withdrawal fees may (or may not) apply.
- Be sure you familiarize yourself with the Peruvian money. The denominations for coins are not the same as in the U.S. and the sizes can be confusing. The US \$1 coin is the same size as the Peruvian 1 Sol coin.
- Almost all hotels and big restaurants will accept U.S. \$\$ and credit cards – small restaurants, some stores, hostels and hospedajes (motels) may not.
- U.S. Dollars - Some, but not all, vendors will accept them. Don't bring anything bigger than a \$20 bill for use at local vendors. Money changers will accept all bills in good condition.
- If you decided to bring U.S. money and exchange it in Perú, be sure to go **into** a bank before you leave the U.S. to get the money you are going to bring. Don't take it from the ATM. Get **NEW, UNWRINKLED, UNFOLDED** bills that have no writing or ink spots on them – **and keep them that way**. Most vendors won't accept the bills if they're folded, wrinkled, written on, or torn because the Peruvian banks won't take them. Vendors and banks in Perú do not accept U.S. coins.
- We will try to have a sufficient amount of Peruvian currency available if you need to change money.
- Beware of counterfeit Peruvian money. At least once per trip, one of us ends up with some funny money. Hold the bills up to the light and check for the thickness of the paper, watermarks and metallic strips. Ask someone you trust to show you how to do this.
- Most hotels and large restaurants will accept Visa or MasterCard.
- Foreigners can be easy targets for robberies on the street – so be vigilant. Keep your wallet in a front pocket and be sure your purse is zipped and secured; a shoulder bag, backpack, or fanny pack is recommended.

MISCELLANEOUS

- You may wish to register with the U.S. Embassy or other relevant embassy in Lima, Peru. This is not necessary but the option is available and might give you a comfort level knowing that the Embassy is aware that you are “in country.” Go to <https://step.state.gov/step/> to register.

CELL PHONES

- **Please keep your phone someplace very safe. Try not to have phone or text conversations while walking in public in the city. If you are using it to take photos, hold on tightly.**
- Your cell phone should work in Lima, Iquitos, and may or may not work at the lodge. It may not work in the village.
- Sometimes, your cell carrier “locks” your phone – so, if you’re not sure you can make and receive calls internationally, verify it with your carrier before you leave. They will need to unlock the phone.
- Some carriers have special international talk and text features that you can “turn on” via the carrier’s website. This will allow you to talk and text for less. Just remember to cancel it when you return home or talk to your carrier about their Global Service policy, and pick the one that suits your needs. For example: AT&T has a global policy that costs \$10/day for unlimited talk and text.
- Your best bet for “staying connected” is to download **WhatsApp** and be sure the people “at home” have it, too. You can talk and text for free. It has video talk capabilities. The connection varies from fantastic to awful. It mainly depends on the weather, your location, and the location of the person with whom you are speaking. FaceTime should also work fine.
- There are telephone “cabinas” (locations with pay phone booths) throughout Iquitos where you can use a pay phone for a phenomenally LOW cost to make international calls. This is the least expensive way to make international calls, however, there is no guarantee that you will get a good connection. Telephone calling cards are also available at a very minimal cost.
- SIA team members have local phones. Please don’t hesitate to ask us to use the phone.

COMPUTERS

- There is little or NO wi-fi service at the lodge. You may have to use your phone as a link.
- There is wi-fi service at various restaurants and hotels in Iquitos-some faster than others.
- There are computer “cabinas” throughout the city. Service is a little faster than at some of the hotels, but not much better.
- There is also now free wi-fi connection at the main plaza and other plazas around Iquitos. Speed is not guaranteed.
- There are a few restaurants with wi-fi hot spots in town, but all require purchasing something to eat. Speed is definitely not guaranteed.
- Even if you have a U.S. “hot spot,” it may or may not work in Iquitos.

- Don't promise your friends and family that you will Skype – because it is likely that you may NOT be able to do that. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Google Meet works where service is available.

Suggested Packing List for Working in the Jungle

CLOTHES

- In general, it is better to wear light, cotton clothing, both for comfort and ease of washing and drying. Scrubs are good.
- Long pants for jungle trekking and working (cotton, safari, cargo, or army-style that tie around the ankles are preferable). Lightweight jeans are fine.
- Shorts: **Not recommended** due to an abundance of mosquitoes, chiggers, and other biting insects, but you are welcome to take your chances.

Please consider bringing the following:

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| • Bandanna | • Cotton socks |
| • Wide brim hat (to avoid sunburn) | • Sneakers |
| • Long-sleeve shirts | • Sturdy hiking or rubber boots |
| • Tee-shirts | • Sun glasses |
| • Lightweight jacket | • Flip-flops (for pool and shower) |
| • Swimsuit for the pool | |

NECESSITIES

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| • Lightweight Backpack or bag to carry your "stuff" | • Allergy tablets (if applicable)* |
| • Powerful flashlight | • Rain jacket or poncho |
| • Extra Batteries | • Chilly Pad (definitely necessary -- available at WalMart or Amazon) |
| • Sunblock with zinc– the stronger the better | • Insect repellant - (lotion and/or spray) – You can purchase a natural repellant called REPEL in the camping section at Wal-Mart. Its lemon eucalyptus scent has proven to be effective in protecting from biting insects. There are "recipes" for make-it-yourself citronella repellant on the Internet. |
| • Hand sanitizer | |
| • Anti-malaria pills | |
| • Antacid Tablets* | |
| • Anti-diarrhea pills* | |
| • Small Packs of Kleenex | |
| • Personal toiletries | |
| • Any personal medication you need** | |

*We usually have these items available

**No guarantee that what you need will be available in Iquitos

OPTIONAL PACKING ITEMS, BUT WORTH CONSIDERING

- Camera** w/extra batteries or battery charger
- Power converter (220 to 110) – specific for South America if you use a US hair dryer
- Canteen or your personal water bottle- or you can buy a bottle of water in Iquitos. It can be refilled, as needed, at the lodge or via our own water supply.
- Moist towelettes (“wipies”)
- Binoculars (if you want to see some of the birds)
- Lip balm (w/sunscreen)
- Plastic Ditty bag or baggies (to keep things dry)
- Balance Bars or other protein snack
- Trail Mix or your favorite snacks
- Airborne (for the plane trips)
- Small First Aid kit
- Cell phone with charger
- 1 large garbage bag (you don’t want to have to put damp clothes in your suitcase – should you have damp clothes when you leave)
- Money belt/fanny pack or other “safe” place for carrying valuables
- Lightweight skirt (optional)
- Lightweight sweats (it can get cool in the evening and early morning)
- Small folding umbrella
- Sandals-for city and lodge ONLY
- Journal/writing pad/pens/pencils
- Biodegradable camping soap***

**Note – some cameras are not made to withstand the humidity of the jungle. KNOW your camera. Several of our cameras have succumbed to the ravages of rust due to the humidity.

***This soap is environmentally friendly. It can be used as hand soap, shower soap, and shampoo, so it helps with packing “light”. You can even use it to wash clothes.

SIA has some equipment and supplies stored in Iquitos. You are welcome to use whatever you need, if it is available. Among those items are:

Clipboards Rubber boots Various office supplies Tents

LODGING

- On Saturday, May 4, SIA will make the arrangements for you to stay at a hotel in Iquitos. **Please advise if you prefer to make your own arrangements.**
- We can also assist with arrangements if you are arriving early or staying later than May 10 and plan to spend the night (or several nights) in Iquitos.
- From May 5-May 9 we will be sleeping at the Amazon Garden Ecolodge Boutique. To see the lodge, please go to their webpage: amazongardenecolodge.com.

- Rooms range from double to quadruple occupancy, depending on the size of our group. Expect that roommates will be assigned to you. Please contact Anita Soluna (anita@pams.org) if you have roommate preferences.
- SIA will handle the reservations and all transportation arrangements to and from the lodge. Please advise should you plan to arrive early or extend your stay at the lodge after the mission.
- We will be eating breakfast and dinner at the lodge's restaurant. (Lunch will be in the village and is being provided by the local municipality.)
- The water in the showers at the lodge is **not** heated, neither is it cold. It is usually lukewarm because the sun heats the water tank. You are welcome to bring a solar shower, if you wish.

Note to Medical Team Applicants

Based on the most recent medical campaigns, the following conditions were the most prevalent:

1. Anemia
2. Parasitosis
3. Headache
4. Backache
5. UTI's

6. Gastrointestinal complaints
7. Malaria
8. Vision
9. Superficial mycosis
10. Colds

11. Dental carries
12. High blood pressure
13. Diabetes
14. Skin conditions
15. Paralysis

Other issues of note:

- Tuberculosis and Dengue continue to pose a danger to this population.
- Malaria and h. pylori tests frequently show a false negative.
- Roughly 50% of the patients seen have had bouts of malaria 5+ times.
- In 2007, only 4 women in 125 families surveyed had ever received a Pap smear.
- In 2018, of 12 women tested, two had positive results after PAP and IVAA testing; in 2019, of 49 women tested, two had positive results after PAP and IVAA. There were no positive tests in 2023.
- Working Conditions: We mainly work in school classrooms and churches, which can be extremely primitive.
- There will be water in the village. (We bring our own drinking water.)
- There is little or no refrigeration.
- There are an insufficient number of medical-type exam tables.
- There is no x-ray equipment
- Medical lab tests are available, but limited.
- Dental caries is an extremely serious problem, especially in young children.

IMMUNIZATIONS and PRESCRIPTIONS

It's very important that you consult with a qualified medical practitioner (travel medicine specialist) before undertaking a Selva in Action expedition. Be sure to review ALL recommended vaccinations and medications with your practitioner.

The following information is a **recommendation only** and is in no way to be considered as medical advice.

- Typhoid
- Yellow Fever
- Tetanus / Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A & B

The above shots are HIGHLY recommended. Do not wait until just before you leave to get these, because some come in a weekly series.

Malaria is endemic in the Amazon Basin region in which you will be working. Malaria prophylaxis is strongly recommended. You need a prescription for **anti-malarial** medicine. There are several on the market. Some are taken daily and others weekly. You and your physician will have to determine which one is right for you. Keep in mind that, if you decide to take Mefloquine (the once-a-week pill), you must start taking it 1-2 weeks prior to departure and 2-4 weeks after returning- so don't wait too long to decide about your malaria meds, and be sure to take it as prescribed. **In other words, don't forget to take it after the mission.**

Note: Anti-malaria medication is NOT available in Iquitos.

The CDC can provide information. For the best information, please see the following website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/pdf/travelers.pdf>.

Other CDC web pages that you might find helpful or interesting are:

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationPerú.aspx>

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowBookCh4-DengueFever.aspx>

To prevent Zika, Dengue, and Malaria (even in the City, not just in the jungle), use insect repellent (you may not see the insects, but they know how to find you).

During the mission, SIA doctors will be available for consultation and recommendations in case of infections or other illnesses.

For the management of TRAVELER'S DIARRHEA:

1. avoid uncooked foods like salads, unless prepared under specific guidelines (eating salad at the jungle lodge should not present any problems).
2. avoid buying foods sold by street vendors
3. drink only bottled water or other bottled refreshments
4. If you wish to "eat out" in Iquitos, please ask us for recommendations!!

As prophylaxis (to avoid diarrhea), the CDC advises use of Trimetoprin/sulfamethoxazol (Bactrim) Double strength once a day. We will have this on hand or you can bring your own. You will need a prescription.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **When you arrive in Lima, you will be arriving at the International section. After you pass through immigration, be sure to go to baggage claim and pick up your luggage. Even if you are flying directly to Iquitos on the same airline, your luggage **WILL NOT** be transferred. You will have to go through customs first. Then you must either (1) exit the International terminal and re-enter in the area marked NATIONAL, or (2) walk directly into the terminal and, either way, that's where you'll check in for your flight to Iquitos.**
- Please note that if our daily schedule says we are leaving at 6 AM or 9 AM or 4 PM or whatever time is indicated, we **WILL BE LEAVING** at that time, so it's best to plan to be early. Please don't be late for anything!!!
- During the mission, your clothes will get dirty – don't bring anything you really care about. Scrubs work well. You are welcome to bring clothes/shoes that you can give away at the end of the trip.
- There are options for doing laundry:
 1. Do it yourself in your sink or shower (or in the river) – no guarantee it will dry, but there are clotheslines in the bungalows at the lodge.
 2. Take it to a laundry in Iquitos – pay by the kilo – they will wash, dry, and fold (very inexpensive)
 3. Have it done at a hotel (more expensive) if you stay in Iquitos
- Mosquitoes (zancudos)– there will be plenty, and you will quickly learn to dance the Zancudo Samba. Don't ignore the note under "Necessities" about bringing both spray and lotion repellent. You will want to spray your clothes and your boots.
- Chiggers (izangos)- try to avoid wearing shorts and walking barefoot or with sandals when going through the jungle or the grass, including the grass in the sidewalk medians in town. These little, red, fuzzy guys will climb up your legs and dig in. They'll bury themselves under your skin in the most uncomfortable places; you'll get big, red welts, and they'll itch like crazy. (We have them here in the U.S., too.). Although it's not fashionable, wear your socks over your pants before putting your boots/shoes on when walking in the jungle. And don't forget to spray your boots and shoes with repellent. Don't say you weren't warned!!
- Bugs/spiders/lizards/snakes – it's the jungle. They live there. But it's not like in the movies. They aren't lurking around every corner or hanging from the trees just waiting to get you! Please keep your eyes open and watch where you step. If you slip, don't reach for the closest tree – no telling what you'll grab, and some trees have stickers.
- [Let us know if you'll need a walking stick.](#)

- There will be Western-style bathrooms in the village. We will have toilet paper available, but most travelers carry a roll in their backpacks.
 - If you see a barrel or bucket with water in the bathroom, it means you are going to have to use the bowl within to scoop up water and “flush” the toilet. It may take a couple of tries.
 - Everyone: Helpful Hint - If you do have to drop your drawers in the village bathrooms, be sure to spray repellent in the air and/or on your exposed skin **immediately** so you don’t become a target for biting insects.
- Plan on getting wet...and please bring the appropriate rain gear for you. Some people prefer ponchos, others lightweight coats or jackets with hoods; some bring umbrellas. We will be only a few degrees south of the Equator. It rains a lot (often without warning) and the humidity can be very high. You could be in the city in the rain, on a mototaxi in the rain, on a boat in the rain, in the jungle in the rain, in the village in the rain, or at the lodge in the rain. The sky may not look like it will rain, but it will rain. Not all the boats are covered completely, and even the ones that are covered do not always have curtains.
- Go with the flow; expect the unexpected
 - Daily plans can change in an instant.
 - Our planned agenda times and “jungle time” may not coincide.
 - River passageways may be blocked by debris depending on the height of the river.
 - Boat motors could have problems.
 - Each village is given a set day to participate during the mission, but we have no control over how many patients show up on a given day. Some days might be heavier than others.

It’s all part of the adventure.

- Be sure to leave room in your suitcase for the handcrafts and souvenirs that you might want to purchase and take home with you.

Some Helpful Do’s and Don’ts

1. **Don’t throw toilet paper in the toilet; use the trashcan next to the seat.** This is the rule no matter where you are in Perú, including hotels, restaurants, the village, and the lodge. The septic and sewer systems just can’t handle the paper.
2. Do carry toilet paper or tissues with you. Many public places and restaurants don’t provide it. We will have a supply for use during the mission.
3. Hand washing - Some places may not provide soap or paper towels; others may have a bath towel to be used by all! Having your own hand sanitizer works best. We will have plenty during the mission.
4. Do expect to be hugged and kissed on the cheek by Peruvians when they introduce themselves and when they say farewell.
5. Do drink only bottled water – and consider carrying a refillable, water bottle with you. Water will be available at the lodge and during the mission.
6. Do try to learn some Spanish words and use them whenever possible.
7. Don’t assume anyone speaks English or that raising your voice will help the person understand you.

8. Do ask the cost of a taxi or mototaxi ride BEFORE getting in. Tourists are frequently charged more than locals. Ask a SIA team member or the receptionist if you stay at a hotel so you will know what is a reasonable cost to your destination.
9. Don't allow yourself to be easily distracted – thieves use many tactics to divert your attention.
10. Do keep an eye on all your possessions; if you put something down, it may not be there when you return.
11. Do take adapter plugs. Perú uses both U.S.-style flat-pin plugs and European-style round-pin plugs. It's best to be prepared. Often there is only a two-prong outlet, so bring a 3-prong adapter. Your phone and laptop chargers will work without a converter but may need an adaptor.
12. Do carry a photocopy of your passport and vaccination card.

Hotel Information

If you plan to stay in Iquitos prior to May 4 or after the mission, you can make your own hotel reservations or ask us to assist. Team members usually stay at the Hotel Acosta, the Hotel Victoria Regia (both can be reserved through Booking.com), or the Doubletree (Hilton).

**SHOULD YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY OF THIS INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

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Volunteer Coordinator - Aryn Yancher – selvainactionperu@gmail.com**