

A photograph of several brown pelicans with yellow heads and long beaks perched on a rocky, sloping terrain. The birds are scattered across the frame, some standing and others nesting. The background is a clear, light blue sky. The title text is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters.

NAZCA LINES & BALLESTAS ISLANDS

BETHANY WALES / RECKY ADVENTURES



EXPLORE PERU'S ENIGMATIC SOUTH



**Rising from the pacific ocean
like a rocky metropolis,**

the ancient Ballestas Islands provide a wild playground for one of the most diverse bird populations in the world.

This cluster of craggy islets is just a few km off Peru's west coast, but visitors arriving from the chaotic streets of Lima will feel they have crossed into another world. These giant rock formations span around 0.12 km², and provide crucial sanctuary for millions of birds, mammals, and sea creatures.

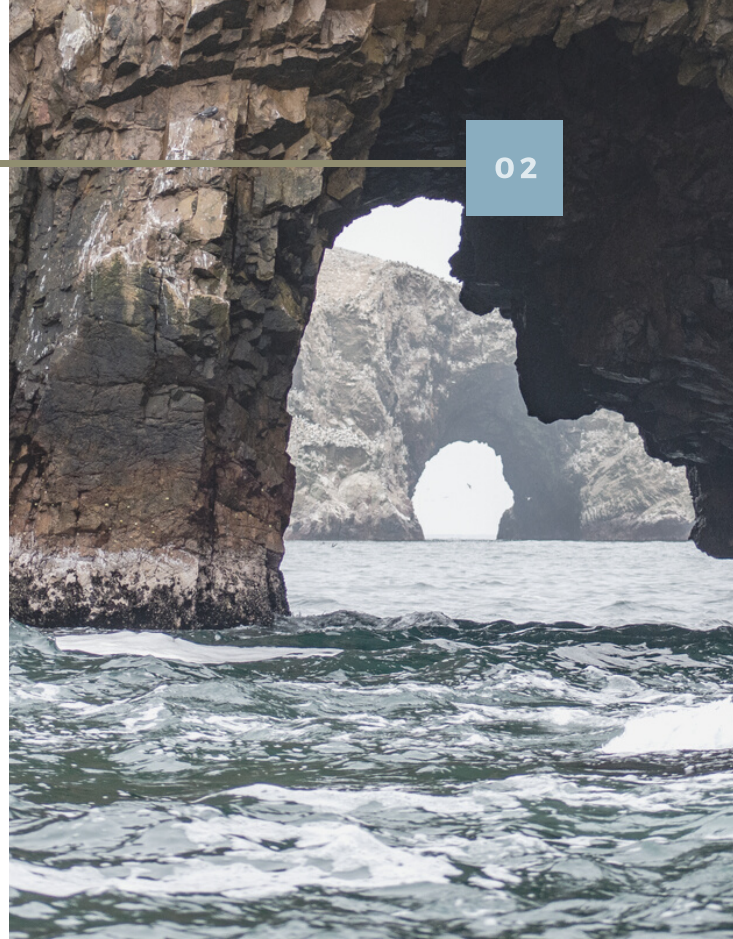
**DISCOVER ANCIENT
MYSTERIES AND EXOTIC
WILDLIFE IN SOUTH PERU**

Penguins huddle on sun soaked rocks, Peruvian Pelicans dive along the shore, and dolphins sail between the silver waves. The sheer volume of marine life here is awe inspiring, and has earned the islands their reputation as the most significant coastal stretch in Peru.

The islands experience next to no rainfall, and as a result, trees and plants are non-existent. This might seem like a disadvantage for the area's wildlife, but in fact, is a bonus for the creatures that call the Ballestas home. Beneath the ocean hides an underwater jungle of some 300 species of algae, which attracts schools of exotic fish in their millions. In turn, these fish provide a hearty buffet for the mammals and birds here, including the many sea lions that populate the shores. It is a common yet extraordinary experience thousands of birds dive bombing the ocean at dinner time, the sound of the waves completely drowned out by the ruckus of bird calls.

Ballestas form part of the Paracas National Reserve, an epic coastal desert in the Ica region of Peru. The area spans 335,000 hectares, and marks the point at which the arid desert is engulfed by the Atlantic Ocean. These opposing features make for one of the rarest eco-systems in the world, and one that continues to fascinate zoologists.

A few hours south of the Reserve, in the Rio Grande de Nasca river basin, lies a series of ancient artworks, etched into the parched ground.



They were created by the Nazca culture, a civilisation which began around 100 BC, and remained in Peru for nearly 1,000 years.

Nazca artists created the motifs by carving the top 15 inches of rock from the ground to reveal a lighter coloured stone beneath.

They depict animals, plants, and geometric shapes, and their purpose continues to puzzle historians. Although conspiracists swear the lines were created to attract aliens to earth, modern historians believe ancient humans etched them as an offering to the gods, and formed a key part of religious rituals. Some recent theories suggest that they were also used as navigation points. Whatever their reason for existing, the symbols make for breathtaking viewing.

For explorers looking to experience a high dose of adventure, there is abundant opportunity to

combine Nazca and the Ballestas Islands in one trip.

The Peruvian capital of Lima is the perfect place to begin your adventure. Tours generally span two to three days, with a day dedicated to each location.

Most tour companies will pick you up from your Lima hotel, providing it is central. You will then begin the journey south to the Paracas National Reserve. Although most companies include a private bus transfer with the tour price, some use public transport with a hired guide.

Alexander and Roberts tours commence the trip with a flight over the Nazca Lines. Your small plane will take off from the city of Nazca, and take you high above the etchings so you have a

panoramic view of the area. Your guide will explain the origins of the lines, and be able to provide insight into their discovery. Most flights last around 30 minutes.

If you opt for the two day tour with Peru Top Adventure, your first afternoon will include a tour of the Paracas National Reserve, where you will see the sweeping golden sands of Yumaque Beach, flocks of flamingos, and “La Cattedrale”, carved entirely from natural rock.

On day two, you will head to your second activity. Excursions to the Ballestas Islands will take you by boat around the rocky islets, offering fantastic views of nesting and hunting birds. Although you will not be able to disembark the boat, you will be able to take in the sights from the comfort of your seat.

At the end of your tour you will be transferred back to Lima, either via a private bus or guided public transport.

Be prepared to wake up early for your boat trip to the Ballestas Islands. Because most of the bird species are nocturnal, visiting early in the day gives you the best chance of seeing flocks resting in the open.

Tours run year round, but the most pleasant time to visit is in the Peruvian summer, from November until February. This being said, the area enjoys a dry climate through all seasons.

Make sure you bring a full passport for your flight over the Nazca Lines. Airlines will insist you show this before take off.

