**Brief History**

In the pre-Hispanic times, different groups of people living from farming, hunting, and trade settled in the region. Among the most important were the Tumpis (fifteenth century) who were great sailors of the Peruvian coast and also skilled masters in woodcarving and work of the Spondylus shells (Spondyillus princeps – a greatly prized bivalve mollusk in the Andean region), pata de burro (Concholapas peruviana) and other seashells. According to the legend, the Tumpis were annexed to the Tahuantinsuyo (Inca Empire) during the reign of Huayna Cápac.

In 1532, when the Spanish Conquistadors commanded by Francisco Pizarro first landed at the port of La Leña – La Chepa estuary (today Playa Hermosa), they had to face strong resistance from the Tumpis in the Battle of the Mangroves. Before setting off, Francisco Pizarro erected a cross as the symbol of Christianity, which gave the name of the actual cove, La Cruz (the cross is still at the same place today).

**Geography and Climate**

The Department of Tumbes features a wide range of terrains. You find five of the eleven existing Peruvian eco-regions here: from the wide plains and soft rolling hills to the steep Amotapes Mountains, the ecosystems range from estuaries and mangroves, to dry equatorial forests and Pacific tropical forest. More than 30% of the territory has been declared Natural Protected Areas (NPA).

All along the coast, there are wide beaches of white sands and warm waters from the tropical seas that reach a temperature of 25°C (77°F). The sun shines all year round, and the variety of activities available there have turned the zone into an extremely frequented and popular area.

The average annual maximum temperature is 26°C (79°F) and the minimum of 19°C (66°F). However, when the El Niño phenomenon occurs, the weather can change drastically, causing more rain and higher temperatures, sometimes over 40°C (104°F).

**Tourist Attractions**

**Province of Tumbes**

- **Main Square, city of Tumbes**
  The main square has been recently remodeled and the part that stands out the most is an acoustic shell covered with a mosaic. Called the “Encounter of Two Worlds”, the sculpture refers to the arrival of the Spanish and to all the natural richness of the region. In the center, you can see a representation of the chief Chimisama, powerful ruler of the area who resisted the Spanish forces. The inhabitants enjoy walking or resting in the shade of the trees, locally known as matacojudos (Kingelia pinnata – sausage tree). The weather is warm and it rains in summer (December – April).

- **Saint Nicolas de Tolentino Church, Main church**
  Main Square
  Built in the seventeenth century by Augustinian priests, this Baroque church features two Roman arches, a slanted two-level roof, and a rib vault covered with mosaics. Inside, you can see the wood carven upper altar decorated with mosaics, stained glass windows with episodes from the life of Christ, figures of the saints and the Virgin, and a remarkable sculpture of the Christ.

- **Pedestrian Esplanades**
  There are many esplanades inviting the visitor to stroll through the city. The best are La Concordia, Los Libertadores, Jerusalén, and Triunfino. The Boulevard of La Madre, the plazas El Beso and Bolognesi, and the park of El Avión are areas often frequented by the citizens of Tumbes.

- **Palo Santo Tourist Lookout and Private Natural Area**
  This is a lookout constructed on top of the highest hill of the city, just five minutes away by car, from where you can see a great amount of the geography of the area. The lookout is located inside the Private Natural Area called Palo Santo.
There are many different wildlife species such as the yellow-faced parakeet, the rubber tree, white-fronted capuchin – the only two primates of the Peruvian coast – and the American crocodile, the northwest nutria, the mantled howler monkey and the jaguar, the Andean condor, and the coastal fox. It is also an important species characteristic to the Amazonian jungle, the highlands, and the coast such as the silky anteater, as well as 100 species of birds, 14 mammal species, 34 crustaceans, dozens of snail species, 24 mollusks with shells, and more than 100 species of fish.

The Tumbes Reserved Zone is spread over 75,102 hectares and is home to species like the silky anteater, as well as 100 species of birds, and the Island of the Pajaros (birds) is an ideal spot for bird watching, especially at sunset when they fly to their nest for the night. It is famous for its black scallops and mollusks prized for their flavor and aphrodisiac properties; the mangroves are also well known for being the breeding grounds of the American crocodile (Crocodylus acutus), a species unique to Peru but unfortunately endangered.

The best time to visit the mangroves is between May and December. During the rainy season (January – April), the tours are subject to 48-hour previous agreement.

El Bendito Rural Community
El Bendito is a rural community, located on the southwestern edge of the Mangrove Sanctuary, where the inhabitants live from gathering black scallops and catching prawns. Visitors can participate in the gathering of black scallops, take rowboat rides, or relax on the white sandy beach.

Cabeza de Vaca Archeological Remains
5 km / 3 miles from Tumbes (10 minutes by car)
This adobe and stone archeological site was occupied before the Incas during the reign of the Chimú but also during the Inca Empire. The investigators have found pieces of pottery, bones, stone instruments, and a workshop in which artisans used to create items using shells such as spondylus and other bivalve mollusks. Likewise, an 8 km pathway (5 miles) constructed from small rounded stones has been found that connects the archeological site with the shore, an irrigation ditch, and a truncated pyramid or adobe house called “Cabeza de Vaca” (cow head) that is 250 meters long (820 feet), 100 meters wide (328 feet), and 15 meters high (49 feet).

Province of Zarumilla
Tumbes National Mangrove Sanctuary
30 km / 19 miles from Tumbes (50 minutes by car)
The sanctuary is composed of a forest made up mainly by five species of mangrove trees and is spread over 2972 hectares. This ecosystem, particularly rich in wildlife, is home to species like the silky anteater, as well as 100 species of birds, 14 mammal species, 34 crustaceans, dozens of snail species, 24 mollusks with shells, and more than 100 species of fish. In order to enter the sanctuary, an authorization from the National Institute for Natural Resources (INRENA) is required.

Tumbes Reserved Zone
51 km / 32 miles northeast of Tumbes (3 hours in a 4x4 vehicle)
The Tumbes Reserved Zone is spread over 75,102 hectares and is home to species characteristic to the Amazonian jungle, the highlands, and the coast such as the jaguar, the Andean condor, and the coastal fox. It is also an important refuge for endemic endangered species of birds, animals, and plants like the American crocodile, the northwest nutria, the mantled howler monkey and the white-fronted capuchin – the only two primates of the Peruvian coast – and the rubber tree. There are many different wildlife species such as the yellow-faced parakeet, the gray-cheeked parakeet, the antechter, the gray-backed hawk, the jay, the ovenbird, and a great variety of flora like ceibo trees, carob trees, angolo trees, quipo trees, palo santo trees and guayacán trees. The place is a representative example of the Pacific tropical forest ecosystem, unique to Peru, and has been included to the Northwest Peruvian Biosphere Reserve for its value. This is a fragile ecosystem that preserves areas with little human incursion.

The zone can be visited throughout the entire year, but it is difficult to get there during the rainy season (January – March) or when El Niño phenomenon occurs.

Province of Contalmarante Villar
Cerros de Amotape National Park
36 km / 22 miles from Tumbes (1 hour and 20 minutes by car)
This park is spread out over 91,300 hectares and is located at the border of the Departments of Tumbes and Piura. The altitude varies from 120 masl / 394 fasl (Rica Playa) to 1538 masl / 5045 fasl (Cerro Campana), and its diverse geography combines dry tropical forests with the mountains of the North Peruvian Cordillera or the Amotapes Mountains.

These mountains gather a large amount of biodiversity. Carob trees, spruce trees, charan trees, sapote trees, pasalú trees and guayacán trees grow there. The wildlife is very diverse and includes species representative of tropical forests, arid zones, and the Andean mountain ranges such as the Andean condor, the little spotted cat, the red deer, the percari, the northern anteater, the spectacled bear, the gray deer, the Guayaquil squirrel, and the scarlet macaw.

The ecological importance of the area has allowed it to be considered as part of the Northwest Peruvian Biosphere Reserve. There are many different circuits you can take to hike around the mountains and gorges allowing you to observe the equatorial dry forest flora and fauna and to navigate through the Tumbes River canyon, an impressive site on the Peruvian coast.

The zone can be visited all year round, but it is difficult to get there during the rainy season (January – March) or when El Niño phenomenon strikes.

Zorritos Beach Resort
28 km / 17 miles from Tumbes (30 minutes by car)
This beach is made of fine, white sand and is stoked by continuous waves. The waters are warm (on average 26ºC / 79ºF) and the area offers lodging, restaurants, shops, Internet access, small markets, and public phones. Zorritos is an ideal place for sports such as jet ski, surf, and fishing.

Punta Sal Beach
80 km / 50 miles from Tumbes (1 hour and 15 minutes by bus)
It is one of the most beautiful and longest beaches of the north coast of the country characterized by its warm, tranquil waters (average temperature 24ºC / 75ºF). The beach is divided in two, the Big and Small Punta Sal beach resorts. The latter is an isolated, half-moon beach with white sand and protected by two small headlands.

Hervideros Hot Springs
40 km / 25 miles from Tumbes (45 minutes by car)
South of Zorritos, the water bubbles through a layer of fine clay where it forms a mixture much like the pure liquid clay used by potters, with elements of iodine, chlorine, and iron which is supposed to have medicinal properties. The concentration of mineral substances in the solution gives it the aspect of a volcano of mud or some type of boiling liquid.

FOLKLORE
The cultural manifestations of the region are varied and take place all around the year. However, the most popular ones are the cumananas, or quartets of poetry inspired by love, death, and the divine that are accompanied by singing and guitar playing.

CUISINE
In the fisherman’s coves of Puerto Pizarro, Punta Mero, Punta Sal y Cencas, people sell items made of seashells such as earrings, necklaces, and seashell curtains. There are also shops selling decorations and figurines of people and ani-
The typical Tumbes cuisine is famous for dishes based on sea bass, grouper, sole, swordfish, as well as mollusks and shellfish from the ocean and the mangroves such as black scallops, crabs, oysters, lobsters, and prawns. The dishes that must be tried are:

- **Cebiches de conchas:** scallops with lime, onion, and aji limo (hot pepper)
- **Aji de langostinos:** prawns in a bread crumb and aji amarillo (hot pepper) sauce
- **Chupe de cangrejo:** crab chowder
- **Majarisco:** mashed green bananas with a shellfish sauce
- **Sango de plátano verde:** made from black scallops and green bananas
- **Caldo de bolas:** stuffed banana balls

Some typical desserts are:

- **Antecoco:** coconut dessert
- **Antepapaya:** paw-paw dessert
- **Dulce de grosella:** gooseberry dessert
- **Mazamorra:** purple corn pudding

The chingurito is a typical drink made from coconut juice.

### Festivities Calendar

**Tumbes Tourism Week – variable date**
Province of Tumbes, District of Tumbes
Many different cultural and tourism promotional activities take place during this week.

### Directory

**AIRPORT**
Pedro Canga Rodríguez Airport
Kilometer marker 1278 of the Pan-American Highway North.
Telephone: (072) 52-5102

**OVERLAND TRANSPORT**
There is no bus terminal but almost all the bus companies are found between the first and eleventh blocks of Avenida Tumbes.