

# WSR letter of inquiry

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**Surf break location:** Huanchaco, La Libertad, Northern Peru, co-ords 8° 4' 53" S, 79° 7' 13" W

Huanchaco in Northern Peru is a surf town just outside the city of Trujillo, its economy relies on tourism from the international and national surf travellers, backpackers coming to see the archaeological sites nearby, sales or artisan goods and fishing in traditional reed boats (Caballito de Totorá).

It has basic services such as clean water, sewer systems, electricity, garbage collection, a little health post, a health center ESSALUD and public and private schools including 2 Montessori primary education schools.

**Summary of quality and consistency of wave:** For almost the entire year Huanchaco offers consistent clean waves for the experienced and intermediate surfer. The section to the south of the pier hosts 3 points where long lefts peel over a mainly sandy seabed and from time to time rights can be had at the furthest point. To the north of the pier a smaller bay provides a more sheltered wave for beginner to take lessons.

The wave height ranges from 2 to 12 ft and works best with a S-W swell but there is always a wave to be had no matter what the direction. Huanchaco hosts a number of surf competitions including national and international level comps such as International Longboard Championship.

**Surf culture and history:** Long before the Inca Empire, Peruvian fishermen used only to fish in the lakes and rivers because they did not have a craft that would allow them to get out back past the big breakers safely. They started to experiment by building boats from the lake reeds that they tested in the ocean, but time and time again they would come tumbling back to the beach having lost all their catch. Being creative, adaptable and good engineers they knew they had to refine and develop their reed boats to be able to get back to shore after fishing. They spent time studying the waves both in and out of the water, analysing where the points were and how a wave breaks and continued to develop their boats. It is thought that in this time they trained riding the waves to devise an efficient way of entering the beach. They would take the boats out and surf, without fishing, just to practice the technique without risking losing their fish. In this time it is thought that the ancient Peruvians started fishing for pleasure. It was after they had learnt how to read, catch and ride the waves that they felt safe to start using this method to fish again. This technique has been traced back by archaeologists to 1000BC on artworks that depict a man being presented aboard a little Totorá craft.

Traditionally the root of surfing is attributed to the ancient Hawaiian royalty, however pre-Colombian archaeology has revolutionised these theories suggesting that over 3,000 yrs ago the ancient Peruvians surfed the waves here in Huanchaco. Ancient Chimú and Mochica remains show ceramics and artworks with perfect long waves and patterns expressing the ocean's movement as a source of life. In art representing Gods waves are almost always drawn around the main character and the high reliefs of the walls of the ancient city of Chan Chan (town next to HCO) representing fishing scenes, perfect peeling waves, sea birds and spirits. Chicama beach, 1hr north of Huanchaco, is only 20km from the Lambayaque excavations where the richest tomb in the Americas was discovered recently, holding the Mochican remains of the Master of Sipán.

Fishing with the Totorá horses was an indispensable element in the lives of the fishermen and so was surfing. They gained enormous pleasure from the waves over 3000 yrs ago, long before it was taken to a higher level of perfection by the Hawaiian royalty.

**Unique environmental characteristics:** Huanchaco provides the perfect natural environment to practice surfing, fishing, national and international championships of surfing and various sports and beach activities. Huanchaco also has a variety of natural resources and important cultural aspects that are unique to the area and require certain environmental characteristics to continue

as they are now .

1. The wetlands of Huanchaco and Chan Chan provide the perfect environment for naturally and artificially cultivated reeds which are needed for the ancient crafts of the fishermen and artisans . The Totora reed boats are also built from these reeds .
2. The Cerro Campana provides the breeding ground for many different species of wildlife and medicinal plants which the locals use in their traditional medicine and the hot drink sellers El Moliente.
3. There are many farms in the local area fed by stream water where watermelons, sugar cane and various fruits and veggies grow .
4. The sanctuary of Huanchaco and its cemetery
5. The church with The Virgin del Socorro who is Huanchaquero patron (the tiny town next to HCO).
6. The ancient archeological site of Chan Chan which is recognized as a UNESCO Heritage Site. The archeological zone is within the jurisdiction of Huanchaco.
7. Huanchaco is a traditional village with architecture depicting the colonial influence of the past.
8. A smaller archaeological zone called Complejo Gramalote in Huanchaquito Pampa (next to HCO but still in HCOs jurisdiction) and the archaeological remains around Cerro Campana.
9. The Caballito de Totora, reed boats made by local artisan craftsmen and used for fishing by the local families. The tradition of fishing with these boats in Huanchaco dates back to pre Moche and Chimu settlers and keeps alive the heritage of the fishermen.
10. The Muelle (town pier), built in 1891 and renovated in recent years by the City of Huanchaco is also unique to the area.
11. Archaeological remains of the "Hill of the Virgin" and the sector "La Poza-Las Lomas" are located in the jurisdiction of HCO.

**Community support:** The community of Huanchaco is thoroughly in support of making the location a Surf Reserve. Since starting to discuss the option a facebook page for quick and easy communication has come together, people have put up posters discussing it and making everyone aware of the intension and how they can help, and a group of representatives is forming to represent each section of the community who will be affected by the reserve. So far Olas Peru has written an informative article which also helps to unite the surfing community.

The representatives so far include Fernando Bazan; the local Mayor, Yenth Ccorra; a local shaper, Saara Llomaara; a surf hostel owner, MariCarmen Quevedo; a local consultant, Caroline Warwick-Evans; renewable energy engineer, Elias Rodrich; a local government representative, Jorge Urcia; representing the totora reed boat fishermen, Randal Quiroz representing the surf schools, Carlos and Diego Antonio Ferrer representing the older surfers, Fernando Rodriguez representing the League de Tabla de Huanchaco (Huanchaco surf league), Coco Burmester from the 'Quiero Playa ' movement petitioning about the coastal erosion and a number of local surfers who still need to clarify they want to take responsibility. This is just the start, and expect to have a group formed of about 15 people who can head up the project after next week and who will be the point contact for a larger section of the community.

We are organising a meeting for next week for all those interested and are expecting a large turnout. The community wishes to not only make a group who will head up making Huanchaco a Surf Reserve but also a group who, once we have reserve status can work together to organise and initiate environmental projects associated with protecting the wave and ocean environment.

To see the community at work please visit to facebook page

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/International-Surfing-Reserve-for-Huanchaco/121255921320530> where you can see the latest article in Olas Peru **[OLAS PERU: Océanos de Información - Tablistas intentan hacer de Huanchaco una reserva mundial de sur](#)**

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