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People hold newspapers in Chiclayo, Peru, May 9, 2025, reporting on the election of Pope Leo XIV, who is a dual U.S.-Peruvian citizen. Formerly Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, the prelate was elected pope May 8 at the Vatican, becoming the first American pope in history. As an Augustinian priest, then-Father Prevost spent many years as a missionary in Peru and later as Chiclayo's bishop. (OSV News/Reuters/Sebastian Castaneda)



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CHICLAYO, Peru — August 18, 2025

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A tourist itinerary connecting dozens of landmarks associated with Pope Leo XIV's decades-long mission in Peru was launched in July by the South American country's government, in a joint effort with the church and the tourism industry to draw national and international visitors.

A separate plan was announced July 21 about the construction of a 21-foot-high sculpture of the pontiff in the southern entrance of the city of Chiclayo, where the pope, then Augustinian Fr. Robert Francis Prevost, was the diocesan bishop for eight years (between 2015-2023).

The tourist initiative, called "Los Caminos del Papa León XIV" (In the Footsteps of Pope Leo XIV), is headed by the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism, which pledged the government will invest $150 million in church renovations, museums' expansions, and roads.

"This is a route that not only runs through streets or churches, but also through the memory, faith, and hope of a people who never stopped dreaming, and who today can proudly say that we have a Peruvian Pope," said Peruvian President Dina Boluarte during the launching ceremony.

The route includes circuits in four different regions — the departments of Piura, Lambayeque and La Libertad, along with the constitutional province of Callao — and encompasses 35 tourist attractions.

The circuits are centered around religious locations that were significant for Father and later Bishop Prevost during his pastoral work in Peru.

In Piura, for instance, the route includes the parish of San José Obrero (St. Joseph the Worker), in Chulucanas, where Prevost took his first steps with his mentor, Fr. John McKniff, servant of God, whose sainthood cause is open.

The circuit also encompasses the local pastoral center and the formation center Villa la Buena Nueva (Good News village), a pre-seminary in which Prevost educated and motivated many religious men.

The route also suggests visiting two villages, La Encantada, known for its pottery, and the Pueblo De Cruz Pampa-Yapatera, marked by the Afro-Peruvian culture. Each of the routes includes thematic stops related to the pope, as well as "complementary" stops that highlight important tourist landmarks.

In the region of La Libertad, the thematic circuit includes visits to the Archdiocese of Trujillo, where Prevost acted as a judicial vicar, and the Convent of San Tomás de Villanueva, which was his home for nearly 10 years.

Callao appears in the route due to its central importance for the Catholic Church in Peru, with its 1833 St. Joseph Cathedral and the parish of St. Rose, one of the most beloved ones in the city.

In Lambayeque, home of the Diocese of Chiclayo, four circuits were defined, encompassing 22 attractions.

"It was an initiative of the municipality of Chiclayo that was assimilated by the central government. The church worked with the authorities and the tourism industry in order to define the most important places during the pope's tenure as Bishop of Chiclayo," Fr. Freddy Beltrán, the diocesan delegate in charge of that task, told OSV News.

One of the circuits includes visits to the Chiclayo Cathedral, to the church of St. Peter in the town of Monsefu and St. Mary Magdalene Church in the city of Eten.

Eten was a special place for Prevost and for local Catholics. In 1649, according to tradition, the Christ Child appeared on a consecrated host on two occasions, which would make it the only eucharistic miracle in Peru's history.

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The future pope would always visit the city and promote the miracle. "He even sought pontifical recognition for it," explained Beltrán. In 2019, Prevost handed to Pope Francis a report containing the devotion's history and thousands of testimonies of faith.

Another route in the Lambayeque region encompasses the 16th-century Convent of St. Augustine in Zaña (sometimes known as Saña), the city where the Spanish-born St. Turibius of Mogrovejo, who is considered the father of the Peruvian church, died in 1606.

"He was very important to Pope Leo. Many churches, schools, and seminaries are dedicated to Saint Turibius in our diocese," explained Beltrán.

The Sanctuary of the Cross of Chalpón, in the city of Motupe, is part of another circuit. A popular devotion that comes from the 19th century, the Cross of Chalpón was also seen with much sympathy by Prevost, who would take part in the August festivities on many occasions, according to Beltrán.

The Lambayeque route also includes historic churches and chapels and visits to archeological museums related to the pre-Inca Mochica culture.

Beltrán said that Prevost had a close relationship with the priests of the diocese, so he had numerous opportunities to talk to him over the years. That gave him the opportunity to understand which places in Lambayeque were more relevant to him.

"That's how we chose those specific locations. It's also about giving it adequate importance to the ecclesiastical cultural patrimony," he added.

The Caminos del Papa León XIV's program is already going on. The government still has to make the necessary investments, but travel packages are already available.

Lambayeque Governor Jorge Pérez Flores announced on July 21 that a large sculpture of the pope will be built in Chiclayo. He said it will be paid by his administration and that the works will begin within a few months.

Felix Mio, regional manager of Foreign Trade and Tourism, affirmed that many of the local tourism agencies have already been selling tour packages that include

important localities for the pope. He added that Eten is awaiting pontifical recognition of the 1649 Eucharistic miracle, which will transform it into one of the Eucharistic cities in the world. Those measures will make Chiclayo a central religious destination in Peru, he added.

"For Peru's Catholics, the fact that the pope has Peruvian nationality is something very special. So, the places that marked his mission in our country must be celebrated," Fr. Fidel Purisaca Vigil, Chiclayo's diocesan spokesperson, told OSV News.

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. View the full series.
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