Association of Energy Engineers

2026
Trade Mission Report

Ecuador & Peru
February 7-21, 2026

Trade Mission Impact at a Glance
Countries visited:
Ecuador & Peru
Dates: February 7-21, 2026
Delegates: 13 professionals from 4 countries

Major outcomes:
- Launch of AEE Peru Chapter
- First Trade Mission service project (energy audit)
- Engagement with local energy leaders

Focus areas:
- Renewable energy
- Sustainability in emerging markets
- Global collaboration

Why This Mission Matters

Energy challenges don't stop at borders, and neither do the solutions. As the demand for sustainable, efficient systems continues to grow worldwide, the need for global collaboration has never been more critical.

AEE Trade Missions offer a unique opportunity to move beyond theory and into real-world application. Participants gain firsthand exposure to how energy systems, sustainability practices, and infrastructure challenges are being addressed in different regions - while building meaningful connections with local professionals and industry leaders.

This mission to Ecuador and Peru brought those opportunities to life. From engaging with the newly formed AEE Peru Chapter to conducting the organization's first on-the-ground service project, participants experienced the impact of knowledge sharing in action.

More than a trip, this mission reinforced the value of global perspective. Attendees returned with new insights, stronger connections, and a deeper understanding of how energy solutions can be applied across different environments.

History

Since 1991, the AEE staff, members, and industry representatives have journeyed together on curated adventures around the world. Tours led by AEE Founder Al Thumann have taken AEE members to six continents and more than 30 countries.

Today, the tradition continues as key AEE leaders and members come together for curated trips that support AEE's mission.

AEE recognizes the importance of global connection and knowledge sharing. We become stronger, smarter, and more energy-efficient when we unite people across borders, with a common focus and mission to conserve energy in the most impactful way.

Sustainable Travel Partner

AEE partners with Intrepid Travel, a leader in climate-conscious tourism focused on reducing environmental impact and supporting local communities.

As a carbon-neutral, B Corp–certified organization, Intrepid continues to advance sustainability through ongoing emissions reporting and investments in decarbonization initiatives.

The 2026 Trade Mission Trip

In February 2026, the AEE staff, members, and industry representatives set out on an unforgettable Trade Mission to Ecuador and Peru to explore the stunning landscapes and biodiversity of the Galápagos Islands and the Amazon Rainforest, and to experience the engineering marvels of Machu Picchu. Their aim was to discover the complex relationship between nature and engineering, to see how innovative solutions can drive positive change, to build relationships with local energy professionals, and to officially charter the AEE Chapter in Peru.

Mission Objectives

- Learn about the energy landscape in other regions.
- Discover new/different energy technologies, systems, processes, best practices, and ideas.
- Build new connections that bring forth critical global knowledge-sharing needed to meet the challenges our industry and environment are facing.
- Promote the AEE and our members' expertise within the region and globally.
- Establish sustainable partnerships that have a lasting impact.

Arrival in Quito:
Setting the Stage for The Mission

A team of 13 AEE members and spouses, their companions from the U.S.A., India, Guatemala, and South Africa, came together and began their sustainable journey in Quito, Ecuador.

As we follow our team on their trade mission, we will observe multiple sustainable travel methods, including public transportation, walking, and even accommodation selections.

In Quito, the team learned that for over 16 years, the Le Parc Hotel has implemented sustainable practices that help reduce its carbon footprint. As a result, Le Parc Hotel has earned several distinctions, including Carbon Neutrality for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the Quito Eco-Efficiency Matrix for its environmentally conscious construction projects, and Punto Verde for its minimal use of natural resources and its construction management practices.

While the team was in Quito, they brought together energy professionals to discuss the evolving energy landscape and the critical need for capacity building in energy management. During these discussions, participants emphasized the role certifications play in building a skilled workforce equipped to address evolving energy challenges. The night ended with a welcome dinner, during which we wished Mark Cox a happy birthday.

Day 2: Biodiversity and Conservation in the Galápagos

The team traveled to the fifth-largest innermost island of the Galápagos, San Cristóbal. It was here that the team learned about the archipelago's human and natural history at the island's Interpretation Center and Tijeretas. The team discovered that the island was made up of three inactive volcanoes and was the site where Charles Darwin began his studies of the Galápagos Islands in 1835. Additionally, the team learned about the environmental challenges that San Cristóbal Island faces as a port town with an airport. These impacts include the introduction of invasive plants and species; as a result, the number of native plants on the island has declined. In the 1990s, the environmental concern was also intensified by the island's goat population. This led to preventative measures such as removing 3,500 goats from San Cristóbal to conserve the remaining native plants.

Day 3: Marine Ecosystems and Environmental Awareness

The journey continued to one of the best snorkeling sites in the Archipelago, Kicker Rock, also known as Leon Dormido, because, depending on your viewpoint, the rock formation may look like a shoe or a sleeping lion. In fact, the rock is a remnant of a vertical tuff cone formation, rising 500 feet above the Pacific Ocean.

As the team dove into the crystal-clear waters, they witnessed the marine life's biodiversity and its remarkable beauty.

The vibrant colors of the ocean danced across the water, and the team began to realize that they were up close and personal with sharks, sea turtles, rays, schools of fish, and various other marine life as far as the eye could see.
It was here that the team learned that unique species and biodiversity are critical, and that climate impacts should be addressed to ensure they are maintained.

Day 4: Conservation Research and Ecological Restoration

The group rose before the sun to embark on their speedboat journey to Isla Santa Cruz to visit the Charles Darwin Research Station (The Station) to learn about the islands and ongoing conservation initiatives aimed at protecting its distinctive ecosystem. In 1964, the Charles Darwin Foundation (The Foundation) was established on Santa Cruz Island as the official base for scientific research in the Galápagos Islands.

The Charles Darwin Exhibition Hall, located in the research station, showcased a collection spanning over 60 years of scientific research in the archipelago through natural history collections, waysides, rotating exhibits, photos, and more.

The Station also included the Van Straelen Interpretation Center, where the team learned about various marine ecosystems, techniques to assist marine life, and tools used to study them. It was here that the team learned about The Station's program for breeding and raising large tortoises and how they are released into the wild.

They also learned about the national symbol of the Galápagos Islands, Chelonoidis abingdoni, or Lonesome George, the last known Pinta Island tortoise, who was 100 years old and died in June of 2012. After his passing, the center had him taxidermized to preserve his image, and he's now displayed at the site.

Next, the team took a walk outside to witness the beauty of the Native Garden and Shade House and to learn about The Foundation's Galápagos Verde 2050 initiative to restore and maintain the islands' ecological balance through the use of the Shade House.

Lastly, the team wandered through the G. T. Corley Smith Library, Archives, and Museum, reviewing books and documents created and preserved by The Station.

Day 5: Renewable Energy in Action

The day combined exploration of marine biodiversity with a visit to the Galápagos Renewable Energy Center, where participants saw sharks, marine iguanas, and a cenote. They learned that Marine Iguanas can only be found in the Galápagos Islands, that they are the only lizards that venture into the sea, and that they are protected under Ecuadorian law. Additionally, as the team returned to Tortuga Bay, they encountered lava lizards, various birds, and other wildlife. Truly emphasizing the beauty and biodiversity of the Galápagos Islands.

Another highlight was a visit to the Galápagos Renewable Energy Center, where participants saw renewable systems in action. Reflecting on the experience, AEE President Ricson Chude shared: "I was really encouraged by the effort from the islands and Ecuador as they are making meaningful investments in sustainability to save energy and protect the world's most unique ecosystems. Seeing renewable generation in action highlights how clean energy, thoughtful planning, and conservation can work together."

The visit highlighted how clean energy, thoughtful planning, and conservation can work hand in hand to safeguard our planet's future. The team was able to see firsthand that from innovative renewables to ecosystem protection, the Galápagos is proving that sustainability isn't just a goal, it's a reality in motion.

Mission Highlight: Hands-on exposure to renewable energy systems in a remote island environment.

Day 6: On to Peru and National Sustainability Efforts

The team says Goodbye to the Galápagos Islands and hello to the City of Kings, Lima, Peru.

Peru's sustainability efforts are evident in biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, Amazon protection, and recycling. Peru's government believes that developing electricity from renewable energy is a public necessity of national interest. Resulting in the country contributing large investments and development plans toward the matter.

Additionally, in 2013, Peru joined the Climate Clean Air Coalition to improve air quality and decrease the effects of climate change. Whether it is providing cities with safe and sustainable transport systems, minimizing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions from waste disposal by passing the Solid Waste Law in 2016, or joining the Ibero-American Network of Climate Change Offices, Peru consistently strives to be a more sustainable country.

Mission Highlight: Official AEE Peru Chapter Chartering Ceremony

Day 7: Industry Engagement and AEE Chapter Expansion

A key milestone of the mission was meeting with local energy professionals and members of the newly chartered AEE Peru Chapter. During the meeting, chapter leadership shared plans to launch the Certified Energy Auditor (CEA) course in Peru, supporting AEE's vision for growth and professional development across Latin America. From Peru's energy landscape to 2026 priorities, this marks an exciting step forward for energy professionals in the region.

Following the meeting, the group traveled together to conduct a walk-through energy audit at CETPRO Peru, a public educational institution dedicated to quality technical and productive training.

This served as AEE's first Trade Mission service project, the first of many more to come.

The team conducted a walkthrough energy assessment of the facility, observing how daily activities shape its energy use. They noted that the absence of HVAC systems and the widespread use of LED lighting create a naturally low energy baseline, while long operating hours and diverse workshops make lighting, plug loads, and hot water the primary drivers of consumption. As they moved through classrooms, offices, and beauty salons, opportunities arose to improve efficiency through better lighting controls, more mindful use of equipment, and optimized water-heating practices. In particular, the team observed that small operational changes, such as managing standby power, reducing unnecessary lighting, and adjusting hot water settings, could collectively enhance performance.

Overall, the assessment highlighted how thoughtful controls and everyday actions can support efficient operations while maintaining the facility's educational and practical vibrancy.

To conclude the day, the team enjoyed a walking tour, saw sights, and learned about Lima's history.

Mission Highlight: First AEE Trade Mission service project, conducting an on-site energy assessment.

Day 8: Into the Amazon - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Preservation

The journey continued into the heart of the Peruvian Amazon, but first, they stopped in the capital of biodiversity, Puerto Maldonado, to catch a boat to Inkaterra Hacienda Concepción, a lodge deep within the Amazon. On the boat ride, the team encountered animals such as macaws and capybaras.

Once the team reached the lodge, they were escorted to stylish stilted wooden cabañas located on a 380-hectare (1.46 square miles) private ecological reserve. After the group had settled into the eco-lodge, they headed for the heart of the Tambopata National Reserve, where they gained firsthand experience of the beauty of nature. The reserve was established in 1990 to protect the 274,690 hectares (1,061 square miles) of the last remaining and largest areas of pristine rainforest. With 1200 species of butterflies, 1255 species of plants, 169 mammals, 632 bird species, 103 species of amphibians, 17 plant associations by type of forest, and 180 fish, the Tambopata National Reserve is one of the most biodiverse places on the planet, and it is protected by the Peruvian National Service of Protected Natural Areas (SERNANP) a governmental body that manages and preserves reserves in Peru.

The team concluded a nighttime walk through the rainforest, encountering the rainbow boa constrictor and tarantulas, giving them a chance to experience the rainforest shift from diurnal to nocturnal.

Day 9: Exploring the Amazon and Off-Grid Energy Systems

The team spent the morning at Lake Sandoval, an oxbow lake protected by Tambopata National Reserve. An oxbow lake is important to ecological functions because it serves as a water source and breeding ground for animals. As a result, the team observed a variety of birds, giant river otters, red howler monkeys, red-bellied macaws, anacondas, side-necked turtles, and black caimans.

After lunch, the team took a 20-minute boat ride across the Madre de Dios River to climb the Inkaterra Canopy Walkway. The Inkaterra Canopy is a 344-meter (1,136-foot) canopy built to last over 30 years in the Amazon rainforest. It includes bridges, treetop observation platforms, and grand towers with stairways. This was an unforgettable experience for the team, as they had the opportunity to hike to the top of Ramiro Chacon's Sages Tower, used for collecting samples, to learn about the effects of climate change and deforestation on the rainforest.

To end the day, the team visited the power source of the eco-lodge, which included solar panels, battery storage, and generators that operate for a set number of hours.

Mission Highlight: Observed off-grid energy systems powered by solar, battery storage, and generators in a remote rainforest environment.

Day 10: Cultural and Historical Insights in Cusco

After traveling back downriver, the group explored the city of Cusco, where they were able to stop at the Plaza de Armas, the heart of the city, and visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Cusco Cathedral, which was built by the Spaniards over the ruins of the Inca city in the 16th Century.

The team was met by a tour guide at the Cathedral and was provided insight into the building's art, architecture, history, and the surrounding city. The guide ended the tour by visiting one of the most important Inca sites, the Coricancha Temple in Cusco. This temple was where the highest positions of power (i.e., the high priest) would go, and it was considered holy land because of it. After exploring the city, the team ended their day by feeding llamas and alpacas.

Mission Highlight: Explored historical sites that demonstrate the durability and ingenuity of early engineering and construction practices.

Day 11: Rest, Acclimation, and Local Exploration

Before continuing their journey through the Andes Mountains, the group rested and acclimated to the altitude at El Chato Ranch. Situated approximately 240–495 meters (787–1,600 feet) above sea level, the ranch offered a peaceful setting that allowed everyone to slow down and acclimate comfortably. This pause not only supported their well-being but also provided an opportunity to take in the island's unique landscape and rhythm, ensuring they were refreshed and ready for the experiences that lay ahead.

Day 12: Community Engagement and Sustainable Practices

The beginning of the day consisted of the team exploring the Sacred Valley and taking a scenic hike.

After lunch, the team set off to meet the Willoq community in Ollantaytambo, gaining a greater insight into the local lifestyle, and visited a local workshop where they learned about traditional textile techniques.

The team then journeyed to Ollantaytambo, an ancient city in Peru known for its archaeological site constructed without the use of wheels, metal tools, or mortar. The site also includes the ruins of ancient aqueducts, irrigation canals, dams, terraces, and centers of worship dedicated to Pachamama (Mother Earth), raising awareness of just how skilled the Incas were at engineering.

The team also supported the local community by visiting the Awamaki village, where they learned about Inca traditions and practices that promote women's empowerment; an initiative supported by the Intrepid Foundation. During their visit, the team participated in bracelet-making activities and shared a traditional meal with community members.

Next, the group heads to AMA "Love" Restaurant in Urubamba, which addresses the challenges faced by single mothers in Peru, including limited job opportunities and few support systems. Founded by Julio Chemi Sanchez Hernandez, the goal was to create a space and job opportunities for single mothers to not only be successful but also build a community. It is here that you can find mothers crafting and cooking in the kitchen while their children play in the garden, located not too far from their mothers' workstations. It is working without sacrificing time with children.

"Awamaki creates a lasting impact in the remote mountains of Peru by teaching women to start and run their own successful small businesses. They partner with artisan cooperatives that spin, weave, knit, and host respectful cultural tourism. They recognize their skills and leadership and connect them to global markets so they can earn an income without leaving their communities and traditions."

Day 13: Machu Picchu - Engineering and Sustainability

The day began by boarding the tourist train towards Aguas Calientes. As the train hugs the Urubamba River and races into the cloud forest, the team is exposed to 1 hour and 45 minutes of beautiful scenery before arriving in Aguas Calientes and heading up the winding road to the cloud-hidden historic sanctuary. Machu Picchu is a wonder of the world and a timeless symbol of engineering brilliance and sustainability, reminds us of what's possible when human ingenuity works in harmony with nature.

The team explored Machu Picchu and took a deeper look at its architecture, palaces, and living quarters. They learned that Machu Picchu is earthquake-resistant, and even something as small as the blade of a knife cannot fit between the stones, which the Incas precisely cut.

Mission Highlight: Examined the engineering and design of Machu Picchu, a lasting example of sustainable construction and resilience.

Day 14: Wayna Picchu - A Memorable Experience

The group hiked to the top of Wayna Picchu, a mountain overlooking Machu Picchu. It was said that the top of the mountain was used as lookouts and for important ceremonies by the Inca Empire. The team remembers this as one of the most memorable experiences on the trip.

Day 15: Reflections and Lasting Impact

As the mission came to a close, participants reflected on their journey through the Galápagos Islands, the Amazon Rainforest, and Machu Picchu, considering the experiences, insights, and connections that made a lasting impact.

Participant Reflections

"The highlight of the trip was visiting the breathtaking Machu Picchu archaeological site, followed by an unforgettable hike up Wayna Picchu at the end of the journey. It was the perfect and awe-inspiring way to conclude such an incredible experience."

- Shari Kent

"The trip challenged the notion that sustainability requires resources mostly found in First World countries. The efforts in both Ecuador & Peru to preserve and respect natural and historic resources to support the tourism industry were extensive and impressive. On the flip side, building-level sustainability is limited by resources, with low-hanging fruit addressed (e.g., LED lighting), but the carbon footprint of the building stock and generation sources remains high."

- Jeff Krisa

"This informal study exploration helped me to understand how mainstream society and indigenous communities are approaching sustainability in Peru. The formation of the AEE chapter and the practice of energy efficiency are representative of mainstream society. Indigenous communities have a lifestyle aligned with the cyclical nature of the world."

- Vinay Gadikar

A Leadership Perspective on the Mission

AEE Executive Director, Bill Kent, shared his overall impression of the mission, "My sustainable energy journey was a remarkable and immersive experience filled with unforgettable memories and meaningful insights. As I traveled through both developing and developed regions, I witnessed firsthand how people, species, and ecosystems rely on and are affected by energy sources and a changing climate. The unique wildlife of the Galápagos, found only in that region, reminded me of the importance of continuing to take action to ensure their protection and survival. Around the world, energy plays a vital role in daily life, and it was inspiring to see the growing use of solar and other renewable sources.

In the Amazon, the lodge where I stayed operated completely off the grid using solar panels and battery storage, and in a remote community in the Andes, solar energy served as the main power source. I also experienced extraordinary engineering achievements, such as Machu Picchu, a testament to human ingenuity and sustainable community design that has endured for more than five centuries.

Guided by the values of putting people first and embracing a global family, our delegation from four countries came together to observe, reflect on, and appreciate the impact of our work across different settings.

Every person I met, from new chapter members in Lima to villagers in remote Andean communities, inspired me with their culture, resilience, and passion for life."

As we celebrate the meaningful connections and progress made throughout the year, we look ahead to AEE World in Orlando, Florida, where our global community will unite for a powerful week of knowledge sharing, collaboration, and innovation. Immediately following AEE World, attention turns to COP, where AEE will continue to champion the importance of energy efficiency and highlight the significant impact our members are making worldwide toward climate goals and carbon-reduction commitments.

We encourage you to join us on our journey to a more sustainable future by spreading awareness, attending trainings and conferences, keeping up to date with advances in sustainable practices, and becoming part of the AEE family as a member, because building a path toward a more sustainable future sounds like energy well spent.

We look forward to having you join us on our next adventure in 2028! Stay tuned for where we will travel next!

Association of Energy Engineers

www.aeecenter.org