



Inca Trail Trek to Machu Picchu

8 Days



Day 1 | Arrival in Cusco

Peru's Flavors

Our guide will meet us in the hotel lobby at 2 p.m. for a walking tour of all the urban must-sees: colonial arcades, churches, Plaza de Armas and the fusion of Inca and Spanish influences in the Stone of Twelve Angles at Inca Roca Palace.

We participate in a two-hour bean-to-bar chocolate workshop at Choco Museo and learn to make *tisane* (tea) from the roasted husks of cacao nuts. During the workshop, we will be introduced to the entire scratch chocolate-making process from cacao harvest to lips!

Later, we swap stories at Mamá Seledonia's, a truly feel-good restaurant that supports young mothers and teens in rural areas. Women who have expressed a passion and talent for cooking but have experienced difficulty in finding employment due to their family obligations are trained in the industry. Today's first big bite out of Peru is a sweet one!

Included Meals

Dinner

Accommodations

Casa Andina Premium Cusco Hotel



Day 2 | Sacred Valley

Weaving Stories

We depart for the embrace of the Sacred Valley for Ollantaytambo. Here, the Urubamba River, Inca-era cobblestones, adobe buildings and ruins are otherworldly.

It's a magnificent example of Inca urban planning and one of the few places where the Incas defeated the Spanish. The upper terraces of this area offer extraordinary photo opps of the tidy square-grid town below.

In the Awamaki community, we learn about traditional Andean life and have lunch with a local family. The Awamaki women will introduce us to their historical connection to textiles in a weaving demonstration. We can then try our skill at weaving a small souvenir. There will be an opportunity to purchase expertly woven items which will directly support the community.

We transfer back to our hotel to chill and hang out over dinner. Our guide will provide information on how to prepare and pack for our Inca Trail trek.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Samanapaq Hotel

Travel

About 2 hours of driving



Day 3 | Huayallabamba

Making Tracks

After breakfast, we weigh our duffle bags for the trek. They must weigh no more than 15.4 pounds (7 kg). This maximum weight must include your sleeping bag and Thermarest. Your personal gear should weigh no more than 11 pounds (5 kg) out of respect for our porters. We store our remaining luggage and any gear we don't need in Ollantaytambo. On Day 7, we are reconnected with our baggage before heading back to Cusco, so pack thoughtfully! *Please note that the duffle bags are not to be kept.

We then drive to Km 82 (Piscacucho) to hike a scenic section that follows the original Inca Trail to the winding Urubamba river. We cross the bridge over the mighty river at Km 88 for a celebratory lunch at the Tarayoc trail before continuing to hike another two gratifying hours to reach our maximum altitude for the day at Huayallabamba.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Tent Camping

The Hike

9.94 miles (16 km), which takes about 8–9 hours (depending on the group's pace)

Altitude: 9,022 feet (2,750 m)

Maximum Altitude and Campsite Elevation: 10,170 feet (3,100 m)

Elevation Gain: 1,148 feet (350 m)



Day 4 | Pacaymayu

Dead Woman's Pass

We begin walking around 7 a.m. For three to four hours we follow the trail's steep ascent to Llullcha Pampa, where we have lunch with a killer view of Mt. Huayanay. Along this narrow hanging valley and its unfolding trail, we begin to see the surreal cloud forest that shrouds the fairy tale-like Queñua woodlands. The *polylepis* trees and shrubs of this rare Andean forest are only found at high elevation.

After lunch, we continue for two hours to the daunting Dead Woman's Pass. This is the highest point of the Inca Trail (in elevation and heart rate!) and so-named for the mountain crests and their resemblance to a woman's supine body.

From here, we continue downhill for two to three hours, depending on the group's pace and affection for taking group photos! We spend the night in the *en plein air* serenity of the Pacaymayu campsite.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Tent Camping

The Hike

We hike 6.2 miles (10 km), which takes approximately 6–8 hours

Altitude : 10,170 feet (3,100 m)

Maximum Altitude: 13,828 feet (4,215 m)

Campsite Elevation: 11, 811 feet (3,600 m)

Elevation Gain : 3,000 feet (900 m)



Day 5 | Phuyopatomarka

City Above the Clouds

We kickstart the day by walking uphill to the unique semicircular complex of the Runcuraqay ruins (*Runkurakay is a Quechua word meaning “collapsed house”) before ascending to Runcuraqay Pass. From here, it’s all downhill, baby!

We descend for nearly two hours, following ancient Incan stairs down to the ridgetop ruins of Sayaqmarka to pass through a tunnel that the Incas created without the convenience of modern tools. The trail transitions again into dripping, verdant cloud forest vegetation before reaching Chaquicocha for lunch.

Satiated and stretched out, we’ll continue on to the Phuyupatomarka ruins that overlook the fast flow of the Vilcanto River far below. This is the last pass on our agenda and we spend the night here.

Phuyopatomarka is suitably named. In Quechua, it means the “City above the Clouds.” The views from our campsite toward the sacred peak of Salcantay are sublime. Peruvian chocolate bar cravings: SKY HIGH!

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Tent Camping

The Hike

We hike 7.4 miles (12 km), which takes approximately 5–6 hours

Altitude: 11,811 feet (3,600 m)

Maximum Altitude + Campsite Elevation: 13,779 feet (4,200 m)

Elevation Gain: 2,000 feet (600 m)



Day 6 | Machu Picchu

Gateway to a Dream

This morning, we say a grateful thank you to our lean and mean porter team in a formal tipping ceremony to demonstrate our appreciation for their kindness, encouragement, enthusiasm and rock-solid backs!

We descend steeply all day, following the famed Royal Highway through a cloud forest painted with delicate orchids to the Wiñayhuayna ruins and then onward to the Inti Pata Inca site.

After lunch at the Wiñayhuayna campsite, we have a gorgeous traverse across the remarkable Inca stonework leading to the iconic Gate of the Sun overlooking Machu Picchu.

Stunned, we'll float as though in a dream, downhill, to the Machu Picchu site. Tonight we stay in the village of Aguas Calientes and gather for a set menu dinner at a local restaurant. We celebrate this dream-come-true journey and enjoy everything our hotel has to offer: Hot showers! A pisco sour! Real beds! It's the small things (after the BIG things, of course).

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

El Mapi by Inkaterra Hotel

The Hike

We hike 5.5 miles (9 km), which takes approximately 6–7 hours

Altitude: 7,874 feet (2,400 m)

Maximum Altitude: 11,811 feet (3,600 m)

Campsite Elevation: 7,874 feet (2,400 m)



Day 7 | Machu Picchu and Cusco

An Elevated Experience

We will return to “the Sanctuary” by bus. A local guide will introduce us to the sectors of this impressive Inca City as we follow the circuit to the archaeological zone of Machu Picchu.

We learn about the Intihuatana (solar clock) and the urban and agricultural sector of the ridge-top city that sits at 7,972 feet (2,430 m). Contemplating the origins, mysticism and resilience of Machu Picchu under the rising sun is life affirming.

After the guided tour, we return to the town by bus. Later, we board the super scenic tourist train back to Ollantaytambo, followed by a private transfer to the Novotel in Cusco. Here, we enjoy a reflective farewell dinner, still giddy and goosebumpy from our Machu Picchu experience.

Note: Machu Picchu visiting regulations require all visitors to follow a predetermined route within the site. This route must be followed in one direction only and once the guided visit commences, exiting and re-entering the site is not permitted. Once the guided visit concludes, visitors must exit the site as personal exploration of Machu Picchu is not permitted.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Antigua Casona San Blas Hotel



Day 8 | Cusco

Reflections and Rejuvenation

After breakfast, the rest of the day is unscheduled! Unless you have a flight to catch, of course! For those who are lingering a little longer, be sure to explore the city's colorful pockets a little

deeper. Sit down with an Andean mint or *toronjil* (lemon balm) tea or *chicha morada* (made with purple corn). Or, sip a genuine *emoliente* (a medicinal mixture of several herbs).

Note: If you are joining the Amazon extension, your CUZ-PEM (Puerto Maldonado) flight will be booked on your behalf, and your return flight home should be booked from PEM at the end of the extension.

Included Meals

Breakfast



Trip Details

Know Before You Go

For all of the logistical details you'll need to know prior to departure—including the packing list, arrival and departure details and suggested tipping information, click [HERE](#).

Itinerary version as of March 12, 2024.