

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

## DAY 1

### Welcome to Peru!

Fly into Cusco airport where you will be met by our Peruvian partners and transported to our boutique hotel in Cusco. Located a few blocks from the Plaza de Armas or main town square, this charming hotel is a perfect jumping off point to explore the impressive architecture and complex history of the city. Located at a lofty altitude of 11,200 ft, Cusco was the capital and geographic center of the Inca Empire which is why the city's name is Quechuan for "navel of the world." We'll meet in the lobby of our hotel at 4pm for introductions and orientation and then we'll walk to our first delicious dinner together.

Overnight: Andenes Hotel or similar (D)

## DAY 2

### Explore Cusco

Today we start our full day by exploring the Koricancha Sun Temple. Koricancha was one of the most important and sacred temples of the Inca empire and roughly translates to "gold building". When the Spanish arrived in Cusco, they were mesmerized by the grandeur of the gold covered walls and ornate figures made of precious metals. Devastatingly, the conquistadors destroyed most of the temple and built the Santo Domingo church on its foundations, preserving only small pieces of indigenous beauty. We will see the intersection of the Spanish conquest and Incan architectural feats first hand. After Koricancha we will tour the Cusco Cathedral and the bustling San Pedro market, where you can find everything from exotic fruits to hand woven tapestries. Try delicious fresh cheese and figs or the unfamiliar lucuma and chirimoya. We end our Cusco tour with an exploration of Sacsayhuaman, the "house of the sun" located a few miles outside the city. The walls of Sacsayhuaman are made from more than 200 tons of limestone rock blocks, chiseled into perfect alignment that stretches over 1,000 feet in length.

Overnight: Andenes Hotel or similar (B, L, D)

## DAY 3

### Visit Tarawasi Ruins, Begin Trek

After an early breakfast, we will be picked up at 7:00 am for the drive to the starting point of our trek. Along the way we will take a short break to visit the Inca ruins of Tarawasi near the town of Limatambo. After leaving Limatambo, we pass through the mountain village of Mollepata where we stop for a short coffee break before a half hour drive up a winding mountain road to a place called Marcocasa. Here, we begin our trek on an old route called the "Camino Real" (Royal Path). On the way we'll stop to catch our breath: you'll have to decide if it's because of the spectacular views of the mountains or because of the altitude. In any case we'll also stop to eat our boxed lunch. Our destination is the Salkantay Lodge and Adventure Resort, located in the high Andean Valley of Soraypampa at an elevation of 11,800 ft. Although we could drive there, this beautiful trek will help further our acclimatization and get us used to hiking at altitude.

**The lodge has spectacular views of the majestic Salkantay peak at the head of the valley. It's the second most sacred peak in Inca mythology and, at 20,600 ft, the highest in the region. After having some time to get settled in our rooms, we'll have time to relax before an evening briefing by the fireplace followed by appetizers and a hearty dinner. After dinner we might relax in the hot tub or, on a clear night, gaze at the achingly beautiful star-studded sky.**

**Hiking: 3-4 hours, 3.7 miles, and 1,076 feet elevation gain, 499 feet elevation loss. Overnight: Salkantay Lodge (B, L, D)**

## DAY 4



#### Layover Day at Lodge to Acclimatize, Day Hike

We've built in an extra day, partly so that you have one more day to acclimatize before we start and partly to give you a chance to explore this stunning area. Of course the lodge is also a delightful place to relax. If you're up for it, we highly recommend joining us for a hike to a glacial lake at the base of Humantay Mountain. If you like cold water plunges, you could even go for a quick dip! The hike takes about 3 or 4 hours and is an excellent activity for acclimatization and a first experience of high-mountain trekking. We have free time in the afternoon, and you might opt for a relaxing soak in the outdoor jacuzzi or curling up in the comfortable reading room with a book. That evening, after another delicious dinner, we'll make our final preparations for our trek.

**Hiking:** 4-5 hours, 3.1 miles, and 1,430 feet elevation gain and loss. **Overnight:** Salkantay Lodge (B, L, D)

#### DAY 5

#### Cross Highest Point of Trek

Today is undoubtedly our most challenging day! After an early start, we will hike up the Rio Blanco valley, circling Humantay Peak across from Salkantay Peak. We traverse the highest point of the trek today at 15,213 ft. We gain 2,500 feet in 3 miles. And it is amply rewarded, as we stop to take in views of snow-capped peaks of the Vilcabamba Range in every direction, with the south face of Salkantay towering above us. We will keep our eyes out for the Andean condors that are often visible in this area. Our spirits are further lifted and our bodies rejuvenated by a hot lunch along the trail. From the pass we descend toward the Wayra Lodge (Wayra means wind) our destination for the evening. After hiking between 6 and 8 hours, we are delighted to reach the lodge where hot showers and hearty dinners are most welcome.

**Hiking:** 7 - 8 hours, 7.2 miles, and 2,632 feet elevation gain, 2,477 feet elevation loss. **Overnight:** Wayra Lodge (B, L, D)

#### DAY 6

#### Trek Through Cloud Forest

Today we leave the land of snow-capped peaks and begin descending to the valley. This is an easier day and we can enjoy a leisurely morning and breakfast at Wayra Lodge. After breakfast we begin our trek by hiking downhill above the Salkantay River, through increasingly verdant scenery as we enter a cloud forest. Cloud forests are both fascinating and endangered, with dramatically different flora and fauna than we've just seen. Our destination for today, the Colpa Lodge, is located in an open headland at the confluence of three rivers that are all fed by snow melt. The outdoor hot tub in this lodge has prominent views of lush green mountains and a small, far-away, local town. Dinner and overnight at the lodge.

**Hiking:** 4-5 hours, 5.2 miles, and 0 feet elevation gain, 3488 feet elevation loss. **Overnight:** Colpa Lodge. (B, L, D)

#### DAY 7

#### Trek Along River

Today's trek is longer so we'll depart early this morning and head down the Santa Teresa River Valley, through more populated rural areas. Our trail rises and falls before descending to the river. We'll stop along the river to relax and enjoy a hot picnic lunch. We'll cross the river on a bridge and then continue up along the side of the mountain. This area is known for banana, granadilla, and avocado orchards, and coffee plantations that are said to produce some of the best organic coffees in the world. After another hour of trekking we'll be picked up by a private vehicle for a 30-minute drive to the beginning of the "Llactapata Inca Trail", a restored ancient Incan trail. From the head of the trail it's a short climb (30 min.) to the inviting and cozy

Hiking to the Lactapata ruins, a series of Incan stone terraces and walls built on the steep slopes of the mountain (14,000 ft) in the morning and stay at Lucma Lodge. If time allows, we may explore the small nearby village of Lucmabamba.

**Hiking:** 6 - 8 hours, 10 miles, and 935 feet elevation gain, 3,350 feet elevation loss. **Overnight:** Lucma Lodge (B, L, D)

**DAY 8**

Finish Trek, Train to Town of Aguas Calientes

After a hearty breakfast and an early start, we tackle the last day of our trek. We head uphill for about 3 hours and 1,900 feet towards Lactapata pass (8,974ft). Here we have a distant but amazing view of the Incan fortress, including both Machu and Huayna Picchu (or "old" and "young" peaks) from the southwest. This is a vista few tourists ever glimpse. An added value are the Lactapata Ruins, which have recently been restored. There couldn't be a better place to enjoy our lunch.

We then begin our final steep descent of 2 - 3 hours to the rushing Aobamba River, through lush bamboo forests and more orchards and coffee plantations. At the end of the trail we hop on a train for a short (45 minutes) scenic train ride to Aguas Calientes. We'll celebrate the end of the hike with dinner in Aguas Calientes ("hot springs"), where an early bed time will re-energize us for the following day's trip to Machu Picchu.

**Hiking:** 4 - 6 hours, 6.3 miles, and 2,359 feet elevation gain, 3,455 feet elevation loss. **Overnight:** Inkaterra. (B, L, D)

**DAY 9**

Explore Machu Picchu

Today we visit Machu Picchu, the "Lost City of the Incas". Recent research has shown that it wasn't actually a true city but rather a retreat for the Incan elite. It is absolutely as stunning as the pictures indicate, with the sheer rock face of Huayna Picchu towering in the background. We'll start with a guided tour of this world wonder for about three hours. Our guide will explain how the area is divided into distinct sections and help us understand the significance of each temple and park. The stonework has been painstakingly restored and the temples are exquisite. You may choose to return to our lodge to relax at this point or you may continue on exploring different aspects of the park like the Sun Gate. Regardless of which you choose, we'll gather again in our comfortable hotel in Aguas Calientes for dinner and the night.

**Overnight:** Inkaterra or similar (B, L, D)

**DAY 10**

Adios Peru!

This morning after breakfast we'll return by train, enjoying one final ride through the beauty of the Sacred Valley, and then by private vehicle to Cusco. If you're returning today, we'll have you back to the Cusco airport by 3pm and you can plan for flights out after 5pm. Alternatively you can be dropped off at your hotel if you want some more time in Cusco. If you're staying on for more time in Peru, we'll be glad to put you in touch with people who can help you plan the rest of your time. Peru is a fascinating place and a trip to Lake Titicaca, the Nasca Lines, or into the jungle would all be amazing additions to your adventure.

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