



## Classic Peru

**TRIP LENGTH:** 14 days

**STARTS:** Cusco

**ENDS:** Arequipa

*Our Classic tour brings together Peru's best, both on and off the beaten track: ancient ruins, thriving folk culture, mind-blowing mountain scenery, fantastic food, graceful colonial cities, amazing hot springs, and more!*

### Day 1 Welcome to Peru!

We'll pick you up in Cusco and drive 45 minutes to Pisac. This cute, cobbled village is the gateway to the spectacular Sacred Valley of the Incas, and has plenty to do, including a spectacular ruined fortress that bristles above the town, and the biggest handicraft market in the region! Your guide is on hand to share the sights with you and get you oriented in Peru.

**Accommodation:** Boutique hotel, Pisac

**Meals:** Lunch and dinner included

### Day 2 Life in the Sacred Valley

One of our favorite things about Peru is the way traditional customs coexist matter-of-factly with modern life, as we'll learn today in the tiny hamlet of Lamay. Here, the *panadero* (baker), *chichera* (traditional corn beer lady), *cuyero* (guinea pig man), and the church are the social hubs. We'll get to know each of them, in between wandering around a typical, sleepy Peruvian farming village. Then we'll drive (1.5 hours) to Chichubamba, at the other end of the sunny, fertile Sacred Valley. We'll need frequent photo stops as we pass still-working Inca terracing, irrigation canals, and awesome mountain vistas.

In Chichubamba we'll dive deeper into local culture, visiting the women of the local artisan co-operatives and trying our hands at their crafts of ceramics, beekeeping, and backyard coffee processing.

**Accommodation:** 4-star accommodation in the Sacred Valley

**Meals:** All meals included

### Day 3 Ollantaytambo

We'll spend this morning getting to know Ollantaytambo, perhaps the most perfectly preserved of all Inca towns, a picturesque maze of cobbled alleyways, sun-drenched plazas, and ridiculously charming irrigation canals. It's also where one of the most spectacular battles of the Spanish conquest took place, and is presided over by two separate ruined fortresses perched on two separate mountainsides.

This afternoon you have a choice – we might hike to an overgrown, little-known Inca site, take a chocolate-making class, or perhaps just relax and enjoy the expansive gardens of our accommodation, accompanied by hummingbirds and surrounded by peaceful countryside and spectacular mountain peaks.

**Accommodation:** 4-star accommodation in the Sacred Valley

**Meals:** All meals included

## Day 4 Ruins, weavers and salt

We'll spend today high up in the mountains enjoying some of the best scenery of the whole trip (which is saying a lot!), with stunning views across the Sacred Valley to range after range of the central Andes.

We'll visit perhaps the most mysterious Inca site, Moray – three massive amphitheaters of incredible engineering precision and stern, magnificent beauty. Then we'll check out Salineras – a surreal and beautiful patchwork of pools and paths that still produces salt using Inca technology, and is Steve's favourite sight in Peru!

We'll also spend time in Chinchero, a quiet little town best known for its outdoor weaving studios, terraced Inca ruin, and intricately-frescoed colonial church.

**Accommodation:** 4-star accommodation in the Sacred Valley

**Meals:** All meals included

## Day 5 Start hiking the Lares trail

This morning we'll take a short drive into the Pumahuanca valley, where we'll start to hike – straight up! We'll ascend about 1,100m (3,600 feet) in around six hours of walking today, as we head over the huge *cordillera* (range) between the Sacred and Lares valleys.

Along the way we'll stop to check out a cool, little-visited ruin and have lunch next to a waterfall, before arriving to our campsite at Cuyoc, a charming spot in a native *queuña* forest, with incredible views across to Salineras and Maras on the other side of the Sacred Valley.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** All meals included

**Minimum altitude:** 2,960m (9,710ft)

**Maximum altitude:** 4,000m (13,120ft)

**Campsite altitude:** 4,000m (13,120ft)

**Distance:** Nine km (5.6 miles)

## Day 6 Complete the trek to Lares

Today starts with a two-hour uphill push to the high (4,700m/15,400 feet) pass, where we're rewarded with breathtaking (in more ways than one!) views of surrounding snow-capped peaks including Colque Cruz, Sahuarsiray and Veronica. From here we start to descend – through continuing spectacular views, past llamas and lagoons – about an hour to the village of Cuncani, where we'll stop for lunch.

After Cuncani we continue descending for another three hours, emerging into the Lares Valley about halfway through, to a fitting reward for a long, hard hike: a campsite set up right next to a natural hot spring! The Lares hot springs are our favourite place in the world to arrive to after a tough day, and you've just done two! Sitting in the hot, medicinal water looking up at the stars tonight will make it all more than worthwhile, and it's an experience you'll never forget.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** All meals included

**Minimum altitude:** 3,150m (10,300ft)

**Maximum altitude:** 4,700m (15,000ft)

**Campsite altitude:** 3,150m (10,300ft)

**Distance:** 12 km (7.5 miles)

## Day 7 Scenic journey to Aguas Calientes

This morning there's the option of driving or hiking (two hours) down through a river canyon back into the Sacred Valley. The amazing, unfolding contrast in ecosystems, between the exposed mountain tops of the high Andes where we've spent the last couple of days, and the temperate forest of the Lares valley, makes this charming, easy stroll all the more enjoyable!

We'll check out the Sacred Valley's main local market in Calca, then take the scenic 1.5-hour train ride to Aguas Calientes, where we'll enjoy a well-deserved hot shower and gourmet dinner!

**Accommodation:** Boutique 4-star hotel, Aguas Calientes

**Meals:** All meals included

**Minimum altitude:** 1,700m (5,580ft)

**Maximum altitude:** 3,150m (10,300ft)

**Distance:** Eight km (five miles) hiking

## Day 8 Machu Picchu

Today is all about exploring massive, magnificent, mysterious Machu Picchu. Your guide will show you around the highlights plus our favorite hidden corners, and you'll have some time of your own to enjoy the maze of pathways and terraces, and soak up stunning views of the incredibly steep, jungle-clad peaks all around us; the surrounding scenery is Katy's favorite thing about Machu Picchu!

This afternoon we'll travel by train and road to Cusco, the historic, beautiful capital of the Inca empire and our base for the next stage of our adventure.

**Accommodation:** 4-star hotel in Cusco's colonial center

**Meals:** All meals included

## Day 9 Explore Cusco

Cusco is the longest inhabited city in the Americas and its undisputed archaeological capital. On top of its famous Inca foundations, it's home to many notable churches, museums, galleries and markets. Narrowing down what to do is the hard part, and your guide is here to help you with that, organize the day that best suits your group's interests, and get you well oriented to get the most out of your time in this amazing town!

**Accommodation:** 4-star hotel in Cusco's colonial center

**Meals:** All meals included

## Day 10 Free day in Cusco

Cusco is a great place to just wander around - around every corner you'll be surprised by mountain views, charming streetscapes, great cafés, and crazy hole-in-the-wall shops selling everything from frogs and herbs for casting spells, to the world's most colourful candles!

We're also happy to help you book organized activities like rafting, mountain biking, horse riding, and cooking or ceramics classes.

By this stage of the trip, many of our guests are ready for some unstructured time to sort through photos and touch base with family back home, and your comfortable accommodations are the perfect place to chill out.

**Accommodation:** 4-star hotel in Cusco's colonial center

**Meals:** Breakfast included

## Day 11 Arequipa, Peru's white city

This morning we'll fly to Arequipa, known as Peru's most beautiful city thanks to its graceful colonial architecture and extensive use of *sillar* (a luminous white, marble-like stone), all set against the backdrop of lush green countryside and surrounded by a circle of volcanoes known as the 'ring of fire'.

This afternoon we'll explore Arequipa's historic center and delve deep into Santa Catalina convent, a colorful, walled city-within-a-city where generations of nuns have left an indelible imprint of faith, miracles, and ghost stories.

**Accommodation:** Boutique 4-star hotel in downtown Arequipa

**Meals:** All meals included

## Day 12 Unique wildlife and natural hot springs

This morning we'll take the drive to Colca Canyon, with plenty to see along the way including petrified rock formations, herds of alpacas and vicuñas, and wetlands where ibis, flamingos, Andean geese and other birds congregate.

Folkloric culture is strong in this area, and we'll get a taste of it through dance and costume over lunch today, then spend the afternoon soaking in healing waters at another set of awesome natural hot springs.

**Accommodation:** Four star resort, Colca

**Meals:** All meals included

## Day 13 Condors at Colca Canyon!

An early start gets us in position at sunrise to greet some famous locals – the huge condors who rise majestically out of Colca Canyon on morning thermals. The strange and beautiful view down into the enormous canyon is worth the trip in itself.

Later we'll check out ancient stone agricultural terracing, mysterious lakes, and a beautiful church as we retrace our steps to Arequipa, where a gourmet dinner marks our final night together.

**Accommodation:** Boutique 4-star hotel in downtown Arequipa

**Meals:** All meals included

## Day 14 Departure day

We'll get you where you need to be today - and if you're keen to explore more of South America, we'll be glad to share some ideas!

**Meals:** Breakfast included

## What's included:

- All accommodation in double or twin room (*single supplement: add US\$1000pp*)
- All ground transportation including airport transfers at start and end of trip
- Flight from Cusco to Arequipa
- All attractions and activities specified in itinerary
- Dedicated Aspiring Adventures to look after you throughout the trip
- Meals as specified in the itinerary
- Clean, safe drinking water throughout the trip

## What's not included

- Tips for your guides & drivers
- Alcoholic beverages
- Laundry and room service