



The Quyllur Rit'i trip

TRIP LENGTH: Three days
STARTS AND ENDS: Cusco

If you're a hardcore traveler who thinks you've seen it all, Quyllur Rit'i is for you! Camp above 4,800m (15,000 ft), among a sea of indigenous, Quechua-speaking people who have rarely seen a foreign face, here to worship nature gods and Jesus by trance-dancing in elaborate costumes for days on end in the shadow of a glacier.

Day 1 Pilgrimage hike to Quyllur Rit'i

A 2.5 hour drive brings us to the hamlet of Mawayani, (3,900m/12,800ft), where our pilgrimage begins. From here it's a walk of approximately eight kilometers (five miles) up to the Sanctuary, 4800 meters (15,750ft) above sea level. Here the ceremonies – in honor of, in no particular order, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, Taytacha (Father Earth) and the Apu Ausangate (a powerful mountain god) – take place. Along the way are crosses marking places for rest, prayer, and exchanging religious icons, all accompanied by the hypnotic, pentatonic-scale music, played by our fellow pilgrims, that will follow us throughout our time here.

Late in the afternoon, we'll arrive at our comfortable base camp, among tens of thousands of other pilgrims and within sight of the Sinakara Glacier. If you have any energy left, you will find plenty to look at wandering around the site, or you might want to just relax with a cup of coca tea or *ponche de habas* in our cosy dining tent while you get used to being here.

Accommodation: Camping at Quyllur Rit'i

Meals: Lunch and dinner included

Day 2 Central day of Quyllur Rit'i festival

Quyllur Rit'i, the largest indigenous festival in the Americas, centers around the Sanctuary of the Lord of Quyllur Rit'i and the nearby pre-Inca holy rock which has had a chapel to the Virgin Mary planted on top of it. A procession of singing and dancing devotees continues day and night between these two points, with a stop in between to make reverence to the mountain. Fireworks go off all night, and the music never stops.

Different *comparsas* – groups of dancers – drawn overwhelmingly from rural, Quechua-speaking communities are the players in this bizarre show. Each *comparsa* has its own music, dance, and unbelievably elaborate costume. Perhaps the most important personages are the Ukukus: they're the police force and guardian spirits of the festival, and, drawn from all the communities, the unifying link between all the groups here. They are heavily disguised in shaggy bear costumes and masks, always carry a whistle and a llama-hide whip, and speak in falsetto voices to hide their identities.

Today involves several different rituals and activities which your expert, passionate guide will interpret for you, as well as a lot of going with the flow. It will be a day you'll never finish processing, and never forget.

Accommodation: Camping at Quyllur Rit'i

Meals: All meals include

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Day 3 Back to the real world

This morning a solemn Mass brings the Quyllur Rit'i festival to a close. Late this morning we'll join the trail of pilgrims winding their way back down the valley and out to the road. Here we'll meet our vehicle for the trip back to Cusco, where a hot shower and a comfortable bed await us!

Meals: Breakfast included

What's included:

- Tent accommodation, two people per tent (*single supplement: add US\$100pp*)
- Sleeping bag (with polar fleece liner) and sleeping mat
- Mule to carry your stuff to the campsite
- All ground transportation
- All events specified in itinerary
- Dedicated Aspiring Adventures guide to look after you throughout the trip
- All meals as specified in the itinerary
- Clean, safe drinking water throughout the trip

What's not included

- Tips for your guides & drivers
- Mule to carry you to the campsite
- Alcoholic beverages. **Alcohol is strictly forbidden at Quyllur Rit'i**; please do not bring any on the trip!

Spelling and pronunciation

Quyllur Rit'i is pronounced **KOyo RIti**. It means star of the snow in Quechua and makes reference to the reappearance of the Pleiades in the night sky as the weather turns away from summer.

The Quechua language, does not really have fixed spelling, so you'll also encounter it written as Coyllor Rity, Ccoyllor Riti, Qoyllority, Qoylloriti, Qoyllor Rity, Qoyllor Riti, Coyllority, Coyllority, Ccoyllor Riti, Coyllority, Coyllor Rity, Ccoyllor Riti, Ccoylloriti, Qoyllority, and Qoylloriti, to name just a few!

Conditions at Quyllur Rit'i:

This trip is suitable for adventurous people who are prepared to rough it. You will be camping in a high, cold, isolated mountain valley with no infrastructure. Food choice is limited and suitable for those who consider themselves adventurous eaters. Vegetarians should bring extra snacks. We provide clean drinking water and hot food and drinks throughout the event, in our base camp.

Quyllur Rit'i dates

Quyllur Rit'i is scheduled by the Christian calendar, so its dates vary each year - it's like Easter. Our annual Quyllur Rit'i trip begins on Trinity Sunday.