



ADVENTURE TOURS THAT DELVE DEEPER

THE PERU CLASSIC TRIP

TRIP LENGTH: 14 Days

STARTS: Cusco

ENDS: Puno

*The **Classic** brings together Peru's best: ancient ruins, colonial architecture, fantastic food, and a thriving, bewitchingly colourful folk culture – all set against the incredibly scenic background of the High Andes. The variety of experiences will astound you. Wander through graceful plazas, cobbled alleyways, farmland paths and jungle tracks. Descend from a glacial high pass to a rainforest oasis. Soak in natural hot springs. Drink coffee under the tree it was harvested from.*

It's the best two week Peru itinerary there is, and one of the most rewarding tours you can do anywhere – and did we mention it also includes Machu Picchu, Cusco, the Sacred Valley and Lake Titicaca?!

DAY 1: SUNDAY EXPLORE CUSCO

Welcome to Cusco, capital of the Inca Empire, one of the most beautiful cities on Earth, and a natural starting point for any Peru itinerary. We'll meet you at 1pm for a traditional Peruvian meal at a local favourite restaurant. In the afternoon your guide will lead a relaxed walking tour around Cusco's stunning historic centre – it's important to take it easy if you've arrived from sea level today, as you need to adjust to Cusco's 3,400m (11,200 feet) altitude.

Accommodation: Comfortable hotel in Cusco

Meals: Lunch and dinner included

DAY 2: MONDAY STUNNING SCENERY IN THE SACRED VALLEY

The sunny, incredibly scenic floodplain between Pisac and Ollantaytambo in the valley of the Urubamba River is known as the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Pisac is a tiny, cobbled Inca village which is home to the largest handicraft market in the region and a huge Inca fortress. We'll explore both, then set off into the Sacred Valley. We'll need frequent photo stops as we pass still-working Inca terracing, irrigation canals, and awesome mountain vistas. Our destination is Ollantaytambo, perhaps the most perfectly preserved of all Inca towns, a maze of cobbled alleyways and sun-drenched plazas presided over by a spectacular, llama-shaped ruin.

Accommodation: Cosy, family-run Ollantaytambo hotel

Meals: All meals included

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OPTION A: JUNGLE TRAIL TO MACHU PICCHU

DAY 3: TUESDAY RUINS, WEAVERS, AND A FUNCTIONING INCA FACTORY

Today starts with Chinchero, best known for its outdoor weaving studios and extensive Inca terracing with incredible views. Next we'll explore Moray – a mysterious complex of massive amphitheatres of incredible engineering precision and stern, magnificent beauty.

Then an easy stroll (or ride in the bus if you prefer), through rolling farmland and views of the high Andes, brings us to Salineras – a surreal and beautiful patchwork of pools and paths that still produces salt using Inca technology and is our favourite site in the Cusco region.

Accommodation: Family-run hotel in Ollantaytambo

Meals: Lunch and dinner included

DAY 4: WEDNESDAY ADVENTURES IN THE AMAZON BASIN

Today we cross one of the world's more drastic topographical divides: from the arid, Pacific side of the Andes to its lush western slope and the uppermost reaches of the Amazon Basin. The differences become more and more obvious as we descend from the icy high pass of Abra Malaga (4,350 m/14,000 feet), all the way down to the steamy heat of the *ceja de selva* ("eyebrow of the jungle").

Our destination, sleepy Santa Teresa (1,550 m/5,085 feet), is home to one of our favourite places in Peru, the *Baños Termales de Cocalmayo*, natural mountain hot springs beside a raging river. It's the perfect place to soak away the road dust of today's journey from one side of the Andes to the other.

If you're into biking, you might want to ride some or all of the day's long descent to the high jungle – it's an incredibly fun, freewheeling, downhill and is suitable for anyone who can ride a bike. We provide bikes so you can ride as much or as little as you like.

Accommodation: Rustic eco-lodge near Santa Teresa

Meals: All meals included

DAY 5: THURSDAY MEET COFFEE GROWERS AND SAMPLE THEIR WARES

Coffee, grown at cottage-industry level and exported to the world through growers' co-operatives, is the backbone of this area's economy. This morning a local coffee producer will show us around their plantation, and the operation where they harvest and mill coffee.

In the afternoon we'll take a short (seven km/five mile) train ride to Aguas Calientes. There's time this afternoon to explore the market and admire the scenery all around and above us – the isolated little town has one of the most beautiful settings you'll see in Peru, in a jungle gorge by a rushing river.

Accommodation: Comfortable hotel in Aguas Calientes

Meals: All meals included

OPTION B: INCA TRAIL HIKE TO MACHU PICCHU (ADD US\$250)**DAY 3: TUESDAY****START HIKING THE INCA TRAIL TO MACHU PICCHU!**

We'll get up very early this morning to take the bus to KM 82, the start of the Inca Trail. The hike begins in the Sacred Valley as we follow the Urubamba River, climbing ever higher and eventually heading off up the Cusicacha Valley, through semi-arid forest and farming villages, to Wayllabamba, where we'll camp for the night.

Accommodation:	Luxury camping on the Inca Trail
Meals:	All meals included
Walking:	12 km (7.5 miles)
Min. Altitude:	2,700m (8,860 feet)
Max. Altitude:	3,100m (10,170 feet)
Altitude of camp:	3,100m (10,170 feet)

DAY 4: WEDNESDAY**HIKE OVER WARMIWAYÑUSCA PASS**

Most of our walking time today is taken up by a stiff 1,200 m (3,940 feet) hike up to Warmiwayñusca (Dead Woman's Pass), the highest point of the Inca Trail. From here if it's clear we'll enjoy incredible views back the way we came, and onwards towards the distant, snowcapped Vilcabamba Range. Then we descend steeply into Pacaymayo, our campsite for the night with one of the best views in the Andes.

Accommodation:	Luxury camping on the Inca Trail
Meals:	All meals included
Walking:	11 km (6.8 miles)
Min. Altitude:	3,100m (10,170 feet)
Max. Altitude:	4,200m (13,780 feet)
Altitude of camp:	3,600m (11,810 feet)

DAY 5: THURSDAY**RUNKURAKAY, SAYACMARCA AND WIÑAYWAYNA**

Today's hike takes us through some of the most stunning scenery in Peru, with cloud forest, orchids, hummingbirds and mountains on all sides, and to three gorgeous little ruins – Runkurakay, Sayacmarca, and Wiñaywayna, next to the evening's campsite. Along the way we cross the watershed of the Andes – this is one of the best days trekking in the world.

Accommodation:	Luxury camping on the Inca Trail
Meals:	All meals included
Walking:	12 km (7.5 miles)
Min. Altitude:	2,670m (8,760 feet)
Max. Altitude:	3,900m (12,800 feet)
Altitude of camp:	2,670m (8,760 feet)

DAY 6: FRIDAY**MACHU PICCHU**

An early start rewards us with sunrise at Machu Picchu – a peak moment for anyone. A spectacular stone city surrounded by incredibly steep, incredibly green mountains, Machu Picchu needs no introduction and is deservedly one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. Your trip leader will take you on a guided tour – a necessary start to orient you in this massive site – then you'll have plenty of time to explore the site and some of the surrounding peaks on your own before we catch the train back to Cusco for the night.

Accommodation: Back at our home-base Cusco hotel

Meals: All meals included

DAY 7: SATURDAY**FREE DAY IN CUSCO**

There are things to do in Cusco to suit every mood and personality: churches, museums, and art galleries, rafting, horse riding, and cooking classes, just for starters. This is also the perfect day to just wander around and enjoy the spectacular mountain views, traditionally dressed locals, excellent cafes and charming architecture that make Cusco such a fascinating and beautiful place.

Accommodation: Cusco hotel

Meals: Breakfast included

DAY 8: SUNDAY**LOCAL LIFESTYLE AND FABULOUS FOOD IN THE SOUTH VALLEY**

The *Valle Sur* just outside Cusco is a popular weekend destination for *Cusqueños*, who flock here to specialist restaurants offering local favourites like *chicharrones* (deep fried pork chunks with corn and mint) and *cuy* (guinea pig), as well as plenty of more conventional and equally delicious options! We'll fit a very local lunch in between visiting Tipón and Pikillacta, two of Peru's most charming archaeological sites, and the church of Andahuaylillas, whose interior is so ornate that it's known as the Sistine Chapel of the Americas.

Late this afternoon we'll arrive at the village of Raqchi, home to a group of gracious, funny people we're proud to call our friends. For the next couple of days, they'll open their homes and lives to you, giving you a unique insight into traditional Andean life.

Accommodation: Raqchi homestay

Meals: All meals included

DAY 9: MONDAY**POTTERY MAKING, A VOLCANO, AND RUINS IN RAQCHI**

Today we'll strike off into the countryside, wandering to breathtaking lookouts, and the nearby (extinct!) volcano of Kimsach'ata. Later we'll try our hand at pottery-making – the people of Raqchi are professional potters and will show us how to make a pot on a pedal-powered potter's wheel.

We'll also have the privilege of attending a *ch'alla* (payment to the Earth) – a ceremony of propitiation of *Pacha Mama* (Mother Earth) held regularly by an ostensibly Catholic community, and a very good example of the paradox at the heart of Andean religion.

Accommodation: Raqchi homestay

Meals: All meals included

DAY 10: TUESDAY WELCOME TO THE ALTIPLANO

This morning we'll explore the enormous adobe ruin that dwarfs the humble homes of Raqchi, before heading off into the *altiplano* – one of the highest inhabited places on Earth, and home to some of its most unlikely attractions.

We'll take the plunge at Marangani: a surreal and improbable complex of five natural hot pools linked by steaming streams and populated by locals enjoying the only hot water for miles around.

We'll spend the night at a historic hacienda. Established as a convent in the 18th century, it's now home to a dairy farm where we'll have the opportunity to sample delicious high-altitude cheese and yoghurt.

Accommodation: Historic hacienda near Ayaviri

Meals: All meals included

DAY 11: WEDNESDAY FORGOTTEN RICHES IN LAMPA

Today we'll explore Lampa. Once one of the richest towns in Peru, it's now all but a ghost town, making the grandeur and scale of its cathedral all the more striking. Impressive from the outside, inside the cathedral is simply incredible. Among many other marvels, it houses a catacomb, a collection of skulls and skeletons, and a full-scale reproduction of Michelangelo's *Pietà*.

We'll arrive to the shores of Lake Titicaca in time for a memorable dinner at one of Puno's excellent restaurants.

Accommodation: Family-run hotel in downtown Puno

Meals: All meals included

DAY 12: THURSDAY LAKE TITICACA'S SOUTH SHORE

The tourist map ends at Puno. Past it lies a land of ancient burial monuments dedicated to dwarves, half-buried ruins drowsing in farmers' fields, and layer upon layer of human history and belief, built up over thousands of years: it's one of the weirdest and most wonderful places in the world and today we'll take our pick from many strange sights.

Amaru Meru is said to be a stone-carved door into another dimension. Even if interdimensional portals aren't your thing, you'll enjoy the windswept majesty, imposing rock formations, and views of Lake Titicaca around it. We'll also visit Chucuito, where 86 huge stone phalluses are buried every which way in what is said to be an Inca fertility temple – though some locals passionately argue it's a hoax. Either way, it's quite a sight!

Accommodation: Puno hotel

Meals: All meals included

DAY 13: FRIDAY

TAQUILE ISLAND ON LAKE TITICACA

This morning we take to the waters of Lake Titicaca. We'll stop briefly at the Uros – the famous floating reed islands of Lake Titicaca – but our main destination is Taquile, one of the most fascinating islands in the world. It was isolated until the 1950s and still follows a very different way of life. Decisions are communal, economic activity is co-operative, and society is based on the fundamental Inca principles: "*Ama sua, ama llulla, ama quella*" (don't steal, don't lie, don't be lazy). There are no cars, few dogs, and little electricity, because the Taquileños want it that way.

Taquile is also the most famous textile centre in the Andes. Its storytelling textiles, designed and woven by Taquile's women from thread spun by its men, draw aficionados and investigators from all over the world to this amazing island. On top of all this, the scenery is stunning and the peace and serenity is like nowhere else on Earth. Taquile is just magic.

Accommodation: Puno hotel

Meals: All meals included

DAY 14: SATURDAY

DEPARTURE DAY

You can book your flight out for any time you like today – do allow for the fact that Juliaca airport is just over an hour's drive away. If you're staying on in Peru, we're delighted to help out with suggestions and assistance for the rest of your time here.

Meals: Breakfast included

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- All accommodation (based on twin share. Single supplement available for US\$400)
- All ground transport (private vehicle, train and boat)
- All activities specified in itinerary
- Entrance to all attractions specified in itinerary
- Extra permit to climb Huayna Picchu at Machu Picchu if available at time of booking (with Option A)
- Dedicated Aspiring Adventures guide
- All meals except lunch and dinner on free day
- Drinking water with meals

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED:

- Tips for your guide(s) and driver
- Extra cost for Option B, Inca Trail hike (add US\$250)
- Option B only (Inca Trail hike): sleeping bag and mat (hire for US\$40 per item or bring your own)
- Option B only (Inca Trail hike): tips for your porters and cooks
- Private trip for just you and your party, plus your guide (add US\$400 per person)

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Accommodations on our Peru itineraries are our favourites in each town. In Cusco and Puno we stay in clean, comfortable hotels of three star standard. In Ollantaytambo, Aguas Calientes, Santa Teresa and Ayaviri we stay in quirky, interesting, family-run lodgings. In Raqchi we stay in humble family homes. Here, conditions are basic and hygiene may not be what you are used to at home, but any slight discomfort you experience will be well compensated for by this incredible insight into a very different way of life. The Inca Trail hike entails three nights of camping in tents.