



Adventure tours that delve deeper

Best of Peru and Galapagos cruise

TRIP LENGTH: 12 days
STARTS: Cusco, Peru
ENDS: Guayaquil, Ecuador

Discover ancient ruins, colonial architecture, fantastic food, and a thriving, bewitchingly colourful folk culture in a week exploring in Cusco, the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu.

Then cruise aboard the Galapagos Legend – the only cruise boat in the Galapagos with an on-deck swimming pool! – between islands where you'll get close to more birds, iguanas, animals and sea creatures than you ever dreamed possible.

Day 1 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 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 Ruins, weavers, and an Inca salt 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 vehicle 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: All meals included

Day 4 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 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 Start hiking the Inca Trail!

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:	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 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, snow-capped Vilcabamba Range. Then we descend steeply into Pacaymayo, our campsite for the night with one of the best views in the Andes.

Accommodation:	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 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:	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 Machu Picchu!

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.

We'll be up at sunrise so there's time for your guide to show you around Machu Picchu's main citadel, as well as our favourite hidden nooks and crannies, before the crowds arrive. Then there's time for your own exploration of the massive, still-mysterious site, before we catch the train back to Cusco.

Accommodation: Comfortable hotel in Cusco

Meals: All meals included

Day 7 Fly to Ecuador

Today we'll fly you from Cusco to Guayaquil in Ecuador, where you'll stay one night and rest up ready for the next stage of your South American adventure!

Accommodation: Comfortable 3-star hotel, Guayaquil airport or downtown

Meals: Breakfast included

Day 8 To the Galapagos!

We'll get you back to the airport in time to check in for your two hour flight to San Cristobal airport in the Galapagos! Here, your Galapagos-specialist naturalist guide will meet you and take you on a ten minute drive to the pier to board the Galapagos Legend – your luxury floating home for the next five days!

Our first stop is the Museum of Natural History in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capital of the Galapagos Islands. Here we can get oriented on the geography, climate, and volcanic origins of this group of islands, that over millions of years has led to the incredible abundance and uniqueness of flora and fauna here.

Later we'll hike an hour or so up Tijeretas Hill to the foot of a frigate bird nesting colony where we'll enjoy magnificent panoramic views.

Accommodation: Aboard the Galapagos Legend

Meals: Breakfast and dinner included

Day 9 Española Island

This morning we'll land on a white sandy beach where we can observe sea lions, lava lizards, iguanas, and many, many species of birds, including hawks, oystercatchers, mockingbirds, and three species of Darwin's finches. Then we'll take to the crystalline water to swim and snorkel among king angelfish, creole fish, damsel fish, parrotfish, manta rays, and white-tipped reef sharks.

Then we'll set sail for Suarez Point. Volcanic formations – including a blowhole that shoots water up to 23m (75ft) in the air – provide the dramatic backdrop to a 2.5 hour hike that takes us past large sea lion colonies, and nesting grounds of colourful birds. During mating season (May to November) this place also offers an unsurpassed opportunity to get close to waved albatrosses.

Accommodation: Aboard the Galapagos Legend

Meals: All meals included

Day 10 Floreana Island

This morning's wet landing at Post Office Bay gives us the opportunity to post a letter in the famous barrel that gave the bay its name, check out endemic vegetation such as Galapagos milkwort, and snorkel among playful sea lions.

In the afternoon we'll head for a beautiful white sandy beach, one of the most important nesting sites of green Pacific sea turtles. To get here we'll hike through black mangrove beds and a lagoon that's home to one of the largest flamingo flocks in the Galapagos. There's also time to snorkel or swim among sea turtles, reef fish, sea lions and, on a good day, white-tipped reef sharks.

Accommodation: Aboard the Galapagos Legend

Meals: All meals included

Day 11 Santa Cruz Island

This morning we'll visit the Darwin Station, home of the Galapagos giant tortoise breeding program as well as a prickly-pear cactus forest and an impressive variety of land birds.

After some free time to visit the town of Puerto Ayora and pick up gifts and souvenirs, we'll set off on a drive that highlights the contrasting ecosystems of the island, as we head from the coast through the agricultural zone and straight up to the dense, humid forest. Along the way we'll have the chance to see Galapagos Giant Tortoises wandering through the paddocks, and just about every land bird that lives in the entire Galapagos.

Later in the day we'll visit Ballena (Whale) Bay, a beautiful green sand cove whose beach contains plenty of olivine crystals of volcanic origin.

Accommodation: Aboard the Galapagos Legend

Meals: All meals included

Day 12 Goodbye Galapagos!

This morning we'll take a dinghy ride in a turquoise lagoon where we can observe sharks, blue-footed boobies, and different kinds of fish. Then we'll get you to Baltra Airport in time for your flight back out to Guayaquil, and on towards home.

Meals: Breakfast included

What's included:

- All accommodation (*based on twin-share. Single Supplement available for US\$2,750*)
- Flights Cusco-Guayaquil, Guayaquil-Galapagos-Guayaquil
- Ground and sea transport
- All attractions and activities specified in itinerary
- Extra permit to climb Huayna Picchu at Machu Picchu if available at time of booking (*with Option A*)
- Aspiring Adventures Peru-specialist guide on days 1-6
- Galapagos-specialist naturalist guide on all activities, days 8-12
- Meals as specified (*14 breakfasts, 12 lunches, 13 dinners*)
- Snorkelling gear in Galapagos

What's not included:

- Tips for your guides and drivers
- Inca Trail hike option only: tips for your porters and cooks, sleeping bag and mat (*bring your own, or hire from us – add US\$40 per item*), optional porter to carry your personal gear (*add \$60*)
- Scuba gear (*ask us about adding scuba diving to your trip*)
- \$100 Entrance to Galapagos National Park (*has to be paid in cash on arrival to airport in Galapagos*)
- \$20 INGALA Migration Card (*has to be paid in cash in Guayaquil airport*)
- Flights to start (Cusco) and from end (Guayaquil) of trip

Important!

Cruise schedules change. The order of days and embarkation point in Galapagos may vary. Please check with us before setting travel dates.

Travel insurance is mandatory for all travellers to Galapagos.

Accommodations:

In Peru we stay in comfortable, interesting, family-run lodgings of three-star standard.

Trip price is based on mid-range “junior suite” cabin on the Galapagos Legend.

If you're interested in a different level of accommodation, please ask us – we'll make it happen!