

Inca Trail Trek & Titicaca

9 days | Starts/Ends: Cusco



Hike the world famous Inca Trail, taking you along a sacred pilgrimage path, followed by many important Incas, to the incredible, mysterious Machu Picchu, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Starting and ending in Cusco, this 7 day tour will also give you free time to explore the amazing city of Cusco and acclimatise to the altitude.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Cusco - independently explore the captivating capital of the Incas
- Inca Trail Trek - complete one of the most famous treks in the world with spectacular scenery en route
- Machu Picchu - explore the spectacular Inca citadel set high in the Andes Mountains
- Puno & Lake Titicaca - visit the Uros floating reed islands & Taquile Island on South America's largest lake

What's Included

- 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches & 3 dinners
- 5 nights 4 star hotel in Cusco & Puno and 3 nights camping on the Inca Trail

- Airport transfers on days 1 and 9
- Guided tour of Machu Picchu and Lake Titicaca
- 4 day Inca Trail Trek
- Escorted by an English-speaking local tour leader
- Transfers & transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles
- Entrance fees for included sightseeing
- Porter - Up to 7kgs carried by a porter during your trek
- Camping equipment during Inca Trail Trek (excluding sleeping bag and sleeping mat)

What's Not Included

- International flights to/from our tour start/end points and visas
- Items of a personal nature and additional meals
- Tipping - refer to the Tipping paragraph in the Trip Notes for further information

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Cusco

Welcome to Cusco! Upon arrival at Cusco airport you'll be met and transferred to your hotel in the heart of this fantastic old city. A welcome meeting will be organized by your guide for a quick briefing of the tour. The rest of the day can be spent exploring Cusco, the ancient capital of the Inca Empire, set in the

Andes Mountains. Discover Spanish churches and mansions that sit alongside Inca remains and enjoy the vibrant nightlife or sampling Peruvian restaurants. **Overnight - Cusco**

Day 2 : Cusco



After breakfast, enjoy a free day to explore Cusco at your own pace. The capital city of the Inca Empire is now the undisputed archaeological capital of the Americas, as well as the continent's oldest continuously inhabited city. **Overnight - Cusco (B)**

Days 3-5 : Trekking the Inca Trail

Day 3 will start at 4.30am this morning at the hotel before we continue to 'Piscacucho' and complete our Inca Trail check-in procedure. We will need to show our passport, tickets, etc. at the control point. This is the moment to use restrooms, apply sunscreen, insect repellent and take care of any other vital things necessary for a long day of trekking. We have ahead the marvelous Inca Valley,

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used by the great Inca master himself and its royal courtship, to get to Machu Picchu. The Trail begins at 2,720m / 8,923ft and we will be heading across the Vilcanota River on the right side. But the path soon begins to get abruptly lean through the cloud forest. In time we will spot the great views of an Inca Fortress called 'Huillca Raccay', as well as the vast and incredible Inca site of 'Patallacta'. Also, we will see the Urubamba mountain range that divides the jungle, the Andes and the beautiful snow-capped peak of 'W'akay Willca' at 5,860m /19,225ft, known as Veronica. There is so much beauty to admire on this first day of the Inca Trail, you'll have an incredible encounter with the Andean nature. Now we will set up our first campsite near the small village of Wayllabamba 3,000m / 9,842ft in the temperate valley of the same name.

After you have finished your breakfast on day 4 we will get ready for the day ahead of us. It is 5:30 am but we will need most of the daylight and strength for what it is to come. We start the day with a steep ascent taking a few hours to achieve. For the Inca, this was part of pilgrimage route, a sacred one, to become one with the Apus (mountains) or the gods protecting the Andes. After some hours we have reached the highest pass at Abra de Warrmihuañusca or 'Dead Woman's Pass' at 4,200m / 13,779ft. This part of the trek is no easy task and it will take a bit of determination and resilience to complete. After a rest, we begin the descent to our lunch stop which is located at Pacaymayu at 3,550m /11,646ft. As we are passing, we will be able to see lots of hummingbirds as well as other birds species. We will also be able to appreciate an incredible variety of native plants, trees such as the 'Polylepis' which only grow in the cloud forest located at 3,650m/11,972ft. After lunch, we will take another 2 hours steep climb to Runkurakay pass at almost 4,000m and set up our campsite by 5 pm.

Once you have loaded up with a hearty breakfast on day 5, giving you the energy needed for the day ahead, we will get ready to continue along the Inca Trail. A gentle climb will lead us to our first stop at the archaeological site of 'Phuyupatamarca' meaning 'Town in the Clouds', this will also

be the the third highest point on the trail at 3,680m above sea level. The views of the mountains, canyons, and surrounding areas are spectacular! Then we continue, walking 3,000 steps through the cloud forest to the impressive agricultural Inca site of 'Intipata'. Later on, during our trail, we will arrive at our third campsite Wiñay Wayna at 2,680m/8,792 ft. We have walked so far between 4 to 5 hours and will arrive at camp by lunchtime. A short distance from our campsite is the Inca site of the same name, 'Wiñay Wayna' or 'Forever Young', which is a must to visit, especially now we are so close to completing the Inca Trail hike.

Overnight - Inca Trail (Camping) (B:2, L:3, D:3)

Day 6 : The Magnificent Machu Picchu



It is time to wake up, have an early breakfast and get on the trail again. On this early start, we have to get to 'Intipunku' ('Sun gate') (2,730 m/8,792 ft) before sunrise. You will get your first great view of Machu Picchu (2,400m/7,873 ft) with the sun rising over it. We will spend some time there enjoying an impressive tour of the ancient city, including the royal house of the Inca. After some time we will walk down the last part of the trail to a spot where you can take the classic postcard picture of the city. We'll then have a guided tour to learn all about the archaeological site of Machu Picchu. You'll then have another 2 hours to discover the citadel or to take on a further the hike to one of the nearby mountains: Machu Picchu Mountain or Huayna Picchu Mountain. Once you've finished we will meet our guide in Aguas Calientes, which is reachable by bus or by foot. Once we're all in Aguas Calientes we'll board our train to Poroy before we complete

our journey back to Cusco by road. **Overnight - Cusco** (B)

Day 7 : Cusco

After breakfast, you'll be picked up from your hotel at 06h00 and dropped off at the bus station to take a bus trip, more like a tour - a guide will be on board, and you'll stop at four exciting sites. First we'll visit Andahuaylillas, the Sistine Chapel of South America. This church is one of the most beautiful examples of Andean popular religious art.

Next up is Raqchi (Wiracocha God Temple), this was an Inca church of considerable dimensions; 328 feet long, 85 feet wide and 45 feet high. The temple is divided into two naves, and each nave has 11 large columns. Our third stop will be at La Raya. This is the half-way point between Cusco and Puno and also the highest point (14,222 feet above sea level). The landscapes here are stunning and typical Andean animals like the llama, alpaca and vicuña are familiar sights. It is also the geographic border between two cultures - Quechua and Aymara. Our final stop before we reach Puno will be the town of Pukara, this is the most important and oldest ceremonial center of the Altiplano. There are new lite-sculptures and tombs. We'll arrive into Puno around 5 pm this evening.

Overnight - Puno (B, L)

Day 8 : Lake Titicaca (Peru)



After breakfast, you will go out boat riding on Lake Titicaca. Pick up time at your hotel will be around 07h00. You will go over to the port, board our motor boat, and ride south to the Island of Uros. At Uros the Peruvians who live here maintain their ancient customs and way of life by weaving together totora reeds which grow in the shallows of the Lake. These reeds are used to construct their floating islands and their houses. Afterwards we will sail towards

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"Taquile Island". At Taquile, you will enjoy a 2-and-a-half-hour tour of the island which has been ranked the fourth most beautiful island in the world. In the community you will eat a wonderful Andean style buffet lunch.

Here you will visit the isolated weavers of this ancient community. According to pre-Columbian legend, the Incas actually learned how to weave from the artisans of this island. They are very, very skilled weavers. Taquile has been declared to be part of the Cultural Heritage of the Humanity by UNESCO.

Later in the afternoon, you will then have free time to explore the Island on your own, and afterwards return to Puno.

Overnight - Puno (B, L)

Day 9 : Puno

Today marks the end of your amazing journey through Peru. After breakfast a departure transfer will be provided to take you to Juliaca airport. (B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Jose Antonio Hotel

The recently built Jose Antonio Cusco Hotel is the ideal blend of modern architecture and fine colonial details. The comfortable guestrooms are a welcoming palette of neutral and earthy tones with excellent amenities. Discover Andean and Peruvian cuisine at the El Rejo restaurant or sip on a flavoursome cocktail at the spacious El Molino bar. The hotel also boasts its own Jacuzzi and sauna, perfect for a soak after a long day of sightseeing.



Hotel Royal Inn Puno

Situated just a short distance from Puno's main square, the Hotel Royal Inn is well located with access to the local restaurants and souvenir shops. Rooms are comfortable and spacious with some offering large in-room Jacuzzi bath tubs. The Surphu restaurant serves a menu of fusion dishes with both local and international influences.



Our Partners

This tour is operated in by our trusted partner and you will join travellers from different operators, not solely On The Go.

Passports

In accordance with a government requirement related to money laundering, the Peruvian State requires Tourism Operators to obtain and keep on file a copy of the passport of foreign passengers to Peru. Therefore we do require a copy of your passport prior to your departure to Peru. If you change your passport, please remember to inform us as soon as possible - however, please be aware that changing your passport can cause issues if you need to apply for visas or permits (such as the Inca Trail) in advance.

As a general rule most countries expect that your passport is valid for 6 months after the end of your trip and will refuse entry to anyone with shorter validity. A temporary or 'visitor's' passport is not valid on our trips. Please ensure the name on your passport matches the name on your booking and flight tickets. We recommend bringing a copy of the main passport page with you on your trip and leave another copy at home with family or friends.

Trekking guides

On this tour you will be escorted by an expert local trekking guide on the Inca Trail trek. All our trekking guides are Peruvian and passionate about sharing their country with you. Please note that the trekking guides are not "Tour Guides" in the normal sense, whilst they will know are very knowledgeable about trekking and the area of Peru you are in, they are not experts in all aspects of the culture and history of each part of the country. They are employed to ensure the smooth running of your trip.

All included sightseeing will be led by specialist local guides who reside in the city you are visiting. Please note that on the trek it is likely you will be joined by travellers who have booked through different operators, not solely On The Go.

Porters

This tour includes the cost of a porter to carry your personal belongings on the trek so that all you need to carry is a small day pack. You will be given a duffel bag in Cusco to carry the clothing and personal belongings that you need for your nights on the Trek, the rest of your luggage will be stored in Cusco. Please note that your sleeping bag will also need to fit in the duffel bag and the maximum weight the porters can carry is 7kg.

The Inca Trail

The most famous Inca path through the Andes is known as 'the Inca Trail', the royal route to Machu Picchu. The spectacular 44km trail crosses three stunning high passes and weaves between many ancient archaeological sites, culminating at the famous Lost City of the Incas. There are few treks in the world that combine natural beauty, history and mystery with such an awe-inspiring final destination.

Your group is led by an expert local trekking guide and supported by an assistant guide for groups larger than 9 people, plus a team of porters and cooks who carry all the camping gear. Three nights are spent camping en route. The trail can be physically demanding but can be completed by anyone with a reasonable level of fitness. There is no rush to

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finish so individuals can complete each day at their own pace.

Please note that the Inca Trail is closed each year for the month of February for essential maintenance. If you wish to visit Peru during this time we offer the Lares Trek or Salkantay Trek instead.

On the Inca Trail trek you may be joined by travellers who have booked through other operators, not solely On The Go Tours.

The Hike

The Inca Trail itself involves three full days of walking with a few hours to the Sun Gate on the fourth day. Your trekking group will be accompanied by a guide and an assistant. This means one is able to lead and another can stay behind with the slower members of the group, which means everyone can set their own pace. You'll find that the group you are trekking with will naturally spread out along the route but you'll all meet up again at lunch stops and at camp.

The trek follows varying terrain with challenging uphill, enjoyable flats and long downhill that can be hard on your knees. What this means is that some sections will be more difficult than others, especially getting to Dead Woman's Pass (Wamiwañusca Pass) on day 2 of the trek. It's not easy but it's definitely not the same as tackling a mountain summit. There will be ample rest stops to soak up the scenery and give your legs a quick break.

The key to enjoying the trek is to go slow and opt for small steps over long strides. Stay hydrated and take breathers as often as you need. Walking poles help immeasurably and can be rented in Cusco at very low prices so consider hiring a pair. Remember that it's not a race and you'll be fine.

Trek Info:

Day 01:

Total trekking distance: 11 km/6.8 miles (6-7 hours)

Highest altitude: 3000m/9843f (Huayllabamba)

Day 02:

Total trekking distance: 12 km/7.45 miles (6-7 hours)

Highest altitude: 4205m/13796f (Wamiwañusca Pass)

Day 03:

Total trekking distance: 10 km/6.2 miles (5-6 hours)

Highest altitude: 3950m/12960f

Day 04:

Total trekking distance: 6 km/ 3.7 miles (2-3 hours)

Highest altitude: 2680m/8793f

Fitness

You do not need to be an athlete or experienced trekker to complete the Inca Trail. A reasonable level of fitness is required and it's a good idea to get into shape before you head off to Peru to make the trek as enjoyable as possible for yourself. People of all ages regularly trek the Inca Trail and complete failure is rare. Stay positive and determined and like the hundreds of people that complete the trek each day, you will too. The only people that really struggle with the trek are those without a basic level of fitness.

Altitude sickness can affect anyone regardless of their level of fitness or age. It's caused by a lack of oxygen and symptoms include nausea, headaches, exhaustion and dizziness. It may occur at any altitude over 3,000 metres above sea level. As the Inca Trail is a mixture of ascents and descents, the effects of altitude sickness are usually brief and should not necessarily stop you from completing the trek. If you are worried about altitude sickness, preventative medication is available.

Before departing for your tour, we recommend visiting your doctor who will be able to provide you with more information. If you are planning to take your children to Peru, please be advised that the minimum age for hiking the Inca Trail is 13 years old.

Campsites and equipment

On the Inca Trail all camping and cooking equipment is provided apart from your sleeping bag and sleeping mat which can be hired locally. You will sleep in two person tents and there is a communal dining tent for meals and for staying dry if it rains. The porters go ahead each day to set up camp so

that you can just relax when you arrive at the camp and rest your weary feet. Each morning and when you return to camp the porters will provide you with a small bowl of water to wash your hands and face. Wet wipes are also handy to keep yourself fresh and clean. At the campsite on the third night there are showers but demand can be high so be prepared to queue.

Toilets have improved a lot in the last couple of years and all of the larger campsites have toilet blocks with flush toilets and running water. On the whole they are kept pretty clean. Passengers can use toilets before starting the daily trek and during the stop at the lunch site. Whilst trekking you may need to squat behind a bush although there are some small toilet blocks with squat toilets dotted along the trail. Toilet paper is not provided so it's essential that you bring your own. Paper must not be flushed down the toilet so we recommend that you bring small plastic bags to put your paper in.

Meals

The cook prepares three hearty meals a day, in addition to a mid morning snack. It's amazing what tasty food they can prepare with such limited facilities and you should be pleasantly surprised. Tea, coffee and hot chocolate is also available with meals. Soft drinks will need to be purchased and they are expensive on the trail. You can purchase bottled water on day 1 and 2 of the trek and on day 3 the porters will provide cool boiled water for you to refill your bottle. If you have any dietary requirements please inform us at time of booking.

What we recommend that you bring

The Inca Trail is a trip of a lifetime. With three days of hiking at altitude and nights spent camping, it's an experience that requires a fair bit of planning to make sure it's as a comfortable and enjoyable experience as possible. To help we've put together an Inca Trail Packing List with essential items to get you through it and items that we recommend, which you can find here.

What to pack in your day bag

Every trekker will carry their own day bag, which can be as heavy as you like but

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ideally it should be as light as possible with only the equipment and miscellaneous items that you'll need during the day, which should include the following:

- **Day bag** - This is the bag that you will carry yourself during the trek to contain essential items that you will need access to throughout the day and at night. It should be large enough to carry all your essential items but not so big that you fill it with extra weight - anything around 20 litres is a good idea. A bag with pockets and compartment will be useful as will one with a waterproof cover. You may prefer one with back air vents for added comfort or with built-in camel hydration pack for easy access to water.
- **Passport** - Your Inca Trail permits are confirmed with your passport details and you must carry your passport with you during the trek. A photocopy is not sufficient and we recommend you bring a plastic cover to protect it from water and dirt. We also recommend bringing your travel insurance details, including policy number and emergency contact number.
- **Walking boots** - You'll be walking across varied terrain in your boots for three-four whole days so your boots need to be well worn-in to ensure they are as comfortable as possible during the trek. They should be waterproof, provide ankle support and have decent grip. The most important thing is that you have worn them prior to the trek and know they won't cause you any trouble.
- **Waterproof outer clothing** - A plastic poncho is a great way of keeping your upper body and day bag dry or you may prefer to bring a waterproof (and windproof) jacket and trousers.
- **Plastic bags** - These should be used to wrap up your belongings to make sure they stay dry and to ensure any liquids in your bag do not accidentally spill over the other items. Spare bags can also be used for collecting rubbish during the trek. All plastic bags that are brought with you must be taken.
- **Toilet paper** - Squat toilets can be found along the Inca Trail, however, toilet paper is not provided so bring your own.
- **Wet wipes** - These can be used to clean your hands, face and belongings in case they get dirty.

- **Water bottle** - It's important to stay well hydrated when at high altitude aiming to drink 2 litres of water a day so bring a large water bottle with you or a hydration bladder that can be stored in your bag.
- **Headgear** - A lot of heat can be lost through your head so bring a warm beanie to wear when cold and a sun hat or baseball cap to wear during the day when the sun's out. You may also wish to bring a bandanna to wear around your neck to protect against sunburn. A bandanna also doubles as a handkerchief and flannel.
- **Gloves and thick socks** - It's best to avoid cold hands and feet with warm gloves and thermal socks. Ideally your socks should be well padded around the toes and heel to keep you warm and comfortable in your boots, minimising rubbing of your skin at the same time. Aim for mid-calf or knee length socks to keep your lower legs as warm as possible.
- **Sunglasses** - Don't underestimate the strength of the sun at high altitudes and bring a good quality pair of sunglasses that block the worse of the UV and make enjoying the scenery far more pleasurable.
- **Personal medication kit** - This should include Band-aids, blister plasters, rehydration sachets, high factor sunscreen, tropical strength insect repellent and paracetamol and pills for diarrhea (Imodium) in case of altitude sickness symptoms. A lip balm with SPF in it is also a good idea.
- **Camera and spare batteries and memory cards** - You won't want to miss out on the incredible photo opportunities present along the trail and with few electrical points during the trek, make sure you have enough life in your batteries to get you through the three/four days. It's also wise to carry your camera in a padded, water-resistant pouch to protect it. Take your chargers with you and consider taking a portable battery powered charger.
- **Walking poles** - The undulating terrain can be a tough job on your knees and walking poles can reduce the impact on your joints (rubber covers required in order not to damage the Inca Trail). You can hire walking poles in Cusco at a reasonable price.
- **Snacks** - High protein energy bars made mostly from nuts are the best snack to eat during the day to keep your energy levels high.

- **Cash** - Small denominations for tipping and access to toilets.

What to pack in your duffel bag

Before your Inca Trail trek you'll be given a duffel bag in which you can pack up to 6kg of your own personal belongings to be carried by the team of porters. In this bag it's best to pack heavier stuff that you won't need during the day but will need when you reach camp, which should include:

- **Sleeping bag** - A sleeping bag is required as you will be camping at night. We recommend a four season (or -10) for the winter months with a three season (or -4/-5) bag suitable for the rest of the year.
- **Sleep sheet/sleeping bag liner** - These can be used to add extra warmth to a sleeping bag and provide comfort if you plan to hire a sleeping bag locally rather than bringing your own.
- **Sleeping mat/pad** (included on the Lares Trek)
- **Inflatable pillow** - If you like the comfort of something soft under your head at night, bring a small inflatable pillow.
- **Trekking sandals** - After a long day trekking in your boots it can be blissful taking them off when you first get to camp so it's a good idea to take lightweight trekking sandals/flip flops/thongs that will air your feet but still allow you to wear socks for warmth.
- **Small travel towel** - There will be the chance of a shower on day 3 of the trek so bring a small travel towel, which folds down to next to nothing and can also be used to wash your face in the evenings/mornings. It's also advisable to bring travel-size bottles of shower wash and shampoo.
- **Clothing** - We recommend bringing fleece pyjamas to wear at night or long thermal underwear which can also be worn during the day for added warmth. It's best to bring layers so you have more control over your personal temperature with trousers that can zip off to shorts, shirts that can be opened at the front as well as t-shirts and a fleece jumper. The best materials are wool and quick-drying polyester - denim and cotton absorb moisture so are best avoided. As well as the clothes you begin the trek in, you'll want at least one or two sets of clean clothes.

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- Swimwear - There's a number of hot springs in Aguas Calientes, which are the perfect antedote to three/four days of trekking, so bring some bathers and a pair of flipflops/thongs/jandals, also useful for a shower on day.
- Torch and/or headlamp - There are no lights in the toilets so you'll need your own source of light if you want to see what you're doing! Bringing an extra set of batteries is advisable. Headlamps are preferable as you can use it hands-free.

Top Tip: If you don't fancy taking all this with you to Peru, there are a number of outdoor adventure stores in Cusco selling big brands like North Face and Columbia where you can pick up clothing and trekking equipment. Alternatively, there are also dozens of places where you can rent quality gear for very reasonable prices including walking poles, thermal gloves and down jackets so you can add the last few bits you need once in Cusco and return them after the trek.

Equipment for hire

- Sleeping bag: US\$ 35.00 / 4 days. Sleeping bags available to hire are -18°C-comfort (0°F) and mummy form and include a sleeping liner. They are cleaned after every use and have a maximum usage of 30 trips.
- Inflatable sleeping mat: US\$ 25.00 / 4 days. Alternatively you can easily hire a sleeping bag and mat yourself in Cusco for as little as US\$10 per item but we cannot guarantee the quality or cleanliness.

The Weather

Cusco has two seasons: the rainy season, from November to April (the heaviest rainfalls occurring usually between January – March); and the dry season, from May to October. The dry season is colder, so temperatures can drop to below 0 degrees at night.

Along the Inca Trail, temperatures range from 15-20°C during the day if it's sunny, to 05-10°C during the day if not sunny or 0-05°C at night in the first 2 campsites. At Wiñaywayna and Machupicchu, at lower altitude, temperatures are usually warmer though warm clothes are still recommended at night.

Tipping

Tips are not included in the overall price of Inca Trail or Lares treks. The porters, guides and cooks do an amazing job on the trail and most trekkers do tip on the last night of the hike during the dinner. We recommend that you budget approx. US\$65-80 in total for this and suggest that each person in the group contributes the following:

- US\$50-60 - to distributed among the cook, assistant cook and the porters
- US\$15-20 - for the trekking guide

Note: you can tip in either Peruvian Soles or US dollars.

Tipping

Although tipping is not a natural part of many Western cultures it is expected in Peru. The local people work very hard to provide a good service and this is due in part to the tips they have received from foreigners in the past. However all tips are at your own discretion and you should not feel obliged or pressured to tip at any time – particularly if you feel that the level of service was not up to standard.

As a general guideline a gratuity of 10% of the total bill for your waiter is recommended in restaurants. You should be aware that prices on the menu often exclude service charges but they are added to the bill (10%) and local taxes (anywhere between 2% and 20%). If it is included then you are not expected to pay an additional tip, although this is still appreciated. Some restaurants have a 'cubiertos' (cover charge) which is normally added onto the food section of the bill, not the total, so watch out for this when dividing the bill with other group members.

It is also customary to tip local guides for included sightseeing and tips are appreciated by your drivers and tour leaders. As a guideline, we recommend:

- Local guides for a full day excursion: approx US\$3-5 per person
- Tour leader: approx US\$4-6 per person per day
- Drivers: approx US\$2 per person per day

For advice on tipping for the Inca Trail and Lares trek please see the Inca Trail section on these Trip Notes.

This information is given as a guide, as many travellers are unsure and uncomfortable about how much to tip. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture and the amount you tip is at your own discretion.

Electricity in Peru

The voltage in Peru is 220V and sockets are a mixture of the European, two-pronged round variety and US flat-pin. We recommend that you pack a universal travel adaptor that will allow you to use a hairdryer, electric shaver, charge a mobile phone or other electrical items. You will also need a voltage converter if you're using appliances from the US.

Essential packing

- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Passport and Andean Migration Card (TAM) provided on arrival to Peru
- Your travel insurance details including emergency contact number
- A photocopy of your passport data pages
- A universal power adaptor
- Insect repellent to guard against mosquitoes
- Spare camera batteries/memory card
- Buy some Peruvian Sol at the airport on arrival
- Keep a supply of small notes for local transactions

Health

You should seek medical advice from your local health practitioner before travelling to Peru and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide tetanus, diphtheria, polio, typhoid, hepatitis A are recommended. There is the risk of malaria in certain areas of Peru, most notably the Amazon jungle, so it is very important to check with your health practitioner before you go to see whether malarial medication is required for the areas you are visiting.

Altitude can affect anyone at moderate to high altitude (generally anything over 3,000 metres). Altitude sickness is caused by the lack of oxygen which can be up to a third less than at sea level. No one understands why some people are affected and others not, and age, level of fitness and strength is no indication of how well you will fare. With altitudes of up to 4,200 metres on the Inca

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Trail and 4,600 metres on the Lares Trek, it is imperative that you speak with your doctor prior to departure as drugs are available to combat the effects of altitude sickness and may be recommended. Whether you decide to take altitude sickness medication or not, make sure you allow a few days' of acclimatisation before the trek with minimal physical activity and plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. Be aware that you may experience altitude sickness in Cusco, which sits at an elevation of 3,399 metres.

Not like home

Travelling to far-flung corners of the earth often involves encountering lifestyles and conditions that are very different from what you are used to back home. As such it is important to come prepared for unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned, as things can and do change in foreign countries. Peru is a destination where you'll be afforded plenty of unique encounters, and if you can travel with an open mind you will have a wonderful time here. In return, please remember to demonstrate sensitivity and respect for local customs.

Personal safety

It is not advisable to wear chains or expensive looking watches or jewellery while in Peru. You should also keep your camera concealed when not in use and carry daypacks on your front for extra safety. Crime in Latin America is not as bad as its reputation but you must be sensible and alert.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Peru Country Guide

Peru - Fact File

- Official Name: Republic of Peru
- Capital: Lima
- Population: 30 million
- Total Area: 1.285 million square kilometres (twice the size of France)
- Official Language: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara also spoken in places

- Religions: Roman Catholic 90%
- Voltage: 220 volts. Sockets are a mixture of the European, two-pronged round variety and US flat-pin.
- Dialling Code: +51
- Time Difference: GMT/UTC -5. For other time differences please visit www.timeanddate.com
- Airport Departure Tax: US\$31

Peru - Visas

Currently, EU, US, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand citizens can enter Peru without a visa for up to 90 days (on arrival ask for 90 days as the standard issued is 30 days). As this situation changes periodically, we advise you check with your local Peruvian embassy prior to departure. All tourists will be presenting with a tourist card to enter Peru, which will be issued to you by your airline before landing and will be stamped by an official upon arrival where you will also be asked to present a return ticket or proof of funds for your stay and return ticket. This must always be kept with you throughout your stay in South America (as per Peruvian law, everyone must carry some form of ID at all times) – especially when travelling outside of main towns and cities. You must also retain this card for when you exit Peru (this is a big deal, if you lose it, you can't leave & must go through all sorts of bureaucracy - which takes days). Take a copy or a digital photograph copy.

Peru - Climate

Peru is split into three main zones – the coast, the mountains and the jungle, all boasting different climates. From the driest hottest desert in the Americas, to the Andean peaks, to the lowland Amazon Jungle, each zone offers different seasons.

It rarely rains along the coast; however, the capital does experience a substantial amount of smog, coastal fogs and even drizzle, particularly between the months of May and November.

The mountains and the jungle regions can be divided into wet season between November and April and dry season between May and October. During dry season there can be some showers however it is not as heavy or as

frequent. Rainy season normally means a few downpours a day rather than continuous rain.

Peru - Money

Local currency

The monetary unit in Peru is the Nuevo Sol. For up-to-date exchange rates with your own currency visit www.xe.com.

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

US dollars are used and accepted for payment in Peru, especially in tourist areas however we recommend you always carry some local currency where you can as you are more likely to get preferable exchange rates. There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency you can bring into Peru however large sums must be declared on arrival. We recommend keeping a small supply of small denomination notes and coins as there is usually a lack of small change.

Traveller cheques are also better exchanged in US dollars. Banks will usually accept and exchange traveller's cheques however it can be trickier and a much slower process than when in Lima.

We recommend you change enough money to get through the first few days of your trip – especially over a weekend. Please note you can change cash at the Cambio or withdraw money from an ATMs in the capital (as well as Arequipa, Cuzco and Puno) where ATMs are open 24 hours a day.

Important

Please note that ATMs in Peru do not always automatically release your credit or debit card at the time when you receive your money. Please be aware that you sometimes must push a button to request your card to be returned. Many ATMs in main towns have instructions in English.

Peru - Local Transport

We recommend using local taxis for your journeys in Peru, especially outside of main cities. Taxis do not usually have meters, so the fare must be agreed with the driver beforehand. Be sure to ask the hotel reception or your tour leader for a rough guide of the price so when you start your negotiation with the drivers you know how much the fare

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should be. It also helps if you speak some Spanish to help you however please expect to pay more than the locals do.

Local buses are also available and cheap to use however you really do need to speak reasonable Spanish to get by. There are also bus stops, especially in the capital where tourists are recommended to avoid.

Peru - Food & Drink

Peruvian cuisine is known for its hot and spicy nature which comes from the classic mix of garlic and hot pepper that we have come to celebrate abroad. Due to the diversity of the Peruvian landscapes, the country enjoys a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.

The basic diet focuses around chicken, beef or seafood, (however be prepared to see some exotic meats such as guinea pig on offer) accompanied by rice, chips and salad. Specialities along the coastal regions include 'Cerviche', raw fish marinated in lemon juice, with onion and hot chillies. Another local speciality is 'Cuy', roasted guinea pig served whole and accompanied with yucca and potatoes.

In the highlands, diets focus on potatoes and vegetables, with the country producing over 2000 kinds of cultivated and indigenous potatoes there is an array of variety. 'Causa', a dish made from yellow potatoes, lemons, eggs, sweet potato, cheese and onion sauce. 'Tamales' boiled corn dumplings wrapped in banana leaves and filled with meat are another local favourite.

In most larger cities and towns, you will find an array of restaurants offering international cuisine. Chifas (Chinese restaurants) are very common in Peru, as well as Italian pizzerias, Japanese and Indian restaurants have begun to open however we also recommend trying the 'menu del dia' in local restaurants for a cheap authentic meal.

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. However vegetarian alternatives are becoming more popular. Our tour leaders will do their best

to provide interesting vegetarian alternatives for included meals, but your patience and understanding is requested.

Drink

Please note that drinks will be at your own expense throughout the duration of the tour. Most hotels we use will either have a bar onsite or within walking distance. Imported spirits and beers are available but at a higher price. There are also local drinks available including 'Pisco' clear brandy distilled from grapes.

'Inca Kola' is the country's soft drink of choice, so popular that MacDonaldis had to allow it to be sold in Peruvian branches due to exceptionally high demand.

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available and much safer.

Peru - Bugs

If your tour includes a visit to the jungle region, we advise that you prepare yourself to encounter an array of wildlife including insects and bugs etc. Most creepy crawlies are harmless and will not cause problems at all. If you do find any in your room, it doesn't mean that the room is unclean, just that you are in the jungle and its completely normal – if anything it's part of the jungle experience. If you do not like creepy crawlies we recommend plenty of repellent spray and coils to place in your room.

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