Inca Trail to Machu Picchu
7 days | Starts/Ends: Cusco

Hike the legendary Inca Trail and marvel at Machu Picchu, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, explore the Sacred Valley and ancient Inca archaeological sites on this 7 day tour which starts and ends in the captivating city of Cusco.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights
• Cusco - independently explore the captivating capital of the Incas
• Sacred Valley of the Incas – roam around the Pisac ruins, the temple of Ollantaytambo and local markets
• 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

What’s Included
• 6 breakfasts, 3 lunches & 3 dinners
• 2 nights 4 star hotel in Cusco, 1 night 3 star hotel in the Sacred Valley and 3 nights camping on the Inca Trail
• Airport transfers on days 1 and 7
• Guided tour of the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu

What’s Not Included
• 4 day Inca Trail Trek (alternatively hike the Lares Trek or travel by train to Machu Picchu)
• Escorted by an English-speaking local tour leader in Cusco and the Sacred Valley, with specialist local guides for trek and included sightseeing
• Transfers & transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles
• Entrance fees and Cusco Tourist Ticket
• 4 day Inca Trail Trek (alternatively hike the Lares Trek or travel by train to Machu Picchu)
• Escorted by an English-speaking local tour leader in Cusco and the Sacred Valley, with specialist local guides for trek and included sightseeing
• Transfers & transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles
• Entrance fees and Cusco Tourist Ticket
• 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
Bienvenidos a Peru! Upon arrival at Cusco airport you’ll be met and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to explore this charming city which is easily navigated on foot. The Plaza de Armas and the Catedral de Santo Domingo sit at the heart of Cusco’s cultural centre. The modern square is a bustling tourist hub, with bars, restaurants and shops flanking the northern and western sides of the squares, offering a distinctly European vibe. Tonight at 6pm our welcome meeting takes place.

Please note: You may wish to arrive a day or two earlier in order to adjust to the altitude. Pre tour accommodation can be booked upon request. Overnight - Cusco

Day 2 : Sacred Valley
Cusco Cusco - Sacred Valley. Bidding farewell to Cusco we travel on to the Sacred Valley today. Our first stop is the popular Pisac Markets, where artisans from the region get together and exchange or buy and sell their products. There’s plenty of time to explore the market, see the variety of...
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colourful handicrafts and textiles on offer, and barter for souvenirs. Then we travel on to the remarkable Ollantaytambo fortress with its giant Inca terraces built into a steep mountainside. The fortress was constructed to guard the entrance to this part of the valley and protect it from possible invasions of tribes from the jungle lowlands. **Overnight - Sacred Valley (B)**

Days 3-5 : The Inca Trail

Sacred Valley - Km. 82 - Huayllabamba - Pacaymayo - Winaywaynaya. On day 3 we begin our trek of a lifetime along the famous Inca trail, through spectacular mountain scenery, dense sub-tropical jungle and misty cloud forest, taking in Inca ruins en route. We start the day by transferring by road to Km. 82 where we’ll meet our trekking guide and start trekking along the Urubamba River followed by the Kusichaca River. We’ll walk a total of 11km today before arriving at our first campsite in Huayllabamba.

**Day 3:** Km. 82 to Huayllabamba: 11 km / approx. 6 hours trekking.

The next day is the most challenging as we hike up to Warmihuanusca Pass, which translates as ‘Dead Woman’s Pass’ and is the highest pass on the trail at 4200m. From here you will be able to see the start of the path to the Runkurakay ruins. At the end of the gorge is an area called Pacaymayo and this is where we will spend the night.

**Day 4:** Huayllabamba - Pacaymayo: 7km / approx. 7 hours trekking.

On day 5 we continue along the Inca Trail, taking in several different ruins as we go. Our first stop of the day is at the Runkurakay ruins. The fortress was constructed on to the remarkable Ollantaytambo fortress and protect it from possible invasions of tribes from the jungle lowlands. **Overnight - Sacred Valley (B)**

**Day 5:** Pacaymayo – Winaywaynaya: 9 km / approx. 7 hours trekking.

**Note:** If the Inca Trail is not available, we offer the Lares Trek and if you prefer not to trek at all, you can opt to take the train to Machu Picchu on day 3 and enjoy extra time in Cusco on days 4 - 6 with some additional included excursions. Breakfasts included only. Please refer to the notes after the itinerary for further information. **Overnight - Inca Trail (camping)** (B:3, L:3, D:3)

Day 6 : Machu Picchu

**Winaywaynaya – Machu Picchu – Cusco.** Today is the day we’ve all been waiting for – we finally get to see the world-famous Machu Picchu. But, before we get to the main destination, we’ll stop off at the Winay Waynaya ruins, the second most important archaeological site after Machu Picchu. After this, we cross our final pass – Inti Punku (the Gate of the Sun) – which leads us to the lost city of Machu Picchu.

Situated on a mountain ridge above the Urubamba River and surrounded by tropical forest, the Inca city enjoys a truly spectacular setting. Built in the classical Inca style with polished dry-stone walls and terraces that seem to have been crafted naturally from the rock escarpments, Machu Picchu is a spectacular testament to the greatness of the Inca civilisation. The ruins are divided into the Urban and Agricultural Sectors with features ranging from terraced fields and water fountains to storage buildings, guardhouses and religious temples as well as bridges on the trails leading out of the citadel. After a guided tour there’s plenty of free time to explore this mystical, ancient citadel before we head down to the town of Aguas Calientes. In the afternoon we take the train back to Cusco, where we can enjoy the final night of our tour.

**Day 4:** Winaywaynaya – Machu Picchu: 5 km / approx. 4 hours trekking **Overnight - Cusco (B)**

Day 7 : Cusco

Our tour comes to an end after breakfast today. Included transfer to the airport. Alternatively consider extending your stay to explore Cusco, the captivating Inca capital.(B)

**HOTELS**

The hotels listed below are ones which we frequently use on this tour. We reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard when necessary.

**Xima Cusco Hotel**

Boasting a fantastic location by Cusco’s largest craft market, Xima Cusco Hotel is just a short walk from the city’s main square, as well as plenty of local shops and restaurants. Its modern guestrooms provide free internet access and a flat-screen TV, with some also featuring a balcony with views over Parque Orellana. The hotel's spa offers a range of massage treatments using techniques from the Inca culture, the perfect way to unwind after visiting the world-famous citadel of Machu Picchu. Guests can also enjoy a complimentary breakfast buffet in the Atrium Café.
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La Casona de Yucay
Located in the spectacular Sacred Valley, this Peruvian property exudes local charm and has a stunning mountainous backdrop to match. The hotel itself is situated in a colonial house dating back to the 1810, which has since been remodelled and now consists of 54 cozy guest rooms; a restaurant serving a variety of international and local dishes; and bar serving nibbles and traditional Peruvian Pisco Sour. The courtyard with its chairs and tables is the perfect place to sit back and appreciate the view.

Tour leader
Our Peru tours are escorted by a tour leader who will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the tour, so you are free to sit back, relax and enjoy the journey. All our tour leaders are Peruvian and passionate about sharing their country with you.

Please note that our tour leaders are not “Tour Guides” in the normal sense. They are not experts in all aspects of the culture and history of each area. 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. Should you choose to trek the Inca Trail or Lares Trek your tour leader will not accompany you and will instead remain in Cusco. On either trek you will be guided by an expert local trekking guide.

Porters
Our Trek the Inca Trail Signature tour includes the cost of a porter to carry your personal belongings on the Inca Trail/Lares Trek so that all you need to carry on the trek 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 night in the Sacred Valley and the Inca Trail/Lares Trek and 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 6kg.

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 guide and supported by an assistant guide, 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 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 instead.

On the Inca Trail or Lares trek you may be joined by travellers who have booked through other operators, no 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 uphills, enjoyable flats and long downhill s 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: 12.1 km/7.52 miles (6 hours)
Highest altitude: 3000m/9843f (Huayllabamba)
Facilities at Campsite: Toilets: Yes (silo)
Showers: No
Shops: Yes (snacks, bottled water, others)

Day 02:
Total trekking distance: 8.8 km/5.47 miles (6.45 hours)
Highest altitude: 4205m/13796f (Wamiwañusca Pass)
Facilities at Campsite: Toilets: Yes (silo)
Showers: No
Shops: No

Day 03:
Total trekking distance: 13.4 km/8.33 miles (7/50 hours)
Highest altitude: 3950m/12960f (Runurakay Pass)
Facilities at Campsite
Toilets: Yes (silo)
Showers: Yes (hot water available for 5.00 Nuevos Soles – 1.7USD)
Shops: Local Bar and small shop

Day 04:
Total trekking distance: 4.67 km/2.9 miles (2/10 hours)
Highest altitude: 2680m/8793f
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Fitness
You do not need to be an athlete or experienced trekker to complete the Inca Trail or indeed the Lares Trek. 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, face and belongings in case they get dirty.

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 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 as like but 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. 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.
- 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.
- 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.
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- 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 pleasurably.
- 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.
- Swimmers - There’s a number of hot springs in Aguas Calientes, which are the perfect antidote 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$ 28.00 / 4 days. Our sleeping bags are –18ºC-comfort (0ºF) and mummy form and include a sleeping liner. They are cleaned after every use and have a maximum usage of 30 trips.
- Therm-a-rest inflatable sleeping mat: US$ 28.00 / 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 15-20ºC during the day if it's sunny, to 05-10ºC during the day if not sunny or 0-05ºC 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
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Note: you can tip in either Peruvian Soles or US dollars.

The Lares Trek
When there are no Inca Trail permits available you can opt to do the Lares Trek instead. Details of the trek are as follows...

Day 1: Lares Trek
Sacred Valley - Calca – Lares Kiswarani. Morning transfer from our hotel to the township of Calca (2900 metres above sea level), which is located in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, where there's time to stock up on some snacks and have a wander around before we continue our journey to Pascana Zone. We meet the horses that will carry all the equipment and start our hike. We begin our scenic trek through breathtaking mountain scenery to the thermal baths of Lares, where we stop for lunch. In the afternoon our trek continues to the village of Cuncani where you'll see some of the traditional stone and thatch houses inhabited by local people in the Andes. Overnight – Camping (B, L, D) Distance: 8 Km.
Walking Hours: 3-4 hours
High Altitude: 3750m
Campsite Altitude: 3750m

Day 2: Lares Trek
Kiswarani – Cancha Cancha. Today is the most challenging but rewarding day of the Lares Trek, getting off the beaten track and hiking through the rugged Andes Mountains. We'll pass herds of alpaca and llamas, unlikely to encounter anyone apart from the odd Andean farmers in their brightly coloured clothing, until we reach the Andean town of Kiswarani, where we get a wonderful view of Lares Valley. Then it's time to hike up to the highest point on the Lares Trek – Pachacutec Pass at 4600m. It's a very steep uphill trek but when we reach the top of the pass we'll be rewarded with a spectacular panoramic view of the Pitusiray and Sahuasiray mountains and the beautiful green lagoons below. This is a wonderful spot to stop for photographs and take in the vistas before we descend to the camping side of Cancha Cancha. Here we'll meet local people in traditional dress, who talk in Quechua language, and gain a fascinating insight into life in the Andes. Overnight – camping (B,L,D) Distance: 13 Km.
Walking Hours: 6-7 hours
High Altitude: 4600m
Campsite Altitude: 3750m

Day 3: Lares Trek
Cancha Cancha – Huaran – Agua Caliente. After an early breakfast, we begin the final leg of our hike, through beautiful scenery, appreciating the Andean flora and fauna en route to the town of Huaran in the Sacred Valley (2830m). From Huaran we'll be transported to Ollantaytambo town to catch the train to Aguas Calientes. Be sure to look out of the windows on the train and enjoy the incredible views. The town is named after its nearby hot springs and there will be time to relax in the soothing pools and choose a restaurant for dinner (not included) this evening, there are plenty to choose from. We spend the night in a hotel where you can enjoy a hot shower and a comfortable bed for the night. Overnight – Aguas Calientes (B, L) Distance: 9 Km.
Walking Hours: 3 -4 hours
High Altitude: 3750m

Day 4: Machu Picchu
We will have breakfast at 5.45am then catch the first bus to Machupicchu (15-minute ride) in order to appreciate the magnificent sunrise over the city. A walking tour (approximately 2 hours) is given by your guide and after that you can explore the mysterious city by yourselves. Returning to Aguas Calientes by bus we'll catch the late afternoon train back to Cusco. Overnight – Cusco (B)

Note: Sleeping mats are included on the Lares Trek so you will just need to bring your own sleeping bag or hire it locally.

Machu Picchu by Train
If you do not wish to trek, you can take the train from the Sacred Valley to Machu Picchu and enjoy two extra days in Cusco with additional included excursions. This is included in the tour price at no extra charge. Please note that only breakfast is included if you opt to take the train, with the exception of lunch on day 4. Your itinerary during the four days when other group members are trekking will be as follows:

Day 3 - Machu Picchu
Sacred Valley – Machu Picchu. From Ollantaytambo we'll take a scenic train journey to Aguas Calientes early this morning, remember to look out the windows as the scenery along the way is utterly breathtaking. Upon arrival we board the bus up to Machu Picchu where you'll enjoy a guided tour of the magnificent lost city and have plenty of free time to explore and take photos. Later in the afternoon take the train back to Cusco. Overnight - Cusco (B)

Day 4 - Visit to Local Market and Cooking Class
This morning enjoy a visit to the local San Pedro Market, where we have an introduction to the local produce and the diversity of ingredients used in Peruvian cuisine. Departing the market, we visit an Andean Kitchen and Chicheria, where, amongst other things, we learn about the process of making Chicha, a beverage the Incas believed to be sacred. From here we walk to a fully equipped cooking studio, where a Professional Peruvian Chef will show us how to prepare the most popular and tasty dishes of Peru. Today's culinary tour includes a refreshing drink, appetizer, main course, dessert and, of course, the famous Pisco Sour. Overnight - Cusco. (B, L)

Day 5 - Half day Chinchero Village & Market
This morning set off in the direction of the Sacred Valley to the town of Chinchero, an authentic Andean village with lots of character, where we will find the colonial church that houses a large collection of painting from the Cusqueñan School of Art. Chinchero is well known for its continuing tradition as a commercial town and on Sundays the townsfolk gather in the main square to trade their products in a bartering system. Overnight - Cusco. (B)

Day 6 - Free time in Cusco
Enjoy a free day in Cusco today to explore the city at your own pace. This evening you will be rejoined by the trekkers from the Inca Trail for your final night in Peru. Overnight - Cusco. (B)
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.

Domestic Flights
If your tour includes a domestic flight or you have independently booked domestic flights separate to that of your international flights, please be mindful that that free bagage allowance for Economy class travel on all flights within Peru is 22kg with 8kg of hand luggage. Business class travel offers considerably more. Additional weight will be subject to a fee.

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
- 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 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.
Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

- 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 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.
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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 MacDonalds 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.