TOUR CODE

XIB

ADVENTURESABROAD

PERU & BOLIVIA

featuring Inca Explorer Trek

17 days

Updated 06/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in Lima*

Today we arrive in Lima, Peru.

This city has had wonderful restorations in recent years to the plazas, ornate facades, and wooden balconies for which the city is famous. Lima, named the 'City of Kings' by the Spanish Conquistadors, is the capital of Peru. Founded in 1535 by Francisco Pizarro, where the River Rimac meets the Pacific Ocean, this was the most important Spanish city during the colonial era, with a population of about 100,000 inhabitants. Today the city is home to more than 6.5 million people.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores). Hotel Exclusive or similar. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Lima: City Tour*

This morning we start our tour with a visit to San Francisco's Church to visit the extensive catacombs that lie underneath. We then continue to the Plaza de Armas, the most important plaza in Lima. The oldest surviving part of the plaza is the impressive bronze fountain, which was erected in 1650. Surrounding the plaza is the exquisite Archbishop's Palace, the cathedral, and the Government Palace where handsomely uniformed presidential guards are on duty all day. We visit the cathedral where the great conquistador Francisco Pizarro's tomb lies.

After taking some free time for lunch in one of the many outdoor cafes, we head to the trendy area of Miraflores, where people love to stroll along the cliff tops overlooking beaches, and watch the sun setting on the Pacific Ocean. The best location is the new "Love Park" with its magnificent monument to lovers at its centre.

We then proceed to the Larco Museum, which showcases remarkable chronological galleries and an excellent overview on 3,000 years of development of Peruvian pre-Columbian history. Located in a unique vice-royal mansion of the 18th century built over a 7th century pre-Columbian pyramid, is surrounded by beautiful gardens. Features the finest gold and silver collection from ancient Peru and the famous erotic archaeological collection, one of the most visited Peruvian tourist attractions. For an unforgettable experience, Larco is one of the few museums in the world where visitors can also choose to enter the storage area with its 45,000 classified archaeological objects.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores). Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Lima - Cuzco*

Today we fly to Cuzco located in a fertile valley at 3354m (11,000 ft). This is the archaeological capital of the Americas and the ancient capital of the Inca Empire. At its height, this Andean empire stretched from Colombia in the north, through Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, down to central Chile in the south. Although the empire already existed in the 12th century, it remained small until the mid-15th century. Over the next 100 years, it expanded massively but came crashing down due to the civil war and the conquest by the Spanish conquistadors under Francisco Pizarro in 1533.

We arrive in the morning and have a few hours to rest to help acclimatize. We recommend an easy afternoon, possibly visiting the convent of Santa Catalina or the Religious Art Museum whose entries are included on the "Cuzco Pass" entrance ticket, included in your tour. Alternatively, the colonial area of the city offers many shops full of woven textiles, jewelry and other artifacts.

Overnight in Cuzco. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Cuzco Area*

This morning we visit some of the most important Inca sites in the Cuzco area. Sacsayhuaman is an enormous site which, like so many Inca buildings, had a religious as well as military purpose. The huge fortress known as the 'storehouse of the sun' incorporated some of the largest stones ever used in a building. The zig-zag walls represent the teeth of the sacred puma and provide an excellent defensive structure. The stones fit so perfectly together without any mortar that not even moss can grow in the cracks. Sacsayhuaman was the site of the uprising of the Incas in 1536 against Spanish rule which came very close to obliterating the Spanish forces in Cuzco. We also visit the ruins at Tambo Machay, Puca Pucara and Qenko. The latter is an Inca sacrificial site carved with inscriptions.

This afternoon we return to Cuzco and enjoy a tour of the town. The name Cuzco means 'Navel of the World'. Today, stone walls built by the Incas line most of Cuzco's central streets and form the foundations of colonial and modern buildings. The Inca buildings were so well built that the Spaniards simply knocked down the upper parts of the Inca temples and palaces and built their churches and mansions on top of the Inca walls. Shortly after the Spanish conquest the capital was moved away to Lima on the coast.

Cuzco has retained a wonderful, untouched colonial atmosphere. The culture is also very much alive here, and is evident everywhere in the music, clothing and handicrafts of the people. This evening we take our dinner at a local restaurant where we can try some typical Peruvian dishes. You may wish to try a Pisco Sour, a drink made with a Peruvian liquor distilled from white grapes.

Overnight in Cuzco. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Cuzco - Trailhead - Huchuyqosqo*

We depart Cuzco bright and early, heading for the trailhead at the village of Tauca (3854m / 12,718 ft), less than an hour's drive from our hotel. With the camp gear loaded on horses, we carry only daypacks (with our fleece, rain gear, water bottle, other necessities) as we begin our hike north up a tranquil green valley. There is a guide at the lead, and at the rear to ensure that no one falls too far behind. We usually spread out on the trail, taking photos and striking our own pace. There is no stigma attached to arriving last in camp, as your purpose is to watch your step and enjoy!

We cross a 4330m / 14,299 ft pass and pause to take in the panoramas of the Urubamba Range stretched across the northern horizon. We continue north, descending a ravine to the unforgettable Huchuyqosqo ruins, occupying an enormous plateau at 3,688m (12,170 ft) overlooking the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Total walking: 4.7km / 2.9 miles. We explore the beautiful two-story palace of the finest red granite, the irrigation reservoir, and numerous terraces and residential buildings.

THE TRAIL: The term "Inca Trail", much like the Silk Road, actually describes a somewhat braided route used by the ancients. On some stretches, there is only one route, but in some places, there maybe several trails that go generally in the same direction. In order to avoid congestion in some places, and to allow us to spend some nights at hotels en route, we have chosen a somewhat unconventional route -- less travelled, but no less spectacular!

Overnight camp near in Huchuyqosqo. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 6 *Lamay & Sontoccocha*

We hike down to the valley floor and cross the Vilcanota River at the town of Lamay where our support van waits. We drive 10km (6.25 mi) west to the town of Calca, then up a side valley to the hamlet of Sonttoccocha where another crew awaits with horses.

From our second trailhead at 4270m (14,091 ft) we have an easy climb to a pass at 4360 m (14,388 ft), and enjoy the surroundings dominated by the twin snowpeaks Pitusiray and Sawasiray. Trekking eastward through a tranquil valley, we camp amid lush pastureland with many herds of alpacas and llamas. Total distance: 14km / 9 miles.

Overnight camp. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *Chahuaytire - Urubamba Valley*

We continue east, meeting occasional herders as well as llama-trains hauling produce along this traditional trade route joining Quechua-speaking villages of the Urubamba Range. Along the route you traverse mainly level terrain, with very little climbing or descending. Far to the east, we see the massive form of Nevado Ausangate (6374m / 21,034 ft), the highest peak in southern Peru.

Our van meets us in late afternoon just above the village of Chahualtire, and we drive out via Pisac village to a hotel near Urubamba in the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Total Distance 13km / 8.6 miles.

Overnight in Yucay. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *Yucay - Mandor Waterfall - Aguas Calientes*

We transfer to Ollantaytambo station and board the train for the dramatic 90-minute ride down the rugged Vilcanota River gorge toward Aguas Calientes. From town we'll walk out along the road, and then pick up the railroad tracks which follow the river when the road ends. From here we view the steep mountain cliffs all around, jutting straight into the sky far above. After about an hour along the river we'll turn away from the river and head up a side stream toward the Mandor Waterfalls. Although we are hiking in the Machu Picchu sanctuary, there are some homesteads scattered throughout, and as we get away from the river we pass through an orchard with fruit trees before transitioning into cloud forest. About 20 minutes later we reach the waterfall, with a small pool nearby that allows a quick swim before or after our picnic lunch.

We'll then retrace our steps back to town, with a total hiking time of about five hours.

Overnight in Aguas Calientes hotel (near Machu Picchu). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *Machu Picchu Area - Cuzco*

We have an early morning drive up to Machu Picchu followed by a walk up to Inti Punku (The Gate of the Sun). There are some spectacular views of the surrounding countryside from here. After catching our breath we head down to the spectacular Inca ruins at Winaywayna, spread over a steep and densely forested mountain slope. Later we return to the

site of Machu Pichhu itself and have a tour of this amazing World Heritage Site before taking the bus down to Aguas Calientes.

We will then take the late afternoon train back to Cuzco.

NOTE: Regulations governing the walk from Inti Punku down to Winaywayna are subject to change.

Overnight in Cuzco. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Cuzco - Pisac - Cuzco*

This morning we visit the ruins at Tambo Machay, Puca Pucara and Qenko. The latter is an Inca sacrificial site carved with inscriptions.

We continue to Pisac with its lively market where you will encounter traditionally dressed locals with whom you can barter for colourful craft items. You will see many unique Andean musical instruments as well as dazzling textiles. Peruvian woolen items are justifiably famous for their imaginative designs, based on Inca art and the local flora and fauna. You can buy sweaters and caps made from the extremely warm wool of alpacas and llamas.

We return to Cuzco with balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Cuzco. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Cuzco - "Andean Explorer" - Puno*

Today we take the "Andean Explorer" train from Cuzco to Puno, a full day's journey.

From Cuzco, our train heads south-east, following the Huatanay River through green fields dotted with willow trees and eucalyptus groves, passing outlying communities gathered around colonial churches that conceal their artistic treasures behind crumbling adobe facades. The first half of the journey is dominated by magnificent Andes, towering over the deep valleys of the meandering Huatanay River. It then reaches the gentler, rolling Andean Plains, where vicuna and alpaca are often seen. This is a wild, high, windswept and sunburned prairie of isolated communities of shepherds and cattle farmers, wedged between the two distant branches of the Andes visible occasionally on either horizon, when not melting completely with the giant cumulus clouds that dominate the skyline.

The train continues to climb La Raya, some 210 km (130 mi) from Puno. At 4321m (14,260 ft) above sea level, we reach the highest point on our journey, a cold, remote place whose surrounding snow-draped peaks are often shrouded by mist or fine rain, and whose eerie silence is at least partly attributable to eardrums blocked by the dizzying altitude.

Puno, at 3830m (12,562 feet), is the main settlement on the Peruvian shore of Lake Titicaca and the highest place on our tour in which you will spend some time. Puno is the greatest centre of Peruvian folk dancing and traditional instruments; the markets and streets of Puno are bustling with the brightly coloured costumes of the different groups of the region.

Overnight in Puno. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Puno: Floating Islands*

This morning we travel north and east to Sillustani, situated on a wind-swept peninsula on tiny Lake Umaya. The burial towers of the nobles of the Colla civilisation are up to 12 metres / 40 feet high. However, it is not known exactly when they were built. Known as chullpas, it is thought that whole families were buried in the towers.

Returning through the stark landscape to Puno, we take an afternoon boat excursion to the floating islands of Los Uros. The Uros people began their floating existence centuries ago in an effort to isolate themselves from their rivals, the Collas and the Incas. Today, about 300 people live on the islands. The islands are constructed from many layers of floating tortora reeds which grow in the shallow waters of Lake Titicaca. The reeds rot away from the bottom and are replaced at the top, so the ground is soft and springy as you walk over it. Even the buildings on the islands are made of tortora. The whole life of the Uros people revolves around the reeds. They even eat the lower stalk and root, which is supposed to taste like celery.

Today the Uros live mainly from fishing, including catching the giant pejerray which can grow up to 13.5 kg / 30 lb.

Overnight in Puno. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Puno, Peru - Copacabana, Bolivia*

Today we travel round the Peruvian side of the lake and cross into Bolivian territory. The village of Chucuito is built over an Inca settlement and has an Inca sundial on display which was assembled in the mid-1800s using colonial, Inca, and modern era stones. The turbulent history of the lake region can be seen in the many Inca and pre-Inca sites as well as Spanish colonial churches dotted across the area.

We drive along the western shores of the lake taking in various small towns which are famous for their colonial churches and architecture. One of the most unusual towns along the lake is Juli, which has four huge churches and yet is a small town. The town was originally the Spanish capital of the lake region and the Spaniards hoped to convert most of the indigenous population to Catholicism. While building the Church of Santa Cruz the local stonemasons incorporated Inca motifs into the Christian decorations.

This afternoon we will enjoy a relaxed walking tour of Copacabana. For centuries, Copacabana has been a site of religious pilgrimage, beginning with the Incas. We visit the Cathedral of the Indian Virgin, built between 1605 and 1820. It is a brilliant Moorish structure with mudejar domes, colourful azulejos (decorative tiles), and a beautiful church courtyard decorated with wonderful flower gardens. Every year, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims travel from distinct parts of Bolivia and other Latin American countries to take part in religious festivals in Copacabana. Legend says that if the statue is removed Lake Titicaca will rise up and flood the whole Altiplano region.

For the energetic, there is a walk up to Cerro Calvario (Calvary Hill) for beautiful views of the town and lake. Pilgrims pass the 14 stations of the cross to reach the top but once there they encounter, as so often in Bolivia and Peru, a fusion of Catholic and pagan beliefs.

Overnight in Copacabana. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Lake Titicaca*

Today is spent exploring Isla del Sol in Lake Titicaca by boat. This is the most important of the thirty-six islands in the lake. Lake Titicaca, South America's largest lake, straddles the Bolivia-Peru border and is said to be the highest navigable body of water in the world at an altitude of 3810 m (12,497 ft). Lake Titicaca was once much larger than the 8560 sq kilometres (3,305 square mi) it occupies today. The great city of Tiahuanaco was built at the edge of the lake, but today it is more than 25 km (15 mi) from the lake. This reduction in the lake size has had a tremendous effect on the

climate of the Altiplano region over the past 1,000 years and has made this cradle of cultures able to support far fewer people today.

The cleverly terraced slopes of Isla del Sol contain numerous ruins and small traditional villages. We see the Inca steps where water from a natural spring runs through three stone channels. The sacred water is supposed to cure ailments and bring long life. The three stone channels represent the three commandments of Inca life: Don't Lie, Don't Steal, and Don't be Lazy. The Inca society was highly organised and industrious; laziness was punishable by death.

We return to Copacabana for dinner. This evening you may like to take a stroll along the lake shore at sunset.

Overnight in Copacabana. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Copacabana - Tiahuanaco - La Paz*

This morning we drive towards La Paz. We take first a ferry across from the peninsula on which Copacabana sits to the Bolivian mainland and drive to La Paz, one of the world's highest major cities.

En route we stop at Tiahuanaco. This flat, desolate landscape would not seem capable of supporting life, and yet this is where the majority of Bolivia's population live. Here we may see llamas and alpacas, the only surviving relatives of the camel found in the Americas. Tiahuanaco is an ancient ceremonial site constructed around AD 700. After about AD 1200 the Tiahuanaco people disappeared, becoming another 'lost' civilisation. We know little about the people of Tiahuanaco but it is believed that their civilisation developed over a period of 2,000 years and then mysteriously vanished.

Our destination is La Paz, located at 3686 m (12,090 ft) above sea level. La Paz is situated in a bowl-shaped canyon in the Cordillera Real (Royal Range) of the Andes. As we travel across the Altiplano, the ground suddenly drops away 400 m (1,312 ft) to reveal the city hidden in a bowl in the mountains.

This evening you may like to enjoy a 'pena', a traditional Bolivian folk music performance (optional; subject to availability). The music is played on typical Andean instruments such as quenas, zamponas pan pipes and charangos, small, banjo-like instruments, the bodies of which are traditionally made from armadillo shells.

Overnight in La Paz. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *La Paz: City Tour*

The mountains surrounding La Paz soar to an average of 5500 m (18,040 ft) above sea level. The most spectacular views of the city come on a clear evening when one can see the twinkling lights of the city stretching up the hillsides, under the the snow-capped triple peak of Mount Illimani at 6402 m (20,999 ft).

Today will explore the Spanish colonial quarter of the city and visit the Archeological Museum of Bolivia, which has a special exhibit dedicated to the site of Tiahuanaco visited yesterday. We also experience the colourful markets of La Paz. The markets are a great place to observe the colourfully-dressed native Quechua and Aymara-speaking people. The women wear many layers of petticoats covered by a colourful dress, and over their shoulders they sling a multi-coloured striped blanket called a 'phulla' in which they carry their groceries or babies -- or both! On their heads they wear a bowler hat (which always appears to be too small) at a jaunty angle. The British brought the bowler hat to Bolivia when they were building the railway and somehow it became part of the everyday dress of Andean women.

We finish our day with a visit to a great place to buy some of the handicrafts, such as colourful sweaters woven from

sheep's wool or from the light-weight, very warm wool of the native Andean animals. We finish at the unusual Mercado de los Brujos, better known as the Witches' Market, where you will see all sorts of potions, herbs and folk remedies used to guard against evil spirits.

Overnight in La Paz. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Departure*

Departure from La Paz.

Meal plan: Breakfast.