Tour Code
PE11

ADVENTURESABROAD

CLASSIC PERU

with the Amazon & the Nazca Lines

13 days

Created on: 28 Mar, 2024

Day 1 Arrive in Lima

Today we arrive in Lima, Peru.

In recent years, this city has undergone some wonderful restorations of the plazas, ornate facades, and wooden balconies for which it is famous. Named the 'City of Kings' by the Spanish Conquistadors, Lima 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 7 million people.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores).

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Lima - Nazca Lines Scenic Overflight

We have an early morning* private transfer to the bus station for the Cruz del Sur or Ormeno Royal Class public bus to Nazca (6-7 hrs). We have an arrival transfer from Nazca bus station to the Casa Andina hotel. After a brief break for refreshment, you will head directly to the small airport to board your scenic overflight of the 2,000 year old Nazca Lines, comprised of about three hundred figures made of straight lines and geometric shapes most clearly visible from the air.

The lines were supposedly built by an ancient civilization called the Nazca, though no one knows for sure who built them or why. Since their discovery, the Nazca Lines have inspired fantastic explanations from ancient gods, a landing strip for returning aliens, a celestial calendar, used for rituals probably related to astronomy, or a map of underground water supplies. Your total flying time will be about one hour; the total time spent over the lines themselves will be approximately 25-35 minutes.

After the flight we drive back to our hotel in Nazca.

* Given the early morning departure, passengers with flight routings that land in Lima late on Day 1 might consider arriving a day earlier.

Overnight in Nazca.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Nazca - Ica

After breakfast, we visit the Maria Reiche Museum. Maria Reiche (1903-1998) was a German-born mathematician and archaeologist famous for her research on the Nazca Lines. We then drive from Nazca to Ica and check into the Hotel Las Dunas. Our afternoon is free to enjoy the surroundings or visit the Ica Regional Museum.

This evening we drive to Huacachina, built around a small lake in the desert. Called the "Oasis of America," it serves as a resort for local families from the nearby city of Ica. Legend holds that the lagoon was created when a beautiful native princess was apprehended at her bath by a young hunter. She fled, leaving the pool of water in which she had been bathing to become a lagoon.

Return to Ica.

Overnight in Ica. Hotel Las Dunas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Ica - Ballestas Islands - Lima

This morning we travel to Paracas and enjoy a boat trip to the spectacular Ballestas Islands, often described as Peru's answer to the Galapagos. Though they don't quite match the splendour of their northern cousins, they are quite spectacular in their own right. The islands have been eroded to form countless natural caves and arches. In fact, this is where the islands' name comes from -- the word Ballesta means 'bow' (as in archery). There are colonies of thousands of seabirds such as pelicans, Inca terns and cormorants as well as a small colony of Humboldt penguins. You will also see hundreds of sealions and often schools of dolphin.

We return to Paracas and the take the bus north, arriving back in Lima late afternoon. Tonight we meet other incoming group members who are not participating in the Nazca extension.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 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, 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.

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.

Later we head to the trendy area of Miraflores where people stroll along the cliff tops 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 continue to the Hacienda Mamacona for an exhibition of beautiful Peruvian Paso horses, accompanied by a delicious dinner of Criollo food and a folkloric show.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Lima - Fly to Cuzco - Urubamba Valley - Ollantaytambo - Yucay

Early this morning we fly to Cuzco, located in a fertile valley at 3354 m (11,004 feet). This is the archaeological capital of the Americas and the ancient capital of the Inca Empire that, at its height, stretched from Colombia in the north, through Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and 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 declined due to the civil war and the conquest by the Spanish conquistadors under Francisco Pizarro in 1533.

On arrival we will travel by road into the Urubamba Valley, or "Sacred Valley of the Incas," along one of the most scenic drives on our trip, to the Inca ruins of Ollantaytambo located on a spectacular ridge with deep valleys on either side. We can admire the carefully constructed and maintained farming terraces on the surrounding hillsides.

We continue to the town of Yucay on the bank of the Urubamba River (2300m / 7,590 ft). This is an attractive little town of particularly fertile lands whose name translated into Spanish means "deceit" or "bewitchment". According to legend, in the middle of the 15th century, the Inca Huayna Capac was captivated by the incomparable magnificence of Yucay's setting and decided to settle here.

Overnight in Yucay.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Yucay - Machu Picchu Area

Today we take the early morning train* from Urubamba to Aguas Calientes and Machu Picchu. The train journey to Machu Picchu is a highlight of any trip to the Andes; the scenery is simply spectacular, and the train allows you to enjoy it in comfort. The +/- 3 hour trip takes us through a changing landscape with wonderful vistas of the mountains and, deep in its dramatic canyon, the beautiful Urubamba River. Our early arrival from Urubamba ensures that we are at the site before the tourist throngs arrive on the train from Cuzco later in the morning.

Upon arrival at the Aguas Calientes train station, a bus will take us on the 6 km (4 mile) twisting journey up the mountainside to the site of Machu Picchu. Having already dropped our baggage at our hotel, we proceed immediately for a guided 3-hour walking tour of the ruins (please be prepared with all that you need for our tour). We will enter the site through the House of the Terrace Caretakers, which flank the agricultural sector. Once on the site, we will see, among other features: the Temple of the Sun, the Fountain Caretaker's House, the Royal Sector, and the puzzling Temple of the Three Windows. We will also see the Common District, the Sacred Rock, and the prison-like Temple of the Condor.

Machu Picchu, popularly known as the 'Lost City of the Incas,' is an ancient city of stone palaces, towers, temples and staircases. It is a very mysterious place, and to this day our knowledge of it remains sketchy. There are no records or artifacts on the site to indicate what any of the buildings were used for. Archaeologists have ascertained that the site was most likely a ceremonial centre and possibly used for administrative purposes for the populous region.

After our tour, you may choose to proceed to the hotel or remain on the site for some independent exploration (your ticket is included and good for the day), and return to the hotel on your own using the return portion of your bus ticket.

* PLEASE bring an overnight bag for this one night at Aguas Calientes as the train enforces strict luggage limits. Our larger bags will be transported back to Cuzco for us. Please also note that, due to group size limits, groups exceeding 15 participants will be split between two guides for today's site tour.

Overnight at Agua Calientes (near Machu Picchu).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Machu Picchu Area - Cuzco

A large part of the beauty of Machu Picchu is created by its setting on a mountain top surrounded by deep valleys. By staying for a second day to visit Machu Picchu, rather than visiting as a day trip from Cuzco, we are able to savour the atmosphere of this very special place.

In the early morning of our second day at Machu Picchu,* most group members choose to take the bus back up to the site with the weather-dependent hope of seeing the mist-clad mountains greet the morning sun. Weather notwithstanding, the best thing about going up the second day is being there early when there are fewer people, allowing time to "soak it in," as well as the opportunity to climb Huayna Picchu and/or to the Sun Gate.

During our time at Machu Picchu, we will also include a visit to the Manuel Chavez Ballon Site Museum, which focuses on the "discovery", excavation, and history of Macchu Picchu. On display are historical photos, including photos of Hiram Bingham at Machu Picchu shortly after he came across the ruins, informative write-ups on the construction of Machu Picchu and the life of the Incas, and artifacts found at the site. Outside the museum is a very lush botanical garden running along the river; some plants are labelled and there are a few short trails. This is a nice shady area to rest on a hot day and is an easy 25 minute walk from Aguas Calientes down the road leading to Machu Picchu.

Later in the afternoon we board the VISTADOME train from Aguas Calientes to Ollantaytambo Station (1.5 hours) from where we bus back to Cuzco.

* DUE TO strict limits on the number of visitors daily, if you elect to visit again today (optional - at your expense), you will need to book well advance online via www.ticketmachupicchu.com. You will need to choose the EARLIEST options for Machu Picchu only OR Machu Picchu & Huayna Picchu if you want to hike Huayna Picchu.

Overnight in Cuzco.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Cuzco Area

This morning we visit some of the most important Inca sites in the Cuzco area.

Sacsayhuaman is an impressive complex which, like so many others of that time, had both a religious and military purpose. The fortress known as the 'storehouse of the sun' incorporates 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 mortar that not even moss can grow in the cracks!

In the afternoon we return to Cuzco and enjoy a tour of the town. We visit Coricancha, the temple of the sun which was the most important location in the Inca empire. Entombed in the closed cloister of the Sto Domingo Church, these sacred walls were hidden from modern civilization until the colonial walls were brought down in 1950 by a powerful earthquake. We also visit the church of San Blas with its fabulously carved pulpit. Wandering the narrow streets of the San Blas artisan region we make our way to the cathedral which towers impressively over the Plaza Mayor. Inside we find precious paintings from the Cuzco School of Art, one of the most prolific of its era.

This Inca city was laid out around a great central square in the shape of a puma, the god of lightning. 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 to Lima on the coast. Thus Cuzco has retained a wonderful, untouched colonial atmosphere. The culture is also very much alive here, and is evident in the music, clothing and handicrafts of the people.

We have dinner at a local restaurant where we can try some typical Peruvian dishes. One may wish to try the "Pisco sour", a powerful drink made with a Peruvian liquor distilled from white grapes.

Overnight in Cuzco.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Cuzco & Pisac

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.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Cuzco - Puerto Maldonado - Peruvian Amazon

Today we fly to Puerto Maldonado to begin our Amazon adventure. We begin to experience the enchantment of the rainforest with a boat ride along the Madre de Dios River to arrive at our lodge.* After a short briefing, settle into your beautiful cabaña and enjoy your lunch in the dining room. Take a nap, followed by a refreshing tea time and get ready for the afternoon excursion.

After gathering with your Inkaterra Explorer Guide, and embark on a guided walk along the trail system, into the Reserva Amazonica natural area, where you will discover the Amazon Basin. This trail offers an excellent introduction to the jungle environment, winding past impressive trees such as the Shihuahuaco, and the strangely beautiful strangler fig, offering excellent opportunities for bird watching and observing exotic insects.

Enjoy dinner, served in the main dining room from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. After dinner, you may retire early to your own cabaña, or join us to talk about your experience in the rainforest, as you listen to the intriguing sounds of the jungle at night.

* Your Tour Leader will bid you adieu at this point and hand you over to our local lodge staff who will manage all aspects of your Amazon experience. Please also note that this program description was provide by the lodge and may vary depending on weather and other unforeseen changes. We may also use one of several lodges in the area and the detailed description can vary.

Overnight at a comfortable lodge.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Amazon Exploration

New experiences are ahead and after taking a nutritious buffet breakfast, get ready for a trek through terra firma into the Tambopata National Reserve towards Lake Sandoval. Here you will understand why Madre de Dios is called the biodiversity capital of Peru, while learning about the Reserve's conservation efforts and the lake's formation. Navigate by dugout canoe across this mirror-like oxbow lake that is home to the endangered giant river otter, blue and yellow macaw, red howler monkey, black caiman, and one of the world's biggest fresh water scaled fish, the paiche.

Back to the lodge for lunch and, later, the canopy walkway & anaconda walk await. Take a 20-minute ride by outboard motorized canoe to the Inkaterra Canopy Walkway Interpretation Center where you will learn about its construction and the conservation projects of ITA-Inkaterra Asociación (NGO). Ascend one of the two 98-foot towers (30 m) and cross the 7 hanging bridges that connect the treetops at 91 ft high (28 m). Enjoy the breathtaking vistas and get the chance to watch white-throated toucans, woodpeckers, trogons, squirrel monkeys, and the three-toed sloth. You will learn about the fauna and flora of this flooded ecosystem.

Overnight at a comfortable lodge.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 13 Puerto Maldonado - Lima - Departure

Enjoy a full breakfast before departure. A 45-minute return trip by boat on the Madre de Dios River takes you to Puerto Maldonado, where you will visit the Butterfly House. Peru boasts the greatest variety of butterflies in the world, with 3,700 known species. Many of these can be seen at the Butterfly House, a showcase for the variety, beauty and adaptability of these fascinating insects.

Later we transfer to the airport for our flight back to Lima. We have use of day rooms at a Lima hotel to freshen up before transferring to the airport for our overnight flights homeward.

LAND ONLY CLIENTS: In order to provide adequate connection time, please ensure that your return flight home from Lima does NOT depart earlier than 9:00 p.m.

BUEN VIAJE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast