Tour Code
PE5

ADVENTURESABROAD

PERU

including the Nazca Lines

11 days

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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.

NOTE: As most flights into Lima arrive close to midnight, we suggest that you consider adding an extra night in order to rest up. The hotel is comfortable and well-located, and our start time on Day 2 is likely an early one.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores).

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Lima - Paracas & Nazca Lines Scenic Overflight

We have an early morning private transfer to the bus station for the PUBLIC BUS to Paracas (4-5 hrs). On arrival transfer from the station to our hotel in Paracas. After a brief break for refreshment, we will head directly to the Pisco 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 Paracas for dinner and overnight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Ica Regional Museum, Winery & Huacachina Lagoon

After breakfast, we visit the Regional Museum of Ica "Adolfo Bermúdez Jenkins," a significant cultural institution in Peru. This archaeology and anthropology museum offers a deep dive into the rich history and culture of the region, primarily dedicated to the Paracas culture, an Andean society known for its intricate textiles and complex societal structures. The museum has dedicated exhibition rooms showcasing artifacts and information about this culture, providing visitors with a unique opportunity to learn about this ancient civilization.

We then visit one of the traditional wineries of Ica, which can lay claim not only to the lion's share of Peruvian production, but also to some of the oldest and longest established wineries in the New World (500+ years). Most of the vineyards in Ica are planted on the flatlands, hugging the riverbanks and irrigation channels — access to water is vital in this arid desert. The dry, sunny climate and free-draining sandy soils with their ample water supply allowed viticulture to thrive and you'll still find many hundred-year-old vines in a perfectly healthy condition.

Later we drive to the village of 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 Paracas for dinner and overnight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Paracas - Ballestas Islands - Lima

This morning we enjoy a (shared) 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 Ecuadorian 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

Few cities wear their contradictions as openly as Lima. Skyscrapers in Miraflores look out over mud-brick pyramids that predate the Inca by a thousand years; Spanish baroque cathedrals rise from stones the conquistadors stripped from earlier temples. Today's tour traces that long, layered story.

The day begins in the Historic Center, a UNESCO World Heritage district where the Plaza de Armas is framed by the Government Palace, the Municipality, and the Cathedral of Lima — its interior a centuries-long conversation between ambition, earthquake, and repair. Nearby, the Convent of Santo Domingo offers a quieter counterpoint: a handsome colonial complex holding the relics of three Peruvian saints, its cloisters a refuge from the plaza's bustle.

The afternoon shifts registers. In the residential district of Pueblo Libre, the Larco Museum occupies a graceful 18th-century viceregal mansion built — in a satisfying irony — atop a pre-Columbian pyramid. The collection spans more than 3,000 years of Andean civilization, from exquisite goldwork to ceremonial ceramics of extraordinary refinement.

The day closes at Huaca Pucllana, a massive adobe pyramid rising improbably from a quiet Miraflores neighbourhood. Built by the Lima Culture around 400 CE — centuries before the Inca — it served as a ceremonial centre for a civilization most visitors have never heard of. Standing at its base as the modern city hums around it, the full arc of the day comes into focus: Lima isn't a colonial city with an indigenous past. It's an ancient city that a colonial chapter happened to inhabit.

Overnight in Lima.

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. Light snacks and beverages are included on board. 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.

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.

Upon arrival at the Aguas Calientes train station, we will have the opportunity to pick up a packed lunch before a bus takes 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 our timed entrance and 2.5-hour guided walking tour.** During this guided exploration we will visit the central and lower areas of the citadel, home to Machu Picchu's most iconic sections, including the Temple of the Sun, the Temple of the Three Windows, and the residential area. This route offers beautiful views with Huayna Picchu mountain in the background—perfect for memorable photos—and is quieter with fewer steps, allowing us to take our time and appreciate the site's historical and architectural details.

Following our guided tour, you'll have the opportunity to continue exploring the site on our own for several additional hours. It's important to note that the site operates on a one-way circuit system—visitors cannot backtrack or re-enter previous areas, and park guards actively manage visitor flow to ensure a smooth experience for all. After spending the afternoon soaking in the extraordinary atmosphere of this mountaintop sanctuary, we return by bus to Aguas Calientes.

* 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.

** Machu Picchu ticketing is managed directly by the government authorities and is beyond the control of Adventures Abroad. While we will do everything in our power to confirm exactly which circuit we will be completing as a group well in advance, this may not be confirmed until closer to your chosen tour start date.

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, some group members may 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 (an optional excursion).* 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.

During our time in the village below the site, 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. Full details will be included in your pre-trip info package provided at time of booking.

Overnight in Cuzco.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Cuzco Area Touring

Today we enjoy a combined half-day excursion visiting some of the most important Inca sites in the Cuzco area along with key landmarks in the city itself.

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!

We also 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 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.

Our excursion concludes by early afternoon. 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 Departure

Departure from Cuzco.

BUEN VIAJE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast