Tour Code
XPER

ADVENTURESABROAD

HIGH ON PERU

Walking in the Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu & Cuzco

9 days

Created on: 28 Mar, 2024

Day 1 Arrival in Lima

Arrival in Lima - welcome to Peru!

In recent years, Lima has undergone significant restoration 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 CE 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.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Lima: Full-day Touring

This morning we depart on a full-day tour of Lima.

We first visit San Francisco's Church and 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 CE. 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 a break for lunch in one of the outdoor cafes, we head to the trendy area of Miraflores, where people love to stroll along the cliff tops overlooking beaches. 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. After our tour, we return to the hotel. Owing to the fullness of our day, lingering jetlag, and the possibility of an early start tomorrow, we include lunch instead of dinner.

Walk Summary: About 6 hours of walking at sea level, with little elevation gain/loss throughout the day. Total distance of about 6-8 km during the day. Terrain is a mix of paved surfaces and natural paths with a couple of steep sections.

Overnight in Lima.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 3 Lima - Fly to Cuzco - Ollantaytambo & Urubamba Valley

This morning we transfer to the airport and fly to Cuzco. On arrival, we are met at the airport and drive descend into the Urubamba Valley*, the "Sacred Valley of the Incas," and check into our nearby hotel in Yucay. The Urubamba Valley is the most scenic drive on our trip, and the Inca ruins of Ollantaytambo are no less impressive, located on a spectacular ridge with deep valleys on either side.

After some free time for lunch and to settle into our accommodation, we have a tour of the nearby Ollantaytambo ruins to admire the carefully maintained farming terraces on the surrounding hillsides. After our visit, return to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

* In order to aid in our altitude acclimatization, we arrive in Cuzco (3400m/11,000 ft) and immediately descend to the Sacred Valley (2800m/9,400 ft), leaving our Cuzco sightseeing for the end when our bodies are more accustomed.

Overnight in Yucay.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Urubamba Valley: On-foot Exploration

This morning we depart for a relaxed day of walking in the Sacred Valley. We first drive through breathtaking vistas to our morning's trailhead. On arrival, we disembark and stroll through the Andean countryside to the circular farming terraces of the Incas at Moray (3km, easy). Here we learn about the surprisingly sophisticated and somewhat mysterious innovations of Inca agricultural engineers, who developed myriad specialized subspecies of corn, potatoes, and other agricultural products.

We return to the coach then drive to our next destination, nearby Maras, which offers a startling sight—5,000 evaporating salt pans!! These salt pans are carved from the mountainside by villagers to exploit the natural salinity of a mountain spring. It is quite unique to the region. Here we take lunch in a local restaurant, then walk through the town and salt pans for an hour or two (2km easy), and soak up the atmosphere of this section of the Sacred Valley. After our visit, we return to the hotel for dinner and overnight.

Walk Summary: About 4 hours / 5 km (3.5mi) of relatively easy walking throughout the day with about 120m (400 feet) elevation gain/loss; terrain is mountainous, our routes over mildly undulating ground on crushed gravel and natural path, with stairs, and rocky ground.

Overnight in Yucay.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 Urubamba Valley: Pumamarca, Village Walk, Fort Walk

Our on-foot exploration of the Sacred Valley continues, with a full-day and three destinations.

The first is Pumamarca, where we take an Inca Agriculture Walk (4 km). The Inca ruins of Pumamarca lie above Ollantaytambo and offer magical vistas over the entire Urubamba Valley. A highlight of the walk is the advanced system of canals and hydraulics used to irrigate crops during the Inca period.

We then drop down on foot to Ollantaytambo Village, which we explore on foot (2 km). Here we take lunch in a local restaurant then, after a fascinating wander through the busy, colonial-era Ollantaytambo village, we take the Inca Fortress Ruins Challenge Walk, a 1-2 km uphill hike to Ollantaytambo Fortress Ruins, where Spanish conquistadors once suffered a rare defeat at the hands of defending Incas. The size of these dressed stones and the puzzle of how they were transported, are the primary conundrums for this part of the Inca story.

Walk Summary: About 5 hours / 8 km (5mi) total of relatively easy walking throughout the day, with one optional steep walk, with about 120m (400 feet) elevation gain/loss; terrain is mountainous, our routes mostly over mildly undulating ground on crushed gravel and natural path with stairs and rocky ground, with some steep uphill and downhill, parts on stone steps.

Return to our hotel in Yucay.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Yucay - Train to Machu Picchu, Site Tour

Today we transfer to Urubamba and take the early morning train to Aguas Calientes (2042m / 6,700ft.) and the adjacent ruins of 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 approximately 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.

On arrival at the Aguas Calientes train station we disembark, are met and escorted on foot to our hotel where we drop our bags, then board

the public shuttle bus (only option) which will take us on the 6k (4 mile) twisting journey up the mountainside to the site of Machu Picchu. On arrival, we take a guided 3-hour walking tour of Machu Picchu (3k, easy). We enter the site through the House of the Terrace Caretakers, which flank the agricultural sector. Once on site, we 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 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 center and possibly used for administrative purposes for the populous region.

After the guided section of our tour, there are two options for further walking exploration - your Tour Leader will have filled you in on these options last evening. After our visit we return to the ticket office, board the shuttle bus, and return to Aguas Calientes and our hotel for dinner and overnight.

Walk Summary: About 4 hours / 6 km (4mi) total, of relatively easy walking throughout the day, with one optional walk, with about 80m (262 feet) elevation gain/loss; terrain is mountainous, our routes mostly over mildly (or sharply) undulating mountain pathways on crushed gravel and stone, with stairs, and rocky ground, with some steep uphill and downhill on stone steps. Machu Picchu site elevation - 2430m/8,000 ft.

Overnight at Aguas Calientes.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Aguas Calientes - Train to Urubamba - Drive to Cuzco via Chinchero

This morning we take the train from Aguas Calientes back to Urubamba Station, where we disembark and drive to the distinctive, high-altitude Quechua town of Chinchero (3763m / 12,345 ft.) Here we explore the market with an opportunity to see textiles and Inca weaving techniques, and a chance to meet the weavers themselves. A high-altitude stroll then takes us through the town to the dramatically-situated colonial-era church (2k easy). We take lunch in a local restaurant.

We then reboard our bus and drive back to Cuzco, the continent’s oldest continuously inhabited city. En route, we see the locals working their potato and grain fields, and see children at play near their adobe brick homes. On arrival, we disembark and check into our hotel, located strategically just off the Plaza de Armas (due to the fullness of our day and the possible lingering effects of altitude, we leave dinner to your own account this evening - your Tour Leader can assist).

Walk Summary: About 1 hour / 2 km (1.2mi) total, of easy walking through a village, mostly over mildly undulating tarmac or crushed gravel and stone, with some stairs.

Overnight in Cuzco.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 8 Cuzco Area Touring

This morning we depart on a half day Cuzco walking tour (5k, easy) to visit some of the most important Inca sites in the city and area.

We begin with an excursion out of town to visit the mighty ruins of Sacsayhuaman, an impressive complex which, like 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. Many of the stone walls built by the Incas still line many 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. Balance of the day at leisure.

This evening we have our farewell 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 Peruvian liquor distilled from white grapes.

Walk Summary: About 4 hours of walking at altitude, with little elevation gain/loss throughout the walk. Distance of about 5 km during the day. Terrain is a mix of paved surfaces and natural paths with a couple of steep sections.

Overnight in Cuzco.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Departure

Departure from Cuzco.

NOTE: As you are likely connecting through Lima en route home, you will probably have part of your day free in Cuzco, as most northward international flights depart Lima in the evening. Our hotel can store your luggage if needed.

BUEN VIAJE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast