



PERU

INCA TRAIL TO MACHU PICCHU Walk in the footsteps of an ancient civilization



- DURATION:** 10 days / 9 nights (first-class, 4-5 star hotels and 3 nights tent camping)
- SEASON:** April through November
- DEPARTURES:** Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 participants
- TRIP RATING:** Moderate/Strenuous Trek, Grade (III): This active trip features a 4-day, porter-supported trek of 24.5 miles (averaging 6.1 miles per day and reaching elevations up to 13,780'). A warm-up hike is also included to help with the acclimatization process.
- 2025 DATES:** On request any week during the season.
Note: plan early - required trekking permits often sell out 4 months in advance.

INTRODUCTION:

The Incas considered themselves “sons of the Sun” - their principal deity. By force of divine right and with a mastery of engineering, agriculture and economic skills, the Incas united warring tribes throughout the Andes under a common language and single religion, creating one of the most fabulous of ancient empires, *Tawantinsuyo*. At its apex in the late fifteenth century, this impressive kingdom encompassed lands stretching from southern Colombia to central Chile, connected by a network of more than 5,000 miles of stone-paved highways, primary trails, tunnels and bridges. The Qhapaq Ñan, or “Main Andean Road” running through this far-reaching network, gained UNESCO World Heritage status in 2014. The Incas governed this vast realm from Cusco, their administrative and economic center, where, in honor of their gods and king, they built spectacular temples, fortresses and mountaintop citadels of legendary grandeur and precision. Weakened by civil war, this magnificent empire collapsed in the face of the Spanish invasion in 1532, leaving behind silent walls. In spite of the ravages of time, these mysterious stone monuments stand today as a testament to the greatness of their creators.

This classic trek along the stone-paved *Royal Road* leads directly to Machu Picchu, the fabled *Lost City of the Incas*. Travelers are treated to a broad introduction to Inca civilization. First, we acclimatize by visiting unique ruins such as the Coricancha, Sacsayhuaman and Tambo Machay near Cusco. Later, we hike to Pisac, dramatically perched over the Sacred Valley. En route to the trailhead, we stop in at the typical Andean community of Chinchero. Our wilderness route takes us across two high passes, through alpine meadows, lush cloud forests and beneath snow-capped peaks. Each day well-preserved Inca sites emerge – an exciting preamble to Machu Picchu. Arriving through the *Intipunku*, or Gateway of the Sun, the citadel unfolds below for a stunning first view. After hiking down into the ruins, we relax at the finest hotel in town. The next morning offers ample time to explore this treasure a second time before returning by train and bus to Cusco.

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DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01: HOME / LIMA

Depart home and arrive this evening to Peru's capital city, **Lima**. Clear customs and walk a short distance on your own to check-in at the hotel adjacent to the International Terminal. Meals are on your own today.

[Costa del Sol Lima Airport Hotel by Wyndham](#) – 1 night

DAY 02: LIMA / CUSCO

Participants in Lima are transferred this morning to the airport's National terminal for a one-hour **flight to Cusco** (11,150'), the former Inca capital. Reception upon arrival and transfer to a deluxe boutique-style hotel, located near the main square. This restored colonial mansion from the XVI century brings the added benefit of oxygenated rooms, helping with acclimation. Remainder of the morning at leisure to begin acclimating to the high elevation. A light lunch is on your own. Join your Peruvian guide in the early afternoon for an orientation tour of the city and the nearby Incan ruins. The tour includes: the main plaza and Cathedral, which houses important colonial pieces of gold and silver work, the **Coricancha** or Inca's Sun Temple, whose stonework is some of the finest in the country, and the Incan walls along *Hatunrumiyoc Street* (named for the 12-angled stone that is clearly visible). We also explore **Sacsayhuaman**, the spectacular mountaintop complex overlooking the Cusco valley and surrounding hills; and *Tambo Machay*, where the clear cool springs of the ceremonial baths continue to flow 550 years after they were built. Later, after a chance to rest, meet your guide for a trip briefing and enjoy dinner on your own, for convenience, we recommend the hotel's Mishti Restaurant serving Novo Andino and international cuisine.

[Aranwa Hotel](#) – 2 nights

(B)

DAY 03: SACRED VALLEY OF THE INCAS / CUSCO

After breakfast, drive by comfortable vehicle to the highlands above the **Sacred Valley of the Incas** for a 2 hour warm-up adventure. From the village of Maras (11,070') we begin a 3 mile gradual downhill hike, first to explore the Pichincoto Salt Mines, a series of over 2,000 terraced mountainside pools fed by a natural spring. Local families have been producing salt here since Incan times. Continue downhill following a scenic route to the Sacred Valley. After a hearty traditional lunch, we drive to the pleasant Andean town of **Pisac** (9,708'). With your knowledgeable guide, explore the main plaza and narrow side streets with their shops and craft centers. Above town, the Pisac ruins are perched on a ridge overlooking the valley. Observe how the Incas directed the meandering Urubamba River into a canal for farming potatoes and grains. Impressive stretches of agricultural terraces contour the mountainside. Nearby cliff walls house caves which served as South America's largest pre-Columbian cemetery. Walk about 2 miles following a stone-paved trail with expansive views, leading us to Pisac's religious complex with exquisite stonework and *Intihuatana* or Hitching Post of the Sun. Returning to the historical hotel in Cusco by late afternoon, the evening at leisure with dinner on your own to explore town.

[Aranwa Hotel](#)

(B,L)

DAY 04: CUSCO / HUAYLLABAMBA CAMP

Enjoy the early morning light during a scenic drive northwest across the highlands with panoramic views of the snow-capped Urubamba range, including Veronica and Pituisiray peaks, both over 18,000 ft. **Chincho** (12,335') is a picturesque community with characteristics of many Andean towns that combine Inca and colonial architecture. A massive Inca wall with ten trapezoidal niches dominates the village's main square adjacent to the colonial church. Continuing our drive to the trailhead in the lower end of the valley, we stop for a brief visit of Ollantaytambo's impressive terraced remains of the sun temple. The town maintains an original street plan and foundations designed by the Incas. The trailhead for our trek is at Km 82 near the village of **Piscacucho (9,150')**. We meet our camp staff and the Quechua Indian porters who carry our gear. Our journey begins following a relatively level trail winding above the Urubamba River as the fertile valley narrows into a rugged gorge. We hike through a desert-like environment interspersed with cacti and interesting flowering plants to reach the Inca site of **Llactapata (8,366')**. Our route today continues uphill along a gentle gradient passing fields and Inca terraces of the Cusichaca River valley. Snow-capped Mt. Veronica (19,188'), the highest peak in the Urubamba range, looms silently behind us as we approach the village of **Huayllabamba**, a Quechua community built on original Inca foundations. The [tent camping](#) experience is ready upon arrival to unwind and take in the view. **Hiking distance:** 6 miles or 6 hours; **Camp elevation:** 9,678'

(B,L,D)

DAY 05: PACAYMAYO CAMP

We face a challenging, full day of uphill hiking today (4,100' of elevation gain). The trail becomes quite steep as we follow the narrow Llullucha gorge leading up toward the highest pass of our journey. The switchbacks are well-marked, passing through a dense forest with abundant birdlife and flowering plants before topping out in the wide, open meadows of **Llulluchapampa**. Expansive views abound of the surrounding Andean peaks behind us and the highest pass of our route

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before us, *Warmiwañusqa*, at 13,780'. The final approach to the pass, a long steep ramp ending with a few switchbacks, typically takes about 2-2.5 hours from the meadows of Llulluchapampa. Reaching the top, we enjoy views of the rugged, glacier-clad Wiyañey peaks across the valley and the forested Pacaymayo gorge on the other side. We watch as our porters, or *Huayruros*, some dressed in their traditional red ponchos and *chullos* (earflap hats) carry their loads up the same route and then continue past us to arrive to the campsite ahead of the group. From the top our descent is steep, following a newly completed stone-paved trail with sections of staircases. Arriving to the upper meadows of **Pacaymayo** we settle into our campsite for an afternoon of photography, relaxing or exploring the area. **Hiking distance:** 6.5 miles or 6.5 hours; **Camp elevation:** 10,991' (B,L,D)

DAY 06: PHUYUPATAMARCA CAMP

A short, steep uphill section brings us to the **Runkurakay** watchtower this morning. We continue climbing Inca stairs past a small lake to reach our route's second high pass at 12,631'. A clear day offers excellent views to the horizon of the glacier-clad peaks of the Pumasillo Mountains as well as the deep gorges and ridges of the eastern Andes. Ahead of us is the Royal Road leading down past the strategic Incan site of **Sayacmarca** (11,811') and the smaller, neighboring ruins of Conchamarca. The descent is steep but follows a well-defined trail. After exploring the ruins, we contour along the ridge, marveling at the dense vegetation of the cloud forest as we walk on a 4-6 foot wide stone-paved trail. After ducking through an ancient tunnel, we reach the final crest of the ridge and arrive to **Phuyupatamarca**, or "the town above the clouds" as the site's name translates from Quechua. This final campsite is one of the most spectacular along the Camino Inca with a 360-degree view of both the Urubamba and the Aobamba River valleys, and **Mount Salcantay**, (20,575') whose impressive glacier-covered summit is the highest in the Vilcabamba range. Sunrise here can be spectacular, we begin to understand why the mountain was worshiped as a god by the Incas. Condors are sometimes seen soaring above the valley on their way to the highlands, as the world's largest flying bird, their wingspan can reach 10 feet! Trek length: 5.5 miles or 5.5 hours **Camp elevation:** 11,975' (B,L,D)

DAY 07: MACHU PICCHU

Our final trekking day is filled with excitement and anticipation. We descend past the ceremonial baths at **Phuyupatamarca** following hundreds of stairs cut directly into the rocky hillside. This staircase, dropping down through the cloud forest, is a relatively recent discovery on the Incan highway. We descend through increasingly lush vegetation, identifying some of the more than 370 species of orchids that grow in the region as we go, noting various bromeliads, lichens, bromeliads, begonias, mosses and tree ferns along the way. The air warms and butterflies flit before us on the trail. We pass through a second tunnel and look down at one of the most dramatic sites of the route, **Wiñaywayna** (Forever Young), whose terraces and ceremonial baths cling to the mountainside overlooking the winding Urubamba River a thousand feet below. A steep, switchbacked descent along a dirt path leads us past a former hostel and on into the ruins. We explore this extensively terraced site enjoying views over the Urubamba Valley and ceremonial baths that line the main trail through the site. Climbing two final sets of stairs, we reach **Intipunku** (8,860'), the Gateway of the Sun. Our efforts of the past days are rewarded with an incredible view of the magnificent **Machu Picchu** citadel and the surrounding mountains. After a 45-minute hike down to the ruins complex, we take a side trail towards the entrance gate of the lost city, saving our explorations for tomorrow. We catch one of the last buses to the village of Machu Picchu and check into the charming Inkaterra Hotel, a former National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World, situated at 6,627' in 12 acres of secluded cloud forest garden along the Urubamba River. The day ends with a relaxing and delicious dinner, recounting tales from our trek, and a well-deserved cozy bed. **Trek length:** 6.5 miles or 6 hours; **Final trek elevation:** 7,973'

[Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel](#) – 1 night

(B,L,D)

DAY 08: MACHU PICCHU / CUSCO

To experience the citadel bathed in the morning light, we have an early breakfast and join our guide for a tour through the main sections of **Machu Picchu** (7,973'), enjoying peaceful time before the trains arrive. The Incas' renowned *Lost City* was first brought to the world's attention in 1911 by the American historian Hiram Bingham, having escaped earlier discovery by the Spanish Conquistadors. Perched atop a crest high above the meandering Urubamba River and surrounded by the rugged, forested slopes of the Andes, this archaeological treasure is more than just the crown jewel of Incan architecture. It is a city in harmony with its surroundings, the perfect union of human engineering and the natural environment. Our stop includes visits to the Temple of the Sun and the Royal Tomb, examinations of ceremonial water fountains and baths, and a stroll on the Sacred Plaza. At 8,836' **Huayna Picchu**, or Young Peak, looms over the citadel. An optional 1.5 hours climb along a very steep, narrow and exposed trail ends at terraces and ruins on the mountain's top, providing an excellent, bird's-eye view of Machu Picchu! Another 1.5 hour up and downhill hike on a shaded trail ends at the mysterious, partially excavated ruins **Temple of the Moon** (elev 7,220'). A series of caverns likely contained mummies during Incan times. This quiet ceremonial site is perched above the Urubamba River, access is via the same gate as Huayna Picchu. Part of the morning is at leisure for personal explorations before taking a break for lunch at the Tinkuy

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buffet restaurant just outside the citadel which serves a variety of hot and fresh selections. Later on, we catch the afternoon bus and Vistadome train for the 1.5 hour scenic ride back to Ollantaytambo. Reception at the station and 1.5-hour transfer by private vehicle **to Cusco** and the familiar Aranwa Hotel.

[Aranwa Hotel](#) – 1 night

(B,L)

DAY 09: CUSCO / LIMA / DEPARTURE

Morning at leisure for personal explorations of the Cusco's colorful San Pedro market, the many side-street craft shops, museums and plazas. We are picked up at the hotel late-morning for the drive to the airport in **Cusco** to catch the flight back to **Lima**. Upon arrival, we join our local guide for a private tour of **colonial Lima** declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for its originality and high concentration of Spanish colonial monuments. We continue to the fascinating **Larco Herrera Museum** with an extensive collection of pre-Columbian artifacts. Lunch and dinner are on your own to try a typical seafood meal such as ceviche at one of the several gourmet restaurants in the coastal Miraflores district. Participants leaving tonight have a return transfer to the airport this evening.

(B)

DAY 10: HOME

Arrive in in your gateway city this morning, passport control, clear customs and make onward connections home.

NOTES ON THE ITINERARY: Although we do our best to adhere to the schedule listed above, the day-by-day activities on this itinerary are subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control, including group acclimatization, pace, weather, road, river, and trail conditions or train and plane schedules. Hiking distances and altitudes are approximate; times indicated do not include lunch breaks, rest stops, time to explore the ruins, etc. This trip is suitable for physically fit participants age 12 and up accustomed to outdoor activities. In Cusco we may also use the **JW Marriott El Convento**, a renovated XVI century convent with original colonial detail or the elegant and historical **Casa Cartagena Hotel** (both featuring oxygenated rooms) instead of the **Aranwa Hotel** (depending on availability).

2025 LAND COST:

4-6 participants:	from \$7,100 p.p.d.
7-12 participants:	from \$6,500 p.p.d.
Single Supplement:	from \$1,500

p.p.d.=per person based on double or triple accommodation not including airfare.

Note: We can also operate this trip **for 2-3 participants**, budget on a Land Cost from \$8,000 per person and contact us for specific pricing according to your travel dates.

ESTIMATED AIRFARE: The Land Cost DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY FLIGHTS. Southwind's ticketing partner can assist with all your air travel – providing an airfare quote to match your itinerary, personalized support for seating, monitoring schedule changes and coordinating directly with the airlines if any adjustments are needed. Business Class to Lima is often good value (Delta, United and Latam offer lie flat seats in Business). Non-stop flights to Lima are available from these US gateways: New York/JFK (Latam 8 hr flight time), Newark (United 8 hr), Los Angeles (Latam 8 hr 30 min), Miami (American & Latam 5 hr 45 min), Houston (United 6 hr 30 min) and Atlanta (Delta 6 hr 30 min). Estimated international economy fares are \$600-\$900/person and \$350/person for Lima-Cusco-Lima with Latam (SkyTeam Alliance). You have the option to arrange your own flights or redeem award travel yourself if you wish. Tickets should only be purchased after Southwind notifies you that your trip is confirmed. The airlines request that tickets match your passport name. Upon receipt of your deposit, Southwind provides flight booking details for your travel dates.

SERVICES INCLUDED:

- Comprehensive **pre-departure planning packet** and expert travel advice.
- All **in-country transfers** as scheduled. Ground transportation in comfortable private vehicles with professional drivers.
- Local and return flight reconfirmation, **in-country airport check-in and luggage assistance**.
- **First-class Vistadome or similar train** from Machu Picchu town to Ollantaytambo. Machu Picchu bus service to/from town and the archaeological sanctuary.
- All **accommodations in first-class (4-5 star) hotels** as listed (or at similar hotels) on a shared basis with private bath. Advanced bookings are recommended if you require double beds (King/queen) for couples, or plan to arrive early or extend your stay.
- Single Supplement includes single room and single tent on trek. Due to limited space in campsites and at the boutique Hotels in Cusco and Machu Picchu, we recommend making reservations well in advance if you require single

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accommodations.

- All **meals** indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner); **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required). For other diets, consult your travel specialist before making a reservation.
- All **guided tours** (as listed) conducted on a private basis by knowledgeable, English-speaking native guides (includes applicable entrance fees).
- **First-class trekking service** includes:
 - Experienced, licensed, English-speaking, Andean guide (assistant guide provided for 9 or more participants). The main guide will have a satellite phone for logistics and emergencies.
 - Expert camp chef and kitchen assistant, camp assistant and Quechua Indian porters (porters are treated and compensated well, they carry a maximum of 20 lbs of an individual trekker's personal gear).
 - All group camping equipment: spacious 3-person all season Eureka K-2 or North Face VE-25 tents (shared by just 2 participants), Thermarest™ sleeping pads, kitchen tent, enclosed shower, separate dining tent, folding tables, camp stools, an environmentally friendly toilet tent and first-aid kit..
 - All meals: we serve a variety of healthy food with fresh native ingredients. A cup of hot wake-up tea is brought to your tent door followed by a hot breakfast, box or picnic lunch, and a 3 course dinner.
 - Tips to the porters.

NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic, international flights, nor local flights within Peru.
- Tours, meals (at about \$30-45 each per person) or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Tips to the tour guides and drivers plus main trekking staff (trekking guide, assistant guide and chefs).
- Early arrivals, dayrooms or late check-outs at hotels.
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment, laundry and phone calls.
- Sleeping bag and other personal gear. Southwind has synthetic or down sleeping bags rated to 0° or +10°F available for rent for \$50 per person. Advance reservations and prepayment are required.
- Expenses incurred in preparing for this trip such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets or traveler's insurance, nor additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

OPTIONAL HOTEL UPGRADES:

According to interest, Southwind can quote and reserve these **upgraded accommodations**:

Lima: **JW Marriott Hotel** (overlooking Pacific Ocean in the Miraflores district).

Sacred Valley: **Tambo del Inka Hotel** (Luxury Collection) or **Belmond Rio Sagrado Hotel**.

Cusco: **Belmond Monasterio Hotel** (Cusco's original boutique historic hotel with oxygenated rooms, colonial arches & fine colonial artwork) or the luxurious **Belmond Palacio Nazarenas Hotel**.

Machu Picchu: **Belmond Sanctuary Lodge** (located at the entrance gate to Machu Picchu).

Note: Due to high demand, we recommend booking these upgrades at least 4-5 months in advance. Space is subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed. Please see the [Accommodations](#) tab on the trip page for details.

OPTIONAL TRIP EXTENSIONS:

Travelers with extra days may wish to extend their trip to the Galápagos Islands, Amazon Basin, Lake Titicaca, Arequipa & Colca Canyon, Northern Peru or Paracas Reserve and the Nazca Lines. All extensions require a minimum of 2 participants. To view the extensions on our website, click on '[Extend Your Trip](#)'.

WEATHER: Andean nights are cool, days are pleasant and springlike. Temperatures encountered on this trip may range from 28°-90°F. **Daytime highs along the trekking route average 74°F on sunny days** (higher elevations have cooler temperatures) but may only reach the mid 50's on overcast days. At the high campsites you should expect **nighttime lows of 25-30°F**. Cusco has daytime highs in the mid 70's and evening lows in the 40's. The daytime temperatures at **Machu Picchu** will be hot (85-90°F) with mild nights (45-55°F). The trip takes place in the cloud forests on the eastern edge of the Andes, **so rain showers should be expected any month**. Hail, sleet or snow storms might also occur at the highest elevations at anytime. Trekking during the Andean rainy season, December-March, is not recommended because of high risk of mud slides, rock fall or lightning and high passes may be closed due to heavy hail or snow fall.

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Cusco	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
AVE HIGH (°F)	65	65	66	67	67	66	66	67	68	69	69	69
AVE LOW (°F)	43	43	43	41	36	32	32	35	39	41	42	43
AVE RAINFALL	6.3	5.2	4.3	1.8	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.9	1.9	3.1	4.7

Rainfall amounts are in inches.

Machu Picchu	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
AVE HIGH (°F)	77	75	77	79	77	77	77	79	77	81	79	77
AVE LOW (°F)	50	50	50	50	46	45	46	46	48	52	52	50
AVE RAINFALL	8.1	8.5	7.7	4.2	1.3	0.7	0.9	1.3	2.1	3.6	4.5	6.8

Rainfall amounts are in inches.

PRESERVATION: The *Inca Trail* can get busy, particularly during the April-November season. Nearly 75,000 people trek the trail each year and an additional 750,000 visit Machu Picchu by train! In 2000, a governmental decree limited the number of trekkers along this route by restricting the groups to a maximum of 15 plus local staff, and requiring that all groups be accompanied by official guides. If you want to hike the Inca Trail, the way to minimize your own impact is to join a group with an experienced outfitter such as **Southwind Adventures**. If you prefer to avoid large groups of hikers on this popular route, consider our Urubamba Weaver's Trek an equally spectacular trek following an off-the-beaten-path route.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: We strongly recommend purchasing coverage to protect your trip investment. Travel insurance is important in case of unexpected events prior to departure causing the need to cancel or change your dates. Weather, natural events, medical reason, quarantine, local strikes, personal injury/illness (for you, your traveling companion or family members at home), could require itinerary interruption or changes. Missed connections, delayed arrival, lost/delayed baggage or the need for medical attention or evacuation are also reasons why coverage is important. Southwind recommends **Travel Insured International** which offers coverage options at a good value. If you, your traveling companion or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition, you can still receive coverage if a recurrence of the condition forces you to cancel your trip, but you do need to purchase a plan **within 21 days of your deposit**. Southwind can provide eQuote for insurance to review upon receipt of your deposit and Trip Reservation eForm. [Learn more about coverage offered by Travel Insured International](#)

NEXT STEPS: Please contact Southwind to speak with a personal Travel Advisor to help fine tune your travel plans and to receive a custom itinerary with a land cost quote based on your travel dates. You can reach us by completing our [Private Trip Request form](#), by email at info@southwindadventures.com, by phone at 800-377-9463 or by text to 303-972-0701.

Permits Required – Plan Early! Due to the popularity of Cusco and Machu Picchu, we recommend making reservations at least 4-6 months or more in advance.

Note: Due to the mandatory Inca Trail trekking permit system, a **valid passport number** is needed at the time of deposit or soon thereafter. Only 500 people (both trekkers and staff, including porters) are allowed onto the trail each day. Generally the trekking permits sell out 4 months in advance.

Once your trip is confirmed to operate, you will receive pre-departure planning materials, flight booking assistance and advice to help prepare for your exciting vacation in Peru.

We look forward to having you travel with us in Peru!

Southwind Adventures, Inc

Your Latin America Travel Specialist since 1990

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