

# EXTENSIONS: CUSCO, MACHU PICCHU & THE INCA TRAIL



*This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.*



*Machu Picchu and Huayna Picchu. Photo Peter Wise*

**We can offer the following extensions to Cusco and Machu Picchu in conjunction with our Peru treks:**

- **CUSCO, SACRED VALLEY AND MACHU PICCHU BY TRAIN (5 Days)**
- **CUSCO AND THE INCA TRAIL TO MACHU PICCHU (10 Days)**

*It's important to book early if you plan to trek the 'Inca Trail'. The daily quota is 500 people comprising 200 trekkers and 300 support crew. Places between June & September will be snapped up 5+ months ahead. International flight especially from UK and Europe, if not purchased early, become increasingly expensive during these months.*

## **Cusco**

Cusco was the capital of the Inca Empire, which at its peak, stretched from southern Chile to Ecuador and remains today the most important cultural centre in Peru and is a monument to the Incas. The Incas laid out the city in the plan of a puma - their most sacred animal. The head was the great fortress of Sacsayhuaman on a hill above the city, the spine was the stream of Tullumayo, and the body was the great plaza of Huacaypata. Their city layout persists to this day and there is much well preserved Inca stonework with walls of huge stones enclosing narrow alleys and the remains of palaces and temples. The later Spanish colonial development is often built on

Inca foundations. The mix of Inca remains, colonial churches and museums, all beneath their terracotta tiled roofs combine with the narrow cobbled streets, cafés and crafts and wide open Plazas to make it such an enjoyable and essential experience in any visit to Peru.

### **Machu Picchu**

The American archaeologist Hiram Bingham rediscovered Machu Picchu in 1911. It is thought that the Spaniards never found Machu Picchu - perhaps it had been abandoned and 'forgotten' before they arrived. Since its rediscovery when it was swathed in jungle, much work has been done to both clear and renovate the site. With its dramatic setting, high above the Urubamba valley and the peak of Huayna Picchu towering above, it is the most remarkable Inca site in Latin America. It is most commonly reached by either train from Cusco or walking the Inca Trail, arriving at the site via Intipunku, the Gateway of the Sun.

**Note: Cusco is at an altitude of 3350m and time is needed for acclimatisation.** The key is to start slowly, drink plenty and allow good resting time.



*Cusco main plaza: Inca festival*

**The Inca Trail** covers a distance of 43km and reaches the Sun Gate and the first incredible views of Machu Picchu on the morning of your 4<sup>th</sup> trekking day - the highest pass reaches a height of 4300m and the hardest day involves a height gain of approx 1200m. It is never to be underestimated and good acclimatisation and regular walking fitness are so important for both your enjoyment and satisfaction. Our Pisac and Ollantaytambo excursions are excellent final preparation days as well as outstanding Inca experiences. On the trail you will join a group of approx 10-15 other trekkers with own support crew - porters, cook and guide. Sometimes other trekkers will carry all their own gear themselves but the 'half porter' 6kg gear support (usually sleeping bag, mattress, change of clothes etc) which we include leaves you to carry only a daysack.

# CUSCO, the SACRED VALLEY & MACHU PICCHU BY TRAIN



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## DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

*(B, L, D) = meals included in the trip cost; breakfast, lunch, dinner.*

LAST DAY OF TREK ITINERARY if combining with a Cordillera Blanca trek: Return to Lima with group. Hotel.

### DAY 1 TO CUSCO

Most flights from Lima to Cusco take place in the morning and so expect to arrive in Cusco before or around midday. Transfer to your hotel. Unless you have just come off a trek, landing at an altitude of 3350m will call for a cautious first two days. In the afternoon (if you feel fine) we are met by our guide and taken on a city walk around the principal churches and ruins of the city. A bit of a whirlwind tour but it will give you your bearings for tomorrow. Hotel. (B)

### DAY 2 CUSCO

A free day. With good acclimatisation it is possible to walk to Sacsayhuaman, the massive Inca fortress overlooking Cusco and the neighbouring sites (guide optional). A good compromise might be to take a taxi up and walk down – approx 4 kms one way. Hotel. (B)

### DAY 3 OLLANTAYTAMBO

Now it's time to head towards the Sacred Valley. For Inca admirers, the fortress of Ollantaytambo founded by Pachacutec is one of the most exciting places of their great Empire. Its Inca temple, terraces and aqueducts are breathtaking. With an early start we can spend most of the morning there. Early afternoon we board our VISTADOME train and continue along the Urubamba valley to Aguas Calientes (Hot waters), the small town in the valley at the foot of Machu Picchu. The train ride takes approx 2 hours and is fascinating throughout. The 'hot waters' that give the town its name are a recommended option (towels can be hired) before dinner. Hotel. (B,L)



*Train to Machu Picchu*

DAY 4 **MACHU PICCHU**

Arriving at the site for sunrise – the bus shuttles begin around 5.30am – can heighten the experience – the first sight of Machu Picchu is simply stunning. Our guide will also be ready early. For 'High Places' types, the energetic climb up Huayna Picchu, the peak overlooking the site is a 'must'. Amazingly, Inca steps go all the way, but it is still steep and exposed and demands a clear head. In the afternoon we catch our train and return to Ollantaytambo and Cusco. Hotel. (B)

DAY 5 **FLIGHT TO LIMA.** Transfer to Cusco airport for the morning flight to Lima. (B)

# CUSCO & THE INCA TRAIL TO MACHU PICCHU



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*Cusco fortress Sacsayhuaman*

### DAY 2 CUSCO

A full day to begin to absorb the sights and sounds of Cusco in your own time and at your own pace – also a valuable acclimatisation day. Aim for a walk to the massive Inca temple-fortress remains, Sacsayhuaman, a breathless hour from the Plaza de Armas but such good exercise. (Optional guided morning) It is one of the wonders of Peru and the most accessible example of massive Inca stonework. From Sacsayhuaman near the statue of Jesus – El Cristo Blanco – there is a great view over Cusco. That may be enough for the day but it is quite possible to follow a good trail to the ruins of Q'enco, and nearby Salumpunku (Temple of the Moon). You can catch a taxi back to Cusco from anywhere en-route. The Inca sites of Puca Pucara and Tambomachay are 2-3 kms away and best left for another day. The walking, though easy, is at altitude so ensure you don't over exert yourself and remember to drink plenty of water today. (B)

### DAY 3 PISAC

An ideal acclimatisation day combined with a visit to one of the great Inca sites, the Inca Fortress, high above the village of Pisac (30km from Cusco). The steady climb up to the ridge site from the village, approx 500m ascent, will be our first encounter with Inca stone steps. There will also be time to visit the Pisac market. On our return we

make brief stops at Pukapukara and Tambomachay, two more Inca sites nearer to Cusco. Hotel. (B,L)

**DAY 4 OLLANTAYTAMBO**

Time to leave Cusco now. The move towards the Sacred Valley and the start of the Inca Trail is the perfect opportunity to visit Ollantaytambo, a town whose layout and architecture is largely unchanged since Inca times. It's breathtaking setting with a backdrop of towering Inca terraces, restored aqueducts and the enormous stonework of its Sun Temple almost rivals Machu Picchu. En route to Ollantaytambo we hope to visit Chinchero an Inca site high on the plateau overlooking the Urubamba valley and a local weaving and dyeing centre. Time in the evening to prepare for tomorrow's trek! Hotel. (B,L)

**DAY 5 INCA TRAIL 1**

Leaving from Ollantaytambo instead of Cusco makes for a much shorter ride to the start of the Trail at Km.82, approx 1 hour. Here we'll meet our team, guide, cook and porters which always takes longer than expected. It's an easyish day however as we cross the river and pass through several small settlements. A short hike off the trail leads to some Inca ruins and terracing at Llactapata before continuing up to a saddle with good views down and across the main Urubamba valley. From the village of Huayllabamba. We make a final steep ascent to Llullucha and our first campsite. 3350m. 12km. (B,L,D)

**DAY 6 INCA TRAIL 2**

After breakfast the trek continues through forest to the highest point of the trail, Abra de Warmihuañusca (Dead Woman's Pass). At 4200m this will be a good test of stamina and acclimatisation. After a welcome stop for lunch we descend to the valley of Pacaymayu (3600m) where we camp for the night. 12km. (B,L,D)

**DAY 7 INCA TRAIL 3**

Today the trail becomes more obviously an Inca highway. You will be walking on stone steps built into the mountain as the route zigzags up to the ruins of Runkurakay. Descending again towards Sayacmarca, (which in Quechua means '*Dominant Inaccessible Town*') to explore the ruins, which command a sweeping view of the Aobamba valley. After crossing another high pass (4000m) the trail descends an ancient staircase to reach another Inca City, Huiñay Huayna ('*Forever Young*'), with beautiful stonework and an atmosphere of mystery almost exceeding that of the more crowded Machu Picchu. Here we make our camp at approx 2700m. 15 km. (B,L,D)



*Huayna Picchu*

**DAY 8 INCA TRAIL 4**

It's only 5 km to Machu Picchu! The path contours a final hillside and enters a cloud forest full of begonias, bromeliads and tree ferns. A steep flight of stairs leads to the first Inca gate and shortly afterwards to the Sun Gate from where suddenly we can see Machu Picchu spread out below us (approx 2 hours). A dramatic moment impossible to describe and it should be relatively uncrowded, at least until the first train arrives

from Cusco. There is a guided tour of the site and for the adventurous there may be time to climb the steep (really steep!) steps to the summit of Huayna Picchu, the peak overlooking the site (see photo on page 1). Finally we drop down to the valley and catch the train back to Cusco. What a day! (B)

**DAY 9 CUSCO**

A free day in Cusco to enjoy with time to relax, shop, sight see and enjoy - there is nowhere else like Cusco, the capital city of the Inca Empire. (B)

**DAY 10 FLIGHT TO LIMA**

Transfer to airport for the morning flight to Lima. (B)



*Weaving women of Chinchero*

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