

Peru: Cusco, Machu Picchu & the Sacred Valley

Tour-Only Itinerary

Morning light pierces the forest canopy, and your heart quickens. Another few steps up the centuries-old Inca stairway and...you're there! *Intipunku*—the Sun Gate. Far below, Machu Picchu's ruins lie across a knife-edge ridgeline of green. As you've discovered on this walking tour, Peru's culture stands the test of time. At Sacsayhuaman fortress, it's impossible to fit even a slip of paper between the massive stones that comprise its walls—mortarless craftsmanship so resilient it's survived wars and earthquakes. Outside Maras, survey the vast checkerboard of steeply terraced evaporation ponds, where locals still harvest salt as they did before the conquistadors. And in Pisac market, meet women resplendent in traditional embroidery busily working handheld spindles, while their children play among bags of multihued native potatoes. Here too, the ancient endures.



Highlights

- Delight in a morning walk on ancient farm paths through the peaceful Andean Highlands.
- Trek a scenic footpath through the lush Andean countryside to Maras village, where the locals still use traditional techniques to mine the terraced salt pans.
- Marvel at mountain and river views from the panoramic windows of the Vistadome train as you make your way down the narrowing valley from Ollantaytambo.
- Hike the Inca Trail to the Sun Gate – the original entrance to Machu Picchu – taking in sweeping



views of the ancient ruins from above.

- Discover the ancient Inca capital Cusco on a walking tour of the old city. Enjoy free time to shop for delightful Peruvian crafts, art, woolen textiles and silver jewelry.

On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated moderate, with an average of 4-8 miles per day.

This tour features a combination of cobbled streets, uneven footpaths, steps, and rocky, irregular terrain over hills and valleys. An optional 8-mile (13 kilometer) Inca Trail hike includes a 2,000-foot (610 meter) elevation gain including a series of steps. Altitudes between 6,500 and 13,500 ft may require a slower pace. Our Country Walkers minibus support is available at specified meeting points for those who need assistance except on the Inca Trail, where there is no road access and you will be required to walk the entire 8-miles. Please note that guests with vertigo (or a fear of heights or lack of balance) may wish to opt out of this walk by taking the train all the way to Machu Pichu. Both morning and afternoon walking options are available most days.

DAY 1

Join your *Peru: Cusco, Machu Picchu & The Sacred Valley* tour

Travel to Andean Highlands. Follow Ancient Farming Paths to Cuyuni Village; 4 miles, easy. Travel to Pisac and Sacred Valley

Your guides meet you at 8:00 a.m. in the lobby of the designated meeting point hotel in Cusco. They will be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for walking.

Please get in touch with our Peru partner, Coltur, to advise them of any travel delays or changes so the staff can pass the message on to your Country Walkers guides. Coltur's Guest Relations Service Department is available 24/7 with a bilingual staff to assist you.

Depart Cusco and shuttle to the start of your morning walk, which will allow you to experience local life as it unfolds in the peaceful Andean Highlands. Begin your hike along ancient farming paths in this primarily agricultural community. You will make various stops throughout your walk today to learn about local farming, religious ceremonies, and textile production in this region.

After an included lunch, descend to the Sacred Valley (7,841 feet) and continue to the town of Pisac. Here you'll visit a local market where you can peruse shops of diverse handicrafts, souvenirs, art pieces, clothing, and other local products.

You'll also have a chance to interact with the vendors as they barter their wares. If you didn't pack a small bag to take with you to Machu Picchu, this is a wonderful place to pick up a bag.

Tonight, enjoy a special welcome reception and dinner at our acclaimed inn.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Market of Urubamba. Maras Salt Mines. Independent exploration of Urubamba

Shuttle to Urubamba and the Market of Urubamba. Shuttle to Highland Footpath from Maras town to Maras Salt Mines. Moray Terraces to Maras; 3 miles, moderate to challenging. Maras to Urubamba River; 1.5 miles, moderate. Shuttle to hotel

After breakfast, shuttle to the largest town in the valley – Urubamba. Here you will have a chance to visit its authentic market where you will see sellers from surrounding regions offering their products. This particular market, held on Wednesdays, is vital for the local people. The varieties of potatoes, corn, and fruit you will find are amazing. After your visit to the market, venture into the Andean countryside to walk scenic footpaths downhill through the Maras salt mines, which are fed by underground saltwater springs, to Maras village. The terraced Incan salt pans of Salineras are still mined for salt using methods unchanged over centuries. You will be rewarded with a sumptuous picnic lunch overlooking Huaypo Lagoon at the end of your walk before shuttling back to the hotel.

The remainder of the afternoon is yours to relax in your comfortable accommodations, join your guides for an optional walk of approximately four miles around Yucay, before dinner on your own in the hotel this evening.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

Archeological complex of Pumamarca and Inca town of Ollantaytambo. Chicha (corn beer) tasting at a typical Chicheria

Shuttle through the villages of Patacancha and Willoc to the Inca site of Pumamarca. Walk from Pumamarca to Ollantaytambo; 3.8 miles, easy to moderate. Afternoon Chicha (corn beer) tasting at a typical Chicheria and return shuttle to hotel

This morning, you shuttle (60 minutes) through the valley communities of Patacancha and Willoc before arriving at the archeological complex of Pumamarca, a set of pre-Inca warehouses. After exploring this

incredible site, begin your morning walk on an ancient Inca trail to marvel at the diverse species of flora in the Andes. Throughout the walk, you will witness fascinating views of the valley and its impressive Inca terraces on the bordering mountain slopes. Your walk concludes in the town of Ollantaytambo, known as the only Inca town still alive, where local people maintain their traditional costumes and live in the old stone houses of their ancestors. After lunch, join your leaders for an exploration of the Ollantaytambo fortress. After your visit to Ollantaytambo, take a short ride to a *chicheria* where *chicha de jora*, corn beer, is prepared and sold. It's believed the Incas consumed *chicha* for rituals during religious festivals and, today, you will have an opportunity to sample this unique beverage and learn about its brewing process.

Upon returning to the hotel, enjoy some relaxation at your resort.

This evening, a short shuttle ride takes you to a nearby restaurant for tonight's included dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

The Inca Trail. Machu Picchu

Vistadome Train. Inca Trail from Km 104 marker to Machu Picchu; 8 miles, moderate to challenging, 2,000-ft. elevation gain and loss. Non-Inca Trail Machu Picchu walk, 2 miles, easy. Travel to hotel

Shuttle early this morning to Ollantaytambo to catch the narrow-gauge Vistadome train. Your train ride traverses the narrowing valley, which offers breathtaking views of the river and surrounding peaks.

Those who have elected to hike the Inca Trail will disembark at the "Km 104" marker (7,183 feet) to start one of the world's most iconic hikes. The walk offers spectacular panoramas of the mountains and cloud forests, making for an unforgettable entry into the Machu Picchu Sanctuary. Expect to be on the legendary trail for six hours with a mostly continuous ascent. An elevation gain and loss of about 2,000 feet and some steep stair climbing will keep you on your toes. **Note:** the minibus support vehicle will not be available on the Inca Trail. You will be required to walk the entire eight miles. A picnic break is well deserved.

Your effort is rewarded when you arrive at Intipunku – the Sun Gate (8,954 feet) – the most impressive approach to Machu Picchu. This was the original entrance to the "Lost City." Give yourself time to take it all in, perhaps perching on a rock for the best views of the ruins. Then continue down to our hotel located below Machu Picchu. You'll have tomorrow afternoon to discover the wonder of Machu Picchu, with your

guides and independently. **Note:** this is the itinerary for guests who sign up for the Inca Trail walk at the time of booking the tour. If you decide not to walk the Inca Trail you will have the day free to enjoy optional excursions offered by the Inkaterra Hotel.

For those looking for a less-strenuous option (and for those unable to obtain a permit for the Inca Trail), you'll stay on the train past Km 104, arriving in Aguas Calientes in the early morning. Your guide will take you into Machu Picchu for a morning visit before you check into your hotel. Check-in at the inn is not until 1:00 p.m. In the afternoon, you may wish to take advantage of the spa or admire the incredible orchid gardens at the inn. You will be given the same box lunch provided to the guests on the Inca Trail walk so that you may take lunch at your leisure today.

This evening, regroup for dinner at your lovely resort's restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

Machu Picchu. Independent exploration of Aguas Calientes

Shuttle to Machu Picchu. Guided walking tour of Machu Picchu; 1.5 miles, easy. Travel to hotel

Enjoy a leisurely morning at the hotel. Feel free to go birding on the hotel grounds or stroll the hotel's Orchid Trail with over 350 different native orchid species, this garden holds the world record according to the American Orchid Society. Alternatively, enjoy the pool or visit the spa and treat yourself to traditional Andean treatments (at additional cost) using local botanical ingredients such as cocoa and tea leaves. You may also want to explore the city of Aguas Calientes and shop for some last-minute gifts at the open-air Machu Picchu market. While small in area, this market is crammed with stalls offering traditional products such as alpaca ponchos, Andean instruments, woven bags, and silver jewelry. This afternoon shuttle to Machu Picchu. Follow your guides on a walk around Machu Picchu, as well as in the surrounding area, including a roundtrip walk to Inca Bridge (1.5 miles).

Enjoy recounting the day over an included dinner tonight.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Cusco

*Various morning walking options from the hotel; 2-4 miles, easy. Vistadome train and shuttle to Cusco.
Cusco walking tour; 2.6 miles, easy*

Indulge in a relaxing breakfast. You may choose from several walking trails that begin right at the hotel, or you may wish to visit the tea plantation located within the hotel grounds. Later this morning, return to Cusco through the Sacred Valley by train. Upon your arrival in Cusco, put on your walking shoes and discover this ancient Incan capital on a walking tour. Evidence of both the original Incan city and the Spanish colonial city (established in 1533) will be pointed out as you explore Koricancha ("Temple of the Sun"), Cusco Cathedral, and Hatun Rumiyoq, a narrow Inca Street famous for its precise assembly of large stones believed to be the palace of the 6th Inca king, Inca Roca. Admire one well-known stone in particular that has 12 perfectly fitted angles.

Cusco's many dining options are at your doorstep tonight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7

Tambomachay. Puka Pukara. Sacsayhuaman

Shuttle to Tambomachay. Tambomachay to Sacsayhuaman; 5 miles, easy. Travel to Cusco

After breakfast, travel six miles (25 minutes) north of Cusco to begin your day. Trace your way on foot back towards the city, visiting important Incan monuments. This is a spectacular area for walks, with Andean mountain views, colorful villages, and impressive remains of the Incan Empire.

First, visit Tambomachay (the highest elevation of the day at 12,500 feet), which may have fulfilled an important religious function linked to water and the regeneration of the land. Walking down a gentle slope, stop to explore the complexes of Puka Pukara, Qenqo, and Laqo. Your guides can explain more about traditional religious ceremonies held here.

Next, visit Sacsayhuaman. Though this impressive fortress is only a fraction of its original size and scope, the intact walls and structure will astound you. Take a moment to look back over the orange tile rooftops of Cusco before your short transfer into the city.

Enjoy lunch at your leisure and spend time soaking in some last bits of Andean culture in Cusco's colorful

plazas. Tonight, head out on the town for a festive farewell dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8

***Your Peru: Cusco, Machu Picchu & The Sacred Valley* tour concludes**

Your tour concludes at the Aranwa Cusco Boutique Hotel after an included breakfast this morning. The hotel will help you book a taxi at your own expense to the Cusco airport.

Included Meals: Breakfast



What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
16 on-tour meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓