Peru: Machu Picchu & the Sacred Valley

Walking Vacation + Air Package

Peru is magic. This iconic walking journey leaves you breathless with its natural wonders, Incan ruins, folk markets and warm-hearted people. Our route follows ancient footpaths to Machu Picchu—the hidden jewel of the Incan empire—through tropical forests and terraced farms into ethereal cloud forests and high valleys framed by jagged peaks. Invigorating days at high altitude end in plush resorts surrounded by nature's grace and Andean hospitality. Quinoa, corn beer, and coca leaf tea fuel the body among other delicious and energizing meals. The train ride down the Sacred Valley is a focal point, ending in the ancient capital of Cusco, a travelers' delight with elegant Spanish charm, soft alpaca textiles, and vibrant street life.

Cultural Highlights

Delight in a morning walk on ancient farm paths through the peaceful Andean Highlands
Enjoy the bustle and barter at a fruit and vegetable market in Pisac
Walk to the lovely Andean villages of Chinchero and Urquillo
Taste Peruvian chicha de jora, corn beer, at an authentic chicheria
Visit the colorful Qotowincho market in Urbamba
Walk the Andean countryside through Maras village and its salt mines
Gather with your fellow travelers for a delicious picnic lunch by Huaypo Lagoon
Ride the narrow-gauge Vistadome train down the narrowing valley of Ollantaytambo
Hike the stunning Inca Trail, with spectacular views of mountains and cloud forests
Enter the "Lost City" of Machu Picchu from its original entrance at the Sun Gate
Encounter more of Machu Picchu on a guided walk with your Trip Leaders
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

What to Expect

This tour features a combination of cobbled streets, uneven footpaths, and rocky, irregular terrain over hills and through valleys. An elective 8 mile (13 km) Inca Trail hike includes a 2,000-foot (610 meter) elevation gain. Altitudes between 6,500 and 13,500 feet may require a slower pace. Our VBT minibus support is available at specified meeting points for those who would like assistance except on the Inca Trail, where there is no road access and you will be required to walk the entire 8 miles (13 km). Both morning and afternoon walking options are available most days. Appropriate for enthusiastic beginners

and ideal for experienced walkers. Several of the walks require a transfer from our hotel to the start of the walk. Our Trip Leaders often use this time in the van for morning route reviews, so you can enjoy a more leisurely morning at breakfast.

Tour Duration: 10 Days
Average Daily Mileage: 4 - 8
Average Cycling Time: 01:15 - 04:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)
Apr 67º/41º, May 67º/36º, Jun 66º/32º, Jul 66º/32º, Aug 67º/35º, Sep 68º/39º, Oct 69º/41º, Nov 69º/42º
Average Rainfall (in.)
Apr 1.8, May 0.3, Jun 0.1, Jul 0.2, Aug 0.3, Sep 0.9, Oct 1.9, Nov 3.1

DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Peru

Depart from home and travel to Peru. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

DAY 2: Arrive in Peru

You will arrive in Peru via Lima's Jorge Chavez International Airport early this morning. As this is your first point of arrival into Peru, you will need to clear Peruvian immigration and customs. You will be met by the VBT representative who will be holding a VBT sign in the arrival halls after clearing customs. Your VBT representative will then assist you with your connecting flight to Cusco.

Important Note: The TAM (Andean Immigration Card) is now virtual—this means you are no longer required to complete this form by hand, as it is now automatically stored online once you pass through one of the airport's new biometric gates using your passport. You will need to present this TAM card to hotels in order to exonerate you from Peruvian tax as foreigners are exempt of hotel room tax. Therefore, you will need to request a printed copy of the TAM card as you pass through immigration. Simply ask the immigration agent at the time he/she is processing your virtual TAM to print a hard copy of the TAM card. Please hand this hard copy of the TAM card to the VBT representative meeting you in the arrivals hall after you claim your luggage in Cusco. Upon arrival at Cusco airport, claim your luggage and look in the arrivals hall for your VBT representative holding a VBT sign. Make certain that your VBT luggage tags

are affixed to your bag so your VBT representative can identify you. Your representative will make arrangements for the transfer to your hotel in Cusco.

Once you arrive in Cusco (10,900 ft / 3,322 m), it is advisable to rest and avoid strenuous activity as your body acclimates to the altitude. Also, be aware of dehydration and drink plenty of water to help avoid altitude sickness. A couple of hours' rest at this time will go a long way toward feeling more comfortable later.

VBT provides you with City Information that includes recommendations on what to see and do in Cusco. You have the rest of the day to relax or to begin your exploration.

Cusco and its many dining options are at your doorstep tonight.

Hotel: Casa Andina PC Cusco
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: VBT Walking Vacation begins / Transfer to the Sacred Valley / Cuyuni Community

Meet your VBT Trip Leaders at your Cusco hotel at 8:00 a.m. We will have a short orientation during our shuttle ride (approximately 1.5 hours) to the start of our warm-up walk in the Sacred Valley. Please be dressed in your walking attire when you meet your Trip Leaders.

We depart Cusco and shuttle to the start of our morning walk, which will give us the opportunity to experience local life as it unfolds in the peaceful Andean Highlands. We begin our walk along the ancient farming paths in this primarily agricultural community. We will make various stops throughout our walk today to learn about local farming, religious ceremonies, and textile production in this region.

After an included lunch, we descend to the Sacred Valley (7,841 ft) and continue to the town of Pisac. Here we'll visit a local market where we can view the diverse fruits and vegetables including some of the 4,000 varieties of potatoes grown in Peru. We'll also have a chance to interact with the vendors as they barter their wares. If you didn't pack a smaller 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.

Please note: Due to the logistics of getting to Machu Picchu, there are restrictions on luggage. Please be

sure to pack a lightweight, expandable bag that can be packed within your luggage. You will need to transfer only what you need for these two overnights from your large suitcase. Your large luggage will remain in secure storage during your stay in Machu Picchu. In addition to this duffel, you are able to carry your daypack with you.

Hotel: Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Daily Options: 2.4 miles on descending, rolling dirt roads and paths.

DAY 4: Andean villages of Chinchero and Urquillo / Chicha (corn beer) tasting at a typical Chicheria

This morning we shuttle (40 minutes) to the typical Andean village of Chinchero where we will find Inca ruins and a colonial church. Our morning walk begins in this lovely village and we will pass through picturesque landscapes as we descend to the village of Urquillo – once a significant village during the Inca era due to its location on the Inca Trail to Cusco. Today the town is characterized by its haciendas dating from the Spanish colonial period. We will have a box lunch provided to enjoy during our walk today. At the end of our walk we will enjoy 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 and learn about the brewing process of this unique beverage.

Enjoy some relaxation at our resort upon your return. Later in the afternoon, join the leaders on an optional 2-hour trek from the hotel on the *Challa Huasi* (House of the Viewer) trail.

This evening we will venture out of the hotel on a short shuttle to a nearby restaurant for tonight's included dinner.

Hotel: Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Daily Options: 5.5 or 7 miles on descending and rolling dirt roads and paths.

DAY 5: Visit the Qotowincho Market / Maras Salt Mines

After breakfast, we shuttle to the largest town in the valley – Urubamba. Here we will have the opportunity to visit the very authentic Qotowincho market where you will see sellers from surrounding regions offering their products. This particular Wednesday market is vital for the local people and the varieties of potatoes, corn and fruit that you will find are amazing. After our visit to the market, we venture

into the Andean countryside to walk scenic footpaths downhill through the Maras salt mines fed by underground saltwater springs to Maras village. The terraced Inca saltpans of Salineras are still mined for salt using methods unchanged over centuries. We will be rewarded with a sumptuous picnic lunch overlooking Huaypo Lagoon at the end of our walk before we shuttle back to the hotel.

We have the remainder of the afternoon to relax in our comfortable accommodations or join our leaders for an optional walk around Yucay before enjoying dinner on your own in the hotel this evening.

Hotel: Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
Daily Options: 2.4 or 6.4 miles on descending dirt roads and paths.

DAY 6: The Inca Trail / Machu Picchu

We shuttle early this morning to Ollantaytambo to catch the narrow-gauge Vistadome train. Our train ride is down 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 ft) to start one of the world's most iconic walks. The walk offers spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and cloud forests, 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 that a minibus support van will not be available on the Inca Trail. You will be required to walk the entire 8 miles. A picnic break is well deserved.

All your effort is rewarded when you arrive at Intipunku, the Sun Gate (8,954 ft) and the most spectacular approach to Machu Picchu from above. This was the original entrance to the “Lost City.” Give yourself some time to take it all in, perch 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 Trip Leaders and independently.

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 leader 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 enjoy lunch at your leisure today.

This evening we will regroup and enjoy dinner at our lovely resort's restaurant.

Hotel: Inkaterra Machu Picchu
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Daily Options: Inca Trail guests - 8 miles on flat to rolling dirt roads and paved paths. Rail guests – optional 2 miles up and down stone stairs and dirt paths.

DAY 7: Machu Picchu

Enjoy a leisurely morning at the hotel. Options include birding on the hotel grounds, visiting the spa and pool, or exploring the city of Aguas Calientes. This afternoon we shuttle to the Machu Picchu. Here our Trip Leaders will be offering a guided walk around Machu Picchu, as well as in the surrounding area, including a roundtrip walk to Inca Bridge (1.8 miles).

You may wish to continue your exploration of the ruins on your own. Return to the hotel whenever you like by shuttle bus. Enjoy recounting the day over an included dinner tonight.

Please note: The Peruvian Government regulates Machu Picchu's historical site and the visit restrictions periodically change. Visit times may vary depending upon government restrictions for the day of your visit. Your leaders will confirm your exact visit times to Machu Picchu once you are in Peru.

Hotel: Inkaterra Machu Picchu
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: Only Machu Picchu: 2 miles up and down stone stairs and dirt paths. Additional Inca Bridge: 2 miles up and down stone stairs and dirt paths. \

DAY 8: Cusco

Enjoy a relaxing breakfast. Several walking trails begin right at the hotel, or you may wish to visit the tea plantation located within the hotel grounds. Later this morning, we return to Cusco through the Sacred Valley by train. Upon our arrival in Cusco this afternoon, we will put on our walking shoes and discover this ancient Incan capital on a walking tour. Evidence of both the original Inca city and the Spanish colonial city established in 1533 will be pointed out as we explore Koricancha ("Temple of the Sun"), Cusco Cathedral, and the San Blas district. In Incan times, San Blas was a settlement for ancient craftsmen who saw *yachay*—Quechua for "teach and learn"—as their special calling. Today the area is

famous for the unusual Baroque-style pulpit in the San Blas Church and for its artists and artisans.

Cusco and its many dining options are at your doorstep tonight.

Hotel: Casa Andina PC Cusco
Meals: Breakfast
Daily Options: 1.5 miles on descending cobblestone and paved pedestrian paths.

DAY 9: Tambomachay / Puka Pukara / Sacsayhuaman

After breakfast, we transfer six miles (25 minutes) north of Cusco to begin our day. We'll trace our way on foot back in the direction of the city, visiting the most important Incan monuments. This is a spectacular area for our walks, with Andean mountain views, colorful villages and impressive remains of the Inca Empire.

First we visit Tambomachay (the highest elevation of the day at 12,500 ft), which may have fulfilled an important religious function linked to water and the regeneration of the land. Walking down a gentle slope, we'll later stop to explore the complexes of Puka Pukara, Qenqo, and Laqo. Our Trip Leaders can explain more about historic religious ceremonies held here.

Next, we visit Sacsayhuaman. Though only a fraction of its original size and scope, this fortress will astound and baffle you. We take a moment to look back over the orange tile rooftops of Cusco before our short transfer into the city.

Enjoy lunch at your leisure and spend time to soak in some last bits of Andean culture in the colorful plazas of Cusco. Tonight, we're out on the town for a festive farewell dinner.

Hotel: Casa Andina PC Cusco
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: 4.5 miles on flat to gradually descending dirt roads and paths.

DAY 10: VBT Walking Vacation ends

There is a mid-morning transfer to the Cusco Airport for the flight to Lima. Upon arrival, check-in to comfortable rooms for day use. Tonight, dinner is at your leisure before returning to the airport for flights departing in the late evening.

Please note: VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Hotel: Wyndham Costa del Sol Lima
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner (Lunch and dinner are included for Post-trip Extension guests only)

DAY 11: Air Package Guests arrive home

Flights arrive home this morning, depending on connections.

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Casa Andina PC Cusco (Days: 2,8,9)

A beautifully renovated 18th-century manor house, just three blocks from Cuscos Plaza de Armas, Casa Andina Private Collection Cusco is replete with authentic colonial character. It offers the intimacy of a boutique hotel but the comforts and services of a much larger property. The hotel is distinguished by its three interior patios with wooden balconies. The principal patio, featuring a gurgling stone fountain, is one of Cuscos emblematic colonial courtyards. In the hotels cozy lounge and reading room is a massive stone fireplace thats always crackling, while the romantic restaurant invites guests to dine by candlelight in one of four connected salons richly decorated with 18th-century Cusco School paintings. Several rooms in the original structure of the hotel feature surviving colonial frescoes unearthed during renovation.

Inkaterra Machu Picchu (Days: 6,7)

Inkaterra Machu Picchu Hotel is a pueblo of luxurious whitewashed bungalows nestled into terraced hills. The train station is only steps away, but the ambiance at the Inkaterra Machu Picchu Hotel seems to exist in a world apart. It is an intimate 85-cottage luxury hotel designed in the manner of a sprawling Andean-style village on 12 secluded acres of exquisite beauty. Guests follow stone pathways to their rooms, located in comfortable one- or two-story whitewashed casitas. Spa services use natural essences, and a first-class restaurant offers grand views of the Vilcanota River.

Wyndham Costa del Sol Lima (Day: 10)

The Wyndham Costa del Sol Limaat Jorge Chavez Lima-Callao International Airport is a beautiful 130-room hotel. Each guestroom features a 26-inch LCD TV with cable, complimentary wireless Internet access, marble bathroom with tub and shower, individual climate control, minibar, in-room safe, and hairdryer.

Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba (Days: 3,4,5)

Serenity and relaxation are hallmarks of the Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba, a contemporary, hacienda-style hotel on a 100-acre property surrounded by a dramatic mountain range. Set in the Sacred Valley, between Cusco and Machu Picchu, it proudly showcases the regions blend of Spanish and Andean influences in its colonial furnishings, Inca mask accents, and handcrafted woodwork. Harvest produce from the haciendas 10-acre organic plantation, where crops are cultivated as they have been for centuries. Gaze in awe at stunning views from nearly every window. And relax on the terrace or in the privacy of your comfortable room.