



GEODYSSEY

PERU

Peru travel guide

Where to stay

'Classic Peru' travel modules

Tailor-made holidays

Active and walking holidays

Family holidays

Wildlife and birdwatching holidays



PERU

Peru guide

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'Classic Peru' travel modules

A clever way to see Peru. Neatly designed modules that link together to build your ideal trip. Excellent value. 'Cusco, Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley' is the core module. Add others as you wish.

There are different styles of hotel to choose from, and different ways to travel. All the top excursions are already included, and there are often several extra options. For more visit:

www.geodyssey.co.uk/classic-peru

Tailor-made Peru

Our knowledgeable Peru specialists can work with you to design a trip to suit you best. The right itinerary, the right balance of activity and rest, the hotels you'll most enjoy. These suggestions illustrate a few of the options, out of many. Contact us to create your perfect trip.

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Active Peru

Peru is a top destination for adventure, with the Inca Trail its signature trek. Here are 3 options for the classic Inca Trail, and 2 'alternative Inca Trails'.

You can also add leg-stretching day walks to a wider trip.

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Peru for families

There's lots to see and lots to do in Peru, with mind-expanding, confidence-building experiences that are just right for active families.

Direct flights, wonderful places to stay and brilliant organisation make it all possible.

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Natural Peru

'Peru Nature Explorer' suits anyone with a general enthusiasm for wildlife. 'Peru Birds and Culture' brings together great birding with Peru's highlights.

Manu Experience is an intense expedition to this amazing area, while 'The Birds of Tambopata' is a short example of our trips for dedicated birdwatching.

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Beyond Peru

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Welcome

This brochure for Peru is part of our series of in-depth travel brochures for our destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean. In each our aim is always to provide you with a wide choice of travel and holiday ideas that bring out the best in each destination, so that you can pick the holiday that suits you the best.

In each destination we focus on the travel experiences that make that country special. We highlight the distinctive places to visit, ways to gain insights into local cultures and communities, the best opportunities to see wildlife, as well as great beaches and characterful hotels. There are different ways to travel too, from joining a small group with a knowledgeable local guide, taking local tours, or having the luxury of a private guide or driver all to yourself.



Also included in the mix we provide for our clients are special options like expedition cruises, adventurous walking, trekking, biking, rafting and watersports, and specialist wildlife and bird watching at all levels.

We bring all this together for you in a well-organised trip that makes the best use of your precious time and the budget you decide on. Our aim is to provide the best choices, excellent service, and outstanding value.



Geodyssey is not an ordinary travel company. We started life in 1993 and soon developed our own dedicated and personal style that many people seem to like. We have grown, but we are still a small team and we really care about each and every customer. Travel is our passion, and we want to share that with you. Each of us has travelled widely in our destinations (and beyond), so if one of us happens not to have been to a particular place we offer, the chances are that someone else on our team will have been there, probably several times.

When you are deciding where to go for your next holiday you'll want to turn to someone who really knows the area you'd like to visit.

Peru is a wonderful country. We hope you will choose us to help you explore it.

Gillian Howe
Managing Director



Contact us

Geodyssey Ltd
116 Tollington Park
London N4 3RB England
www.geodyssey.co.uk
T: 020 7281 7788
F: 020 7281 7878
E: enquiries@geodyssey.co.uk



Cusco

The heartland of the Incas. Cusco was their centre of power, the Sacred Valley their earthly heaven, and Machu Picchu their last retreat.



Cusco's old city has kept a very special atmosphere. You walk down narrow alleys, beside walls of Incan stonework, and up stone steps trodden by generations. You pass a church from the earliest Spanish times, or join the modern citizens' *paseo* along a splendid arcade of shops from a century ago. Quechua ladies in billowing skirts chatter on street corners, traders barrow endless varieties of maize and potatoes over the cobbles to markets.

Because you have a travel brochure in your hands you might expect to read that Cusco is a 'kaleidoscope' and a 'feast for the senses'. For once, both would be completely accurate things to say.

You might also expect to see that Cusco is 'steeped in history'. That, however, would be a considerable understatement. Cusco is riven through and through with history. The glories of the past ooze out of every pore of the city's ancient centre. Every stone calls you to imagine an earlier time, a Cusco of the Incas, of the conquistadors...

On a busy schedule you may have only a few nights in Cusco, but if you can spare more, you should. You will be amply repaid in memories.

CUSCO AND THE INCAS

With Cusco as their capital, the Incas took just a century or so to assemble one of the largest empires in world history.

Cusco was an essential part of Incan strategy for world domination. The word 'cusco' means 'navel' in Quechua, and Cusco needed to be truly the centre of the world, not only to the Incas themselves, but to the elite of subject lands who would be 'invited' to relocate here.

Cusco had to be the most desirable place to

live: impressive, comfortable, well-supplied and orderly. Cusco needed to demonstrate that the ruling Inca was the centre of power, especially religious power.

Sun worship was widespread among the many peoples of the Andes and the coast. The Incas placed their ruling Inca as the human manifestation of the Sun. Awe-inspiring temples to the sun were built around the city, glorifying the Inca as much as they hailed the sun.

The most important of these temples is **Qoricancha**, the 'golden courtyard'. A temple of gold-plated floors and walls stood beside a garden where golden llamas tended by golden shepherds stood beneath golden trees.

At summer solstice the Inca sat in a special niche in the temple that caught the sun's rays. From this point ley lines radiated to hundreds of sacred sites around the valley.

Every Inca married his wife here, and every Inca's mummified body was held here. The most important idols from every conquered province were brought here and held hostage.

Qoricancha had been a sun temple for the Wari culture from Lake Titicaca (see p10): adopted by the Incas it became the most potent site in the design of their capital. The city's new layout took the outline of a jaguar: the Incan symbol of the earth. The tail lay between two rivers diverted for the purpose. At its head was the great temple of Sacsayhuaman, and at the jaguar's loins was Qoricancha itself.

When the Spanish conquistadors captured the Inca Atahualpa and ransomed his life for three roomfuls of gold and silver, much of his ransom came from Qoricancha. Laid low and stripped of its glitter, the Spanish then overlaid the Inca's



The Rise of the Incas

Incan myths tell of their arrival in the Cusco valley at the dawn of their civilisation. One describes the genesis of Man in Lake Titicaca, and a heavenly challenge to a chosen one to find a home for his people. He makes a long and eventful journey that ends with a golden shaft that sinks into the ground and a flying man that turns to stone to mark the site that becomes Cusco.

In another, an unsoldierly king backs away when threatened by neighbours. All seems lost until the sun god reveals to his brave son that victory will be his. Stones in a field rise up as his warriors, the enemy is routed, and the son is awarded his father's kingdom. At this point, history takes over, and the mythical son becomes the great Inca Pachacuti whose name means 'transformer of the world'. The scene is set for the Inca's dramatic expansion.

Chroniclers recount that the Incas' transformation from local tribe to rulers of a vast empire took place under just three Incan kings: Pachacuti Inca, Topa Inca, and Wayna Qhapaq.

The first venture beyond the valley is attributed to Pachacuti's victory over the neighbouring Chankas in about 1438. Whether this was a ritual contest or a violent battle, it was certainly followed through with masterful politics based on a rolling system of governance, known as *mitmaq*. Cooperative leaders were invited to live back in Cusco, uncooperative ones were executed. Amenable subjects were allowed to stay where they were, dissenters were sent to establish new colonies further afield. And so on ...

To avoid costly military force the empire relied on the myth of Incan divinity and the glorification of Cusco—the 'soft' power of religion and favour.



grandest temple with their unlovely Convento de Santo Domingo. But the magnificence of Qoricancha still shines out from its impressive location and from supreme examples of Incan stonework in the temple's remaining chambers and lower walls. It is an essential for any visit to the city.

The great sun temple of **Saqsawaman**, at the jaguar's head, is an absolute must too. Massive in scale, Saqsawaman was also an enormous storage depot, a ritual parade ground, a fortress if needed, and a reservoir. It is a formidable presence overlooking the city—a reminder of who is in charge.

Saqsawaman's key feature is a triple wall 400m long, punctuated by zigzagging angles, perhaps representing the jaguar's teeth. The lower wall is constructed in the highest quality perfectly-fitted stonework reserved for the most important Incan buildings.

Of the many holy sites above Cusco, one of the best is **Qenko**: a prime example of the 'rock cult' of the Incas and their predecessors. An amphitheatre set into the hill looks on to a great stone hewn into a temple, with divining channels where priests foretold the future from the flow of llama blood.

Life in Incan Cusco wasn't all hard work and ritual. At **Tambo Machay** there are

impressive Incan baths, constructed in fine stonework and fed by a spring that cascades down terraces to create a cold shower just high enough for an Inca to stand under.

MODERN CUSCO

Today, Cusco has spread far beyond the limits of the old Incan city. There's an airport on the outskirts, busy commercial streets, housing developments and shanty areas.

Cusco's main square, called the **Plaza de Armas** as always in Peru, stands on the site of the Inca's central plaza. Here newly-weds come from around the city to stand on the steps of the Cathedral for their photographs.

Standing on the foundations of an Inca's palace, Cusco's great **Cathedral** is both a grand statement of the power of Spain and the church, and an assimilation of local beliefs. The massive main door, carved with a jaguar's head, opens to a vast baroque interior. A wide nave leads to an altar made with 400kg of silver. Of the many paintings only a few are European (including a Van Dyck), others are by local artists of the Cusco school, including a grand depiction of the Last Supper with apostles tucking into roast guinea pig and *chicha* beer.

There are museums, churches,

archaeological sites great and small, shops, markets, terrific walks, a great variety of hotels (some stupendous) and lots of places to eat (many excellent). You'll be busy.



Life at 11000 feet

Cusco's altitude of 3400m means that its air has two thirds of the oxygen of air at sea level. The body responds by breathing faster and by increasing the pulse rate.

If you arrive in Cusco straight from low altitudes (such as Lima or the Amazon) you should take it easy for 2-3 days, drink plenty of water, eat light meals and allow yourself only a little alcohol. Local suggestions include coca tea in moderation.

The most common effects are headache, a certain queasiness, and poor sleep.

Young and old, fit and not-so-fit have much the same chance of these symptoms. Neither does it seem to matter if you have suffered or not at similar altitudes in the past.

The chance of being affected is reduced by ascending gradually, eg by spending a few nights in the Sacred Valley (2800m) and Machu Picchu (2400m).

Lake Titicaca (3800m) is higher than Cusco, but travellers usually arrive there either from Cusco, or from Arequipa (2350m) and Colca (3500m), and are suitably acclimatised already.

Some luxury hotels in Cusco pump extra oxygen into your room at night, which helps a good night's sleep. Others may have oxygen cylinders available. Small cans of oxygen are available in Cusco for a few pounds and can work wonders.

Don't worry yourself over-much. Millions of people visit Cusco every year and the number of serious problems is very small. But if you have a heart, lung or other debilitating condition then you must check with your doctor before booking any trip that involves visiting high altitudes.



Machu Picchu

The Incan citadel of Machu Picchu lay undiscovered in its mountain fastness for 300 years.

Sacred rocks, temples of the sun, royal palaces, and everything needed to sustain them, are collected together on a high saddle ridge that leads to a dramatic peak. Nothing is visible from the valley floor far below, where the Urubamba river tumbles onwards to the Amazon. This is extremely rugged terrain, with peak after peak towering over steep canyons in every direction. Known as the Vilcabamba, this is the area into which the last Inca retreated with his people, away from Spanish conquistadors.

To see Machu Picchu for yourself is certainly one of the most striking travel experiences in the world. Although familiar from countless photographs, you still find yourself catching a breath when you first set eyes on the citadel. Here and there as you walk among them its stones whisper directly to you from the world they knew that is still veiled from us.

And what a stunning setting! Huayna Picchu, the striking peak at the far end of the ridge, is extraordinary enough, but all around are beautiful views of mountain peaks, divided by deep canyons. Mists form and disperse, the sun's rays shift and light up new hillsides—some with sacred sites aligned to Machu Picchu, as peaks cascade into the far distance. We are brought together here like Incas, hidden away in a world that barely acknowledges man.

In its heyday the only practical access to Machu Picchu was a single path that starts close to Ollantaytambo: the Inca Trail. Now the world's most famous trek, you'll find the details on page 38.

A railway track (p47) winds beside the Urubamba river to bring other visitors to the village below the citadel. From the village you catch a bus that snakes up the side of the mountain to drop you a short respectful distance outside the ruins.



The Sacred Valley



An hour through the mountains from Cusco brings you to a steep-sided valley with a wide floor that follows the course of the Rio Urubamba. This magnificent mountain river (also known as the Willkanuta or Vilcanota in these upper reaches) arrives into the valley close to the village of Pisac, tumbles past the 30km of fertile pastures and fields it has created, then flows out of the end of the valley at Ollantaytambo. From that point it tumbles through narrow gorges, passes beneath Machu Picchu, and eventually finds its way out of the Andes to join the Amazon.

For the Incas, the Sacred Valley was heaven on earth. You can easily see why.

You could stay a long while in the Sacred Valley. Taking long country walks along the valley, or striding out on the highlands above. Shopping in village markets. Exploring the ruins of Incan temples and palaces. Eating hearty food. Enjoying the clean air. It's the kind of place you might feel you could settle down in sometime.

There's lots to see. Perched on a ridge above the market town of Pisac at the head of the valley, is an Incan citadel that once controlled a strategic route from Cusco to the Amazon. The views from here are astounding, looking down on the patchwork of fields and intricate terracing of the valley itself, as all around steeping peaks cascade into the distance.

Parts of the ruins at Pisac are extremely fine, with a Temple of the Sun that is reckoned to be

the equal of anything at Machu Picchu. More ruins, largely unexcavated, lie above, along with ancient burial sites hidden in rocky cliffs.

The other end of the Sacred Valley was guarded by the magnificent temple-fortress above **Ollantaytambo**. The ruins include a temple of the sun in astoundingly precise Incan stonework, with 6 pink monoliths to catch the rising sun.

Ollantaytambo is itself an Incan town, laid out in the pattern of a maize cob, each grain an individual courtyard. Agricultural terracing around the village makes the shape of a mother llama with her calf.

A further example of Incan agricultural technology lies on the highlands above the Sacred Valley: the curious 'laboratory' at Moray. Here in Incan times a deep circular depression was created, ringed with terraces. Archaeologists interpret this as a place to experiment with crops in different conditions.

You'll also want to see the dramatic salt-pans below Maras, and perhaps explore the town of Urubamba, which makes a good place to stay if you are spending time in the valley.

There's a train line that runs from Cusco, through the Sacred Valley to halt at Ollantaytambo and again a few kilometres on. Alight here for the start of the Inca Trail, or stay aboard for the exciting ride through deep gorges beside the Rio Urubamba, to emerge below Machu Picchu itself.



PHOTOS: Left: Ollantaytambo temple-fortress; Right: Urubamba market; Moray terraces; Maras salt pans. (John Thirle, Geodyssey)

Where to stay in Cusco and the Sacred Valley

There are plenty of good quality hotels in Cusco, some mid-range but with lots of character, upmarket boutique style properties, and a handful of very high-end options. The Sacred Valley has a smaller choice, but many are in idyllic locations, spaciouly laid out with lovely gardens or country views. Hotels in Machu Picchu Pueblo tend to be squeezed into much smaller plots—with a couple of notable exceptions. See also the **Expedition Lodges** on page 37.



Belmond hotels TOP RANGE

4 top-range hotels in the Belmond grouping.

Belmond Palacio Nazarenas **Cusco** One of Cusco's most exclusive hotels, set in a former palace. 55 oxygen-enriched suites, fine restaurant, spa, outdoor swimming pool.

Belmond Monasterio **Cusco** Converted monastery from 1592, with fine chapel and church art. 126 rooms, 2 restaurants. Great location. Busy.

Belmond Rio Sagrado **Sacred Valley** 21 rooms with private terraces on lawns sloping to Rio Urubamba. Spa, pool, restaurant. Golf cart assistance.

Belmond Sanctuary Lodge **Machu Picchu** Just a few steps from the entrance to the citadel. Amazing mountain views. 32 garden rooms.



Inkaterra hotels UPPER/TOP RANGE

Hugely well-respected for its tasteful, authentic, environmentally aware style, the Inkaterra collection offers 3 upper/top range hotels in this area.

Inkaterra La Casona **Cusco** is one of our favourite boutique hotels in the city ideally situated in the historic quarter with 11 gorgeously decorated luxury suites.

Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba **Sacred Valley** 12 rooms and 24 casitas in beautiful countryside. Stylish Andean cooking from own organic farm.

Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo **Machu Picchu** The most upmarket in the village. 85 spacious comfortable rooms in cottages set in landscaped gardens above the river. Good restaurant, extensive nature trails.



Casa Andina Classic Collection hotels MID-RANGE

Cusco

The leading 'Casa Andina' hotel group has four mid-sized hotels in Cusco in its tourist class 'Classic Collection' properties.

Each is in a renovated historic building, all are in the historic centre: Koricancha, Plaza, San Blas and Catedral. They are the same price and each has about 40 rooms, with different layouts etc reflecting the original buildings.

All have a similar level of comfort and amenities: private bathroom, hair dryer, safe, TV, radiator, and wifi.



Sol y Luna TOP RANGE

Sacred Valley

Situated in the heart of the Sacred Valley of the Incas, 5 minutes outside the village of Urubamba, Sol y Luna, a Relais & Chateaux property, comprises 28 attractive adobe bungalows set amid a flower-filled garden.

All bungalows have king-sized beds, private bathroom with hot water, telephone, private verandah, safe and hair dryer. There is also an outdoor heated swimming pool and Jacuzzi, riding stables, barbecue area, fitness centre gym and spa.



Hotel Picoagua MID/UPPER RANGE

Cusco

The Costa del Sol Ramada Hotel Picoagua is housed in a restored colonial-era mansion, dating back to the 17th century. The hotel has 90 rooms in total, divided between a colonial wing and a more modern building.

All rooms have wifi access, cable TV, direct dial telephones, safety deposit box and a mini bar.



Pakaritampu MID-RANGE

Sacred Valley

Great location just 5 minutes walk from the train station. This characterful mid-range small hotel has 37 en suite rooms and 1 suite spread across blocks spread across the hotel grounds. It has a lovely garden filled with native plants and flowers which attract hummingbirds. There are llamas grazing on the lawn and a telescope for star gazing at night. There is a bar and restaurant serving Peruvian and international cuisine.



El MaPi MID/UPPER RANGE

Machu Picchu

Hip-functional, contemporary style hotel located in the centre of Machu Picchu Pueblo, in the Inkaterra group. The 48 guest rooms are small but well appointed each with blackout curtains, 100% cotton sheets, down duvets, hypoallergenic pillows, cotton bath robes, natural herbal amenities, 32" flat screen TVs and tight-focus reading lights. There is a cafeteria offering organic salads, fresh sandwiches, homemade soups and pastries which is open until 11pm and a bar with free wifi. Oxygen is available upon request.



San Agustin El Dorado MID RANGE

Cusco (with sister hotel in the Sacred Valley)

In an ideal position, close by to the main attractions in historical Quito, San Agustin El Dorado makes a nice base during your time in the city. All 72 rooms have TV, direct dial telephones, safety deposit boxes and hair dryers. There is wifi available from certain locations within the hotel. Other facilities include a restaurant and lobby bar.

Its sister hotel, Monasterio de la Recoleta, in the Sacred Valley is a beautiful renovated 17th century monastery with lovely gardens and 32 spacious rooms.

Worth a mention

Aranwa Cusco Boutique **Cusco** UPPER RANGE

Restored 16 century mansion with many antiques on display. 43 rooms with many facilities including intelligent oxygen system. Bar & restaurant.

Casa Cartagena **Cusco** TOP RANGE

All-suite hotel in restored colonial mansion, high-spec throughout with separate bathtub and tatami shower, oxygen enrichment system, etc.

Sumaq **Machu Picchu** TOP RANGE

Beside the river on the edge of the village. Generously sized comfortable rooms. Pride themselves on their cuisine.

Palacio Manco Capac **Cusco** UPPER RANGE

Midway between Sacsayhuaman and Cusco's main plaza with authentic Inca wall and garden.

Quinta **Cusco** MID/UPPER RANGE

Charming small hotel in the arty San Blas quarter, uphill from main plaza.

El Mercado Tunqui **Cusco** UPPER RANGE

Attractive city lodge by Mountain Lodges of Peru (p37) fashioned from a former market. Close to centre. Warm welcome, good service, arty decor.

Tierra Viva Saphi **Cusco** MID-RANGE

Colonial house made into attractive small hotel. 10min walk from centre.

Lake Titicaca



Lake Titicaca in the ancient world

Lake Titicaca was the home of the Tiwanaku for a thousand years before the Incas expanded from Cusco.

Archaeologists have found a large ceremonial site of temples, sunken courts and stone gateways, surrounded by many adobe houses.

The Incas identified strongly with the Tiwanaku. Lake Titicaca is the centre of their origin myth, classic Incan architecture seems to have derived from Tiwanaku examples, and Incan expansion began with the annexation of Lake Titicaca and its surrounding lands. The immense herds of alpacas and llamas around the lake became one of the great sources of the Incas' wealth.

Sun worship was at the heart of Tiwanaku culture. For them the Sun was born out

of an island on the lake—the Island of the Sun—and the moon from its sister island.

The Incas adopted this belief and built their ceremonial centre on the Island of the Sun on top of Tiwanaku temples around a sacred rock that marks the exact birthplace of the Sun.

From a natural harbour pilgrims climbed an imposing stairway, pausing to wash at a spring-fed bath. To reach the sacred rock they passed gates where their worthiness was challenged. The final gate was part of the Inca's palace, acknowledging his power.

At last they stood before the sacred rock, covered in gold, in a sacred plaza. A rivulet ran across the plaza from an altar in front of the rock, into which priests poured *chicha* beer.



Set in the high plains of the altiplano, with a backdrop of distant mountains, the sapphire blue waters of Lake Titicaca are dotted with beautiful islands. Calm water, clear air and the bright sun of the Andean summer bring long, long views, and a great sense of peace and closeness to the sky.

Lake Titicaca is famously the highest navigable lake in the world, at 3800m. It straddles Peru's border with Bolivia on the high plains of the altiplano.

Andean people call it 'The Sacred Lake' and to this day its shores and islands are home to Aymara, Quechua and Uros communities—a meeting point of peoples and cultures.

FLOATING ISLANDS

The Uros community live on extensive floating islands woven from reeds harvested by the lake shore, topped up with fresh reeds every week or two to stay afloat. Their islands move around in the bay of Puno, especially in the winds of winter.

The Uros build reed houses on their reed islands, schools made of reeds, reed moorings for their reed boats, and even fishponds lined with reeds.

They consider themselves the oldest people on earth. They offer an endearing welcome to visiting newcomers at some of the 40 or so islands in their curious world of reeds: an unforgettable experience.





PHOTO: Uros Islands (John Thirtle, Geodyssey)

TAQUILE ISLAND

Taquile is home to a self-contained Quechua-speaking community, world-renowned for their dramatic finely-woven textiles and traditional dress (see panel).

Taquile is 2½ hours by boat from Puno. It's a small island of just 6 sq km rising steeply above the lake. The community is very keen for visitors to come, buy textiles, and ideally stay a few nights in designated homes. The village is close to the top of the island with panoramic views of the lake.

SUASI ISLAND

Close to the northern shore, Suasi is beautifully set with wide views over Lake Titicaca, and has the air of a quiet Mediterranean island. There's a well-tended upscale lodge for visitors, with delightful gardens.

PUNO

Most travellers arrive at the lake at Puno, a busy town at the head of a wide bay. It's a lively cosmopolitan place, good for an evening stroll although not a great deal more.

Bolivia

A great way to see the Bolivian part of Lake Titicaca from Puno is to follow the shore by road to the small town of Copacabana, and then travel by boat to the Island of the Sun and then perhaps onwards to La Paz.

THE ISLAND OF THE SUN

'The Island of the Sun', on the Bolivian side, is the most notable island on Lake Titicaca: the lake even owes its own name to the island's early name of Titi Khar'ka ('puma rock').

It's a very evocative place. You can see the sacred stone marking the spot where the sun was born, impressive ruins of the palace of Tupac Inca Yupanqui, and many reminders of the pilgrimage route trodden by the Incas and their predecessors (see panel opposite).

COPACABANA

Copacabana on the lake's southern shore, also in Bolivia, is a place of Catholic pilgrimage. The town's beautiful cathedral is a white Moorish-style building that shines in the bright sun of the lake air. Inside is the shrine to the Virgin of Copacabana—a Black Madonna.

At the weekend, the plaza in front of the Cathedral becomes a jostling riot of colour as vehicles of all shapes and sizes, decorated with ribbons and flower garlands, all come to worship her and be blessed.

Nearby Challapampa is a traditional village that welcomes visitors. It lies close to the labyrinthine temple of Chinkana, an archaeological site to which village fishermen will ferry you.



Textiles of Taquile Island

Taquile Island has been awarded a UNESCO Heritage status. The women spin yarn and weave on backstrap looms. The men fish, cultivate crops on terraced plots, weave on treadle looms and are expert knitters. Against the strong sun, women wear headshawls decorated with edgings and tassels. They wear plain shirts or sweaters and layer upon layer of skirts—12 is the ideal number. Men wear knitted hats with ear flaps appropriate to their status, short waistcoats over white flannel shirts, and black trousers. Everyone wears intricate belts colourfully woven by the women.



Sillustani Burial Towers

A few miles outside Puno is a spell-binding site of round burial towers, called *chullpas*, some 40ft high, built for the elite of Colla people of the Aymara culture. *Chullpas* are found in widely on the altiplano, but these are among the best preserved, some with carved decoration, and dressed with fine stone blocks.

Colca Canyon

Stunning landscapes, stone terraces worked by hand, white churches in country villages, Incan ruins, and condors flying in a spectacular canyon.

Twice as deep as the Grand Canyon, the Colca Canyon begins gently. A wide valley opens out below the mountain town of Chivay, decked with layer on layer of terracing dating back to pre-Incan times and still actively used. A mountain river speeds along as the valley widens and slowly deepens, with farms and hamlets either side, some with pretty churches glistening white.

The Colca valley has similarities with the Sacred Valley, and was almost as important to the Incas. It has impressive views, there is plenty to see and do, the countryside is excellent for walkers, and there are some lovely places to stay.

You'll meet old men on donkeys, beaming ladies leading a pig on a rope, cherry-cheeked children, small boys herding goats, and wiry farmers and their sturdy wives heads down as they work fields of mostly potatoes or corn bounded by dry stone terracing.

Onwards, the valley bottom sinks deeper and deeper and descends into a sheer-sided

canyon formed along a massive geological fault. Soon the river is lost to view and the road rises to follow the canyon's edge.

There's a look-out point on a bluff overlooking the canyon. In the early morning air you can watch condors riding thermals below, then swooping upwards to glide effortlessly at your eye level, turning down and around, before soaring along the canyon into the distance on their daily hunt. Their commute may cover hundreds of miles—perhaps even to the Pacific coast.

Chivay, at 3600m above sea level, is a pleasant town, with locals in traditional dress, busy stocking up with fresh produce from the stalls in its lively market. A little way out of the town there are thermal pools at La Calera, popular with locals and visitors, with steaming swimming pools alfresco against the backdrop of a rocky gorge.

An Incan fort stands at Uyo Uyo, looking over tiers of terraces descending to the river below.



Cruz del Condor

As the sun rises and warms the canyon air, condors leave their roosts deep in the Colca Canyon and soar slowly past a viewpoint at the canyon's edge.

PHOTO: Andean condor, Cruz del Condor (John Thirle, Geodyssey)



A Valley of Two Hats

Two traditional communities live in the Colca region today: the Aymara speaking 'Collaguas' and the Quechua speaking 'Cabanas'.

In the past it was the shape of the ladies' heads which distinguished the two neighbours, because both would deform their daughters' craniums. If you were a Collagua, your mum and dad would elongate yours for you, while Cabana girls would have theirs flattened.

Things have improved. Today the communities leave their childrens' skulls alone and instead signal their identity by hat. The Collaguas favour the nobility and elegance of a taller hat. This is a ludicrous anathema to their neighbours the Cabanas, who know that a rounder flatter style is much the best female attire. Both agree that lavish decoration is a must. Splitting headaches are a thing of the past.

Arequipa

Eternal spring sunshine that glistens on fine white stone buildings makes Arequipa the 'White City'

Guarded by three majestic snow-capped volcanoes (Misti 5822m, Chachani 6075m and Picchu Picchu 5664m), Arequipa is Peru's second city after Lima, although just one-tenth its size, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Arequipa's historical centre is a beautiful ensemble of baroque and mestizo colonial buildings, often with intricate carvings in their stone walls: the white 'sillar' stone of the region being just soft enough to allow such elaborate detail. Fine mansions, quiet convents, narrow streets and grand plazas fronted by fine churches, give Arequipa an air of faded grandeur—sometimes lively, sometimes wistful and romantic. No surprise that Arequipa is a town of writers and poets.

Fine mansions testify to the wealth of times when to wool from the flocks of llamas, alpacas and vicunas on mountainsides above the city was exported to the world.

Arequipa has a very grand main square. Shaded by palm trees, cooled by fountains, provided with paths to stroll on and benches to chat on, the Plaza de Armas is a theatre for *Arequipeño*-watching. The majestic Basilica Cathedral dominates the whole of one side of the plaza, with Misti volcano looming behind it.

Time spent in Arequipa is rewarded by the many sights there are to see, excellent Andean cooking, and by the chance to experience modern everyday life, Peruvian style.



In and around Arequipa

Santa Catalina Monastery

The Monasterio de Santa Catalina is a vast convent located in the very centre of Arequipa, guarded by high walls.

Founded by a wealthy widow in 1579 the convent followed a strict protocol. Only the second eldest daughter of wealthy Spanish families were accepted, accompanied by a 'dowry' of about £10,000 a year in today's money. At its peak 450 nuns lived out their days here.

Today the convent is a wonder to visit—a small village in its own right, with pretty courtyards and narrow cobbled streets with colourful adobe

walls and hanging baskets filled to the brim with geraniums. About 20 nuns still live on the premises. Suitable candidates invited to apply.

Juanita the Ice Princess

Discovered on the icy summit of Mount Ampato in 1995, Juanita is a 13 year old Incan girl, taken up the mountain and sacrificed to the gods in the 1450s, her body preserved by the intense cold.

Juanita's story and those of other Incan mountain-top child sacrifices can be followed at the Andean Sanctuaries Museum in the centre of Arequipa. The guided tour concludes with Juanita

herself, or at times another ice maiden, on view in a glass wall freezer.

Maria Vargas Llosa

The birthplace in Arequipa of the great Peruvian novelist ('Conversation in the Cathedral', 'The Feast of the Goat', 'Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter'), Nobel Laureate and presidential candidate, is now a cleverly delivered contemporary museum.

Holograms of the great man talk about his life and work, and introduce some of his fictional characters.



PHOTOS: Santa Catalina courtyard, Arequipa procession, Misti volcano from Arequipa. Above: Yanahuara archway with Picchu Picchu. Below: Alpaca on the Altiplano (all: John Thirle, Geodyssey)

Crossing the altiplano

The road from Arequipa climbs steadily into the Andes, reaching 4900m at its highest pass, and then levels out onto the high plains that stretch across to Lake Titicaca and onwards nearly to Cusco.

This 'altiplano' is a special landscape, with enormous skies and long views to distant mountain peaks. Few things grow, but grasses flourish and feed herds of vicunas and guanacos, the wild ancestors of alpacas and llamas.

Marshes and lakes attract flamingos, ibis and geese, but it is the emptiness of these vast plains that is so striking.





PHOTOS: Plaza de Armas, Lima

Lima is a sprawling, chaotic, contrasting Latin American capital that's finding its place in the world. It's becoming a success story, escaping a long, hard, sometimes uneasy past.

Baroque churches, boulevards and plazas lined with imposing government offices and colonial mansions faced with intricate wooden balconies all speak of Lima's past. Shiny towers of glass shout about the rising wealth of its finance houses and corporate HQs, its smart shops and luxury hotels. Discrete neighbourhoods, remodelled and made desirable, murmur the presence of Lima's modern elites: its boho stylists, its glitzy *fashionistas*, its guru chefs.

The heart of Lima's colonial centre is the Plaza de Armas, a large and attractive square where Francisco Pizarro founded the city in 1535. Here are Lima's grandest buildings: the Government Palace, the Cathedral, and others in that vein.

A couple of blocks northeast, the equally impressive Plaza de San Francisco, is home to the Church of San Francisco, a 17th century monastery with an extensive network of catacombs hidden below. Tours of the catacombs and its famous library of 25,000 antique texts are held daily.

Much of modern Lima revolves around the well-to-do Miraflores district, which bustles with shops, hotels and apartment buildings. Miraflores ends at dramatic cliffs that look to the Pacific. Tucked to one side is Barranco, a summer resort for the city's wealthy that went into decline but is now filled with affluent residences, art galleries, boutiques and smart restaurants.

No stay in Lima would be complete without a nod to its gastronomic revolution. Stalwarts of Lima's kitchen triumphs include El Mercado (ceviche), La Pescaderia (fish), Madam Tusan (Chinese), Alfresco (ceviche), Lima 27 (fusion), and Cala (Mediterranean), but the list doesn't stop there. The range, creativity and quality are very high, putting even the best European outposts of modern Peruvian food to great shame. A list of Lima's great bars would be as long or longer.

Lima has its problems too, and traffic is a big one. A half mile journey can turn into a half hour traffic jam, and getting in and out of the city from the airport can be a major undertaking. So you can forget the idea of seeing Lima in a few hours between flights. Better to bed down at the airport and spend a couple of nights in Lima when you've more time.



PHOTOS: Victor Bellini and Magic Water Circuit (John Thirle, geodysey), Cliffs at Miraflores

What to see in Lima

Huaca Pucllana

You can explore an ancient civilisation without setting foot out of the capital with a visit to the large adobe temple of Huaca Pucllana, in the middle of the bustling district of Miraflores, built by the Lima culture 200-700AD.

Museo de Arte de Lima

Housed in a very grand Italianate palace, worth the entry ticket alone, MALI has good collections, well curated and beautifully displayed, spanning three millennia of Peruvian art.

MAC Lima

Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Lima is the mainstream hub for modern art in the capital, with eye-catching displays of Latin

American art plus US and European extras.

Museo Larco

The Larco Museum is a must-see. A huge private collection of pre-columbian artefacts assembled by a wealthy family in the 1920s and 30s, set in a fine republican mansion with lovely gardens, cafe and restaurant.

MATE

Set in a delicately airy republican era villa, a gallery-cum-artspace for revolving displays of the work of the photographer Mario Testino (a son of Lima) and others. Excellent.

Lunch at a Cevicheria

To enjoy the freshest ceviche – Peru's national dish – raw fish or seafood marinated in lemon or lime and spiced with aji chili peppers

Costa Verde Promenade

Stroll along a landscaped cliff-top from Miraflores breathing the sea air with great ocean views. Good for people watching, joggers, bladders, surfers below, paragliders above, beautiful sunsets too.

Larcomar

Multi-level oceanfront shopping mall with all the expensive international brands, plus cafes, restaurants, disco, cinema and bowling alley. Limenos shop here till late.

Casa Aliaga

The oldest colonial mansion in Lima where 17 generations of the Aliaga family have lived. Elegantly furnished salons and richly decorated interiors (prior appointment only, which we can arrange).

Parque de la Reserva

City park which includes the 'Circuito Magico del Agua': a jolly evening out with the locals. The 'world's largest' fountain complex, a marvel of fountains, music, lights and lasers. Top spot for family gatherings, first dates and coming of age parties.

El Olivar Park

Small upscale park in a former olive grove planted by the first Spanish settlers.

Peruvian Gold Museum

Over 2000 artefacts of gold, silver and brass from Moche, Chimú and Inca cultures, textiles from Inca and Paracas cultures, vast numbers of pots, some mummies and an odd collection of arms and uniforms from around the world. Open daily.

Archaeology & Anthropology Museum

Pre-Incan civilisations. Closed Mondays.

Pachacamac

30km south of Lima, a pilgrimage site for pre-Incan cultures. Extensive ruins of stepped pyramids and platforms at a dramatic ocean front location.

Pantanos de Villa

Small coastal wetland reserve on the edge of the city at Chorrillos with brackish water behind a wild ocean beach. Good for birds.



Paracas and the Nazca Lines



Paracas is barely large enough to call itself a town. Sheltered by a curving headland, it nestles snugly between the barren desert and an ocean that is teeming with life.

Just offshore a marine up-swelling delivers nutrient-rich waters to the sunlight, creating a rolling explosion of plankton that fuels a food chain of shrimps, scallops, lobsters, squid, octopus, turtles, sardines, bass, marlin, shark, dolphin and whale. Feasting on these plentiful waters are sea birds in their swirling thousands.

The few rocky islands along the shore gave rest to the feathered and well-fed, who for centuries deposited copious quantities of their digestive end-product. All that guano brought riches. For a time.

The next town south is Ica at the centre of

Peru's premier wine region. Its grapes passed through the port of Pisco, just to the north, where some were turned into a brandy. Pisco brandy fires the wonderful Pisco sour, Peru's national drink.

After a bad earthquake in 2007, which badly damaged the area and left Pisco and Ica wrecked, the cognoscenti from Lima started to build week-end retreats in Paracas, between the desert and the sea. A handful of stylish hotels followed.

It is peaceful, it is beautiful in an elemental way, and the seafood is magnificent.



Ballestas Islands
Known locally as Peru's 'poor man's Galapagos', the Islas Ballestas are well worth a visit at any time of the year. A 1½h boat ride from the dock in Paracas, the small uninhabited islands are home to colonies of cormorants, blue-footed boobies and pelicans. You will also see Humboldt penguins, sea lions, and fur seals. Dolphins are occasional visitors. Thousands of birds means lots of guano. Rich in nutrients, the guano makes an ideal fertiliser. Harvesting it is still an important part of the local economy. No special methods are needed—just a man and his bucket.



PHOTOS: Ballestas Islands, Brown pelican (John Thurtell, Geodyssey)

Huacachina

An oasis 20 minutes into the desert from Ica, Huacachina's landscape of rolling golden sand dunes surrounding an emerald green lagoon, is a surreal sight, now firmly established as a hub for sandboarding and jeep safaris.



The mystery of Nazca

400km south of Lima, deep in the Nazca desert is one of Peru's remaining unanswered questions. At its most basic the Nazca lines are a series of ancient geoglyphs scraped into the arid ground between 500BC and 500AD. A large number of individual figures spread over a wide area can be seen from the air: a hummingbird, a spider, an 'astronaut', and many more. Yet no-one is truly sure what they mean, who put them there, or how they did it.

Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one theory comes from German researcher Maria Reiche, who concludes that the figures are a vast astronomic calendar (although many locals still dispute this and claim extra-terrestrial influence).

The best way to see the lines is on a sightseeing flight by light aircraft from nearby Ica.

Where to stay in Lima

Our HOTEL GRADES are explained on p46

As you would expect, there are a great many hotels in Lima. Miraflores is a popular and convenient location for visitors to the city, with boutique hotels in neighbouring Barranco also good. San Isidro is more mainstream, with its landmark Country Club setting the tone. There is only space here for a small sample of the hotels we offer.



Hotel B TOP RANGE
Barranco, Lima

A contemporary hip hotel set in a colonial baroque mansion in Barranco. The hotel is divided into two parts, the old house which has 10 rooms and a new addition with 7. All rooms have complimentary wifi, free local calls, minibar, and plasma TV. The hotel's style-conscious restaurant serves a fusion of Peruvian and Mediterranean cooking and is by reservation only. Other areas include a gorgeous living room, tasteful library and very cool sundowner deck on the rooftop overlooking Barranco and beyond to the Pacific Ocean. Lots of art throughout.



Belmond Miraflores Park ULTRA
Miraflores, Lima

Belmond Miraflores Park is situated in a privileged location in the heart of the Miraflores district. Each room is decorated in elegant style and features fine cotton linens. The open-air rooftop pool is heated, with breath-taking views of Lima and the Pacific Ocean.



Country Club Lima TOP RANGE
San Isidro, Lima

Built in 1927, Country Club Lima is located on the edge of San Isidro, Lima's financial district. All 83 rooms are in the style of a colonial country manor and decorated with colonial Peruvian artworks. Rooms have marble bathrooms with Jacuzzis, wifi access, direct line telephones, cable TV, a/c and wifi. Other facilities at the hotel include its award winning restaurant 'Perroquet' which presents a variety of authentic Peruvian dishes and creative international specialities. The hotel has a gym, sauna and spa, while across the road is Lima Golf Club.



Casa Andina Private Collection UPPER RANGE
Miraflores, Lima

Located in the heart of Lima's upscale Miraflores district, two blocks away from Kennedy Park surrounded by fashionable shops and good restaurants, this contemporary hotel has 148 rooms set over 17 floors. Each room has a marble bathroom, soundproof windows, A/C and heating, wifi access, cable TV, hair dryer and safe. Facilities and services include a gourmet restaurant, café, lobby bar, beauty salon, gym, covered and heated swimming pool, gift shop and a business centre.



Sonesta El Olivar UPPER RANGE
San Isidro, Lima

Located in Lima's business district of San Isidro, the hotel's clientele is mainly businessmen but is a good option for tourists too. The hotel is positioned across the road from Parque El Oliver, a pretty park with ancient olive trees (p14), and some of the 148 rooms have views over this green space. There is a roof top pool with ample sun loungers as well as a fitness centre. El Olivar Restaurant Bar serves a selection of Peruvian dishes and international cuisine.



Antigua Miraflores MID/UPPER RANGE
Miraflores, Lima

A good value, characterful hotel situated in the Miraflores neighbourhood between the ocean front and the park. Originally built in 1918 as a private mansion for a wealthy local family it has been renovated into a hotel and restaurant. It has a certain bygone charm with heavy antique furnishings, bric-a-brac and local artwork. All rooms have private bathrooms, a/c, cable TV, free wifi, safe deposit box. Standard/traditional rooms have one queen or twin single beds.



Casa Andina Select Miraflores MID/UPPER RANGE
Miraflores, Lima

A sensible functional choice, conveniently located in the fashionable district of Miraflores, close to numerous shops, restaurants and cafes. All 145 rooms at come equipped with TV, writing desks, soundproof windows, blackout curtains and private bathrooms. Other facilities in the hotel include a bar and restaurant, spa, gym and sun terrace with Jacuzzi, and a business centre with PCs for guest use.



Atemporal UPPER RANGE
Miraflores, Lima

Eclectic chic relaxed 9 room 'hotelito' in a converted 1940s mansion, from the award-winning design team that created Hotel B (this page) and Titilaka (p17). Good common spaces: verandah, salon, reading room and garden. Restrained ambience, with intriguing assemblages of antiques, modern pieces, art and artefacts from around Peru. Full concierge service, house car with driver to nearby restaurants etc. Great location near Huaca Pucllana, close to Astrid y Gaston, other leading eateries, and good shops.

Worth a mention

Costa del Sol Wyndham Lima Airport UPPER RANGE

Good quality functional international-style 130 room super convenient airport hotel. Surprisingly decent restaurant, many other facilities.

Sol de Oro Miraflores MID/UPPER RANGE

Comfortable business hotel close to Miraflores' trendy restaurants and shops. 112 rooms with a/c, wifi, safe, etc. Restaurant, rooftop pool, gym.

Ananay San Isidro MID/UPPER RANGE

Pleasant mid-sized hotel. 48 rooms, contemporary décor. 5 min walk from El Olivar Park, ideal for a jog or some early morning birdwatching

Second Home Peru Barranco MID/UPPER RANGE

Stunning 8 room guest house in the former home of leading sculptor Victor Delfin, perched on ocean cliffs with amazing views, gardens, outdoor pool and art everywhere.

Los Girasoles Miraflores MID-RANGE

Pleasant, well-run, contemporary-style mid-range hotel on the edge of Miraflores. 42 rooms, restaurant-café and lounge.

El Pardo Doubletree by Hilton Miraflores MID/UPR RANGE

Upscale contemporary 11 storey hotel with rooftop pool and plentiful facilities. Not far from Huaca Pucllana, good restaurants and shops.

Where to stay in Lake Titicaca, Colca Canyon, Arequipa and Paracas

There are some terrific hotels around Lake Titicaca: in and around Puno, in wild locations on the shores of the lake, and out on the lake's rocky islands. There are good choices at reasonable prices too. Arequipa has excellent options, though fewer in number. Colca Canyon has a much narrower selection, but with lovely country lodges in stunning locations, and smaller hotels set around gardens. Paracas attracts discrete upscale Lima week-enders, with some cool, contemporary hotels around sleek pools facing the bay.



Libertador Lago Titicaca TOP RANGE

Puno

Imposing modernist construction fabulously located on Esteves Island by the shore of Lake Titicaca, a short taxi ride from Puno. The hotel occupies this entire promontory with all rooms looking out on the lake. The bar is an ideal spot for watching the sunset. The restaurant offers a fusion of international and Andean cooking. There are 123 rooms, equipped with televisions, mini bar and safety deposit box. Leisure facilities include a gym, Jacuzzi and outdoor pool. There is a gift shop and 24 hour internet connection in the business centre.



Sonesta Posada del Incas MID-RANGE

Puno

Truly fantastic location on the shores of Lake Titicaca 5km outside Puno. The 62 guest rooms all have cable television, sound proof windows, a/c, direct dial telephones and safes. The restaurant has panoramic views of the lake, with the lake steamer 'The Yavari' moored nearby, built in England in 1862 and delivered in pieces to Lake Titicaca by mule—for a small donation you can go aboard and see its restoration in progress.



Titilaka ULTRA RANGE

Lake Titicaca

Expedition lodge

Totally hip boldly architected expedition lodge on the shores of the lake, in open country 50min from Puno. All 18 rooms have panoramic windows with views across the lake. Facilities include outdoor terraces, 3 lounge areas, dining room, wine cellar, massage room, fully equipped media and reading room. Restaurant serves contemporary Peruvian dishes with fresh local ingredients. There is a cocktail bar and complimentary bar service during selected hours. Active excursions to sites around the lake, by boat on the lake, plus walking, biking, kayaks, SUP, sailboats and birding.



Colca Lodge UPPER RANGE

Colca

Beautiful sited on the banks of the Colca River deep in the Colca Valley, with its own hot springs within the grounds, perfect for relaxing after a day exploring the valley. All 45 rooms have views over the valley, many also have terraces. Water for the bathrooms is heated by solar power and the rooms are kitted out with plenty of llama wool blankets to keep you warm. 3 restaurants and 2 bars with a wide variety of choice. Eco-spa next to the hot springs offers treatments, massages, Jacuzzi and steam room. To preserve the tranquillity there are no TVs or similar distractions.



Casa Andina Classic Colca MID-RANGE

Colca

Close to the Colca Canyon towards the edge of the small town of Chivay. 51 rooms in semi-detached stone cottages with thatched or clay roofs, scattered around the small grounds with stone paths interconnecting them. The pitched-ceiling restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. In the evening local musicians and dancers perform folkloric shows based on Andean and Colca traditions. The hotel features an on-site planetarium with English and Spanish presentations every day.



Casa Andina Private Collection UPPER RANGE

Arequipa

A mostly modern hotel in an historic building that dates back to 1794 built as the mint (Casa de la Moneda), restored recently after years of neglect. Well located only 3 blocks from Arequipa's Plaza de Armas, and just behind the Santa Catalina Convent, this is a convenient base to explore Arequipa's atmospheric colonial centre. The hotel's 40 standard rooms are in a new 4-storey wing that overlooks the original colonial courtyard. There are also 2 'senior' suites and 1 'imperial' suite in the restored colonial mansion itself.



Hotel Paracas TOP RANGE

Paracas

Hotel Paracas is a luxury resort with breathtaking views of the ocean. The grounds are beautiful, there are two pools, one pool is right on the ocean. 120 spacious beautifully appointed rooms and amenities, rooms are light and airy with sumptuous beds. Hotel Paracas is a Luxury Collection Resort. Swimming in the tempting calm waters of Paracas Bay can sometimes be affected by the arrival of jelly fish or sting rays. Take local advice.



La Hacienda Bahia Paracas UPPER RANGE

Paracas

La Hacienda is a lovely choice for peace and tranquillity, on the shores of Paracas Bay, close to the Ballestas Islands and the Paracas reserve. Facilities include a spa, a restaurant specialising in seafood, a lounge room, bar, café and large outdoor swimming pool. The suites have a private terrace with direct access into the swimming pool. Swimming in the tempting calm waters of Paracas Bay can sometimes be affected by the arrival of jelly fish or sting rays. Take local advice.

Worth a mention

Suasi Lodge Suasi Island, Lake Titicaca TOP RANGE

A real favourite. A lovely upscale eco-lodge on the only private island in Lake Titicaca. All 24 rooms look over terraced Mediterranean-style gardens to the lake. Built in local materials. Solar electricity, log stoves. Ideal to relax. Kayaking, short hikes and massage available.

Eco Inn Colca MID-RANGE

Situated in the traditional small town of Yanque, Hotel Eco Inn is a charming hotel with magnificent views over the Colca Valley. 21 rooms.

Eco Inn Puno outskirts MID-RANGE

Tourist hotel looking over Lake Titicaca. 61 rooms, most with views to the lake. 'Sikuri' restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Libertador Arequipa Arequipa TOP RANGE

The only 5-star hotel in Arequipa, sited in Selva Alegre park, 15min from centre. 88 rooms (superior and suite). Good restaurant.

Doubletree Hilton Paracas UPPER RANGE

Good location on the beach next to the Paracas Reserve. Contemporary, spacious, good facilities, great for relaxing or for watersports.



North Coast

The coastal deserts that begin in Chile run the length of Peru's coast almost as far as Ecuador. In this forbidding landscape, pre-Incan civilisations established themselves and flourished. The Moche and their successors developed irrigation that brought life to the desert, built massive adobe pyramids, created evocative artefacts in gold, silver and ceramics, and governed with ritualised barbarity.

TRUJILLO

Trujillo is a bustling city of a million people around an atmospheric historic centre.

Trujillo was founded by Francisco Pizarro and named after his birthplace in Spain. The city fared very well and around its large Plaza de Armas are fine mansions, well preserved, colourfully painted, with grand carved doorways and ornate ironwork window grilles.

Several are open to visitors and give a taste of life for the colonial elite in 18th century Peru. One, the elegant Casa Urquiaga, was once home to Simon Bolivar.

DESERT KINGDOMS

The Incas had only ruled this region for about 60 years before Pizarro and the Spanish conquistadors came along. The Incas had taken over the impressive Chimú peoples who built the enormous Chan Chan as their capital, just outside modern Trujillo. They had evolved from the great **Moche** culture who flourished from 100 until about 800AD. It was the Moche who brought life to this barren coastal desert through irrigation and farming, and developed a complex and successful culture. They built huge adobe pyramids. They were master potters, with a wide array of styles, most usually as practical pots, many as objects of beauty or worship, many of the natural world, and many grotesques with violent or sexual themes. They were ruled by kings at the head of a priestly

elite that engaged in human sacrifice, calling on a god that archaeologists call the 'Decapitator', whose image is found at Moche temples and on Moche tumi ritual knives. Even ritual cannibalism may have been indulged in.

The purpose of this nastiness seems to have been to control the weather, to deliver agricultural fertility to their people's lands by bringing rain and countering the dramatic effects of El Niño.

Archaeologists have been working for decades to learn more about the Moche and have achieved some dramatic successes—see opposite.

CHICLAYO

3 hours north along the coast from Trujillo, Chiclayo is a pleasant city with an enviable climate.

An array of major archaeological sites lies outside the town. Closest are the very ancient Huaca Ventarrón complex and the Huaca Rajada from the Moche period, where the tomb of the Lord of Sipán was found. The nearby Royal Tombs Museum has the spectacular treasures of the Lord of Sipán on display, along with much else.

An hour or so inland from Chiclayo is the Chaparri reserve (see panel), which protects a dry forest that is home to several threatened species, most notably the Spectacled Bear.

To the north are major sites of the Sican culture which evolved from Moche roots: Batán Grande and Tucume, the 'Valley of the Pyramids'.

MANCORA AND TUMBES

High up on the north coast, Mancora has dusty desert streets, long surfie beaches, 300 days of sun and some new hip hotels. Travel connections to Lima are as yet not good.

The desert peters out just before the town of Tumbes, close to Ecuador, and is replaced with mangroves and dry forest rising to tropical forest rich in endemic birds.



Chaparri Reserve

An hour inland from Chiclayo, Chaparri Reserve protects an important area of dry forest that is home to a range of endemic and threatened species, most notably the Andean or Spectacled Bear and the endangered White-winged Guan.

Spectacled Bear is the only species of bear in South America. They are largely vegetarian and are most regularly seen in the wild from July to December, especially from September when it is driest and the trees shed their leaves to preserve moisture. Males can reach 200kg and rise to stand up to 1.8m tall.

Condors and magnificent King Vultures are regularly seen flying over Chaparri in the late morning. Birds also look for White-tailed Jay, Elegant Crescentchest, Collared Antshrikes, Amazilia Hummingbird, Superciliated Wren and Tumbes Sparrow.

The reserve is named after the Chaparri mountain that dominates the skyline and was sacred to the Muchik people, descendants of the Moche. It is still considered a sacred place of astrological significance by current Shamans who visit from as far afield as Chile.

The reserve was established in 2000 by the local community of Santa Catalina de Chongoyape to protect the natural environment and help to improve the local economy. One of their team will guide you on your visit. The excellent **Chaparri Lodge** (p21) lies within the reserve. Near the lodge is an Andean Bear Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre where rescued bears too habituated to captivity to be released are kept in enclosed areas of natural habitat. A further 11 individuals inhabit the same valley.

Treasures of the Moche

■ From Trujillo



Huaca del Sol & Huaca de la Luna

Just outside Trujillo, two vast, largely complete, adobe pyramids, the Sun and the Moon, stood at the heart of a Moche kingdom that spanned four centuries from 400 to 600AD. It is a large and absolutely unmissable archaeological site.

The pyramid were built at the foot of Cerro Blanco, a sacred mountain. 143 million handmade adobe bricks were used to build the Huaca del Sol, with each king building on top of his predecessor's pyramid. Repeated times, the result is the largest pyramid in the Americas. The smaller, but still enormous, Huaca de la Luna (base 95m x 85m, height 25m) is the better preserved and extensive sections can be visited.

Excavations have shown that Huaca de la Luna was built in 6 levels over two centuries. Archaeologists have uncovered a royal residence, a temple for rituals and ceremonial activities, and burial chambers. Surrounded by a high wall, it is thought that commoners were only allowed access at times of ritual sacrifice, perhaps of captives from rival kingdoms. The purpose of these

sacrifices may have been to bring rain in times of drought or calm the gods when an El Niño event brought extreme rains.

Excavations have revealed vivid polychrome friezes of yellow, white, blue red and black pigment, some depicting Ayapec (or Ai Apaec), the all-knowing god also dubbed the 'Decapitator'. Groups of skeletons at the site show cut marks to their necks, while others appear to have been struck on the head and thrown from a height.

The enormous effort required to build the pyramids speaks to very orderly control of mass labour, reciprocated by the elite through their power over the rain that brought fertility to these barren desert lands. There was tremendous production of craft material too, particularly ceramics. At the site there is evidence of highly developed workshops for potters and metalworkers of gold copper and silver. Discoveries about the Moche are being made every year, and there is much more to learn.



El Brujo

El Brujo is the name given to a large site north of Trujillo which was occupied over an extremely long period—more than a thousand years.

A large Moche platform, Huaca Cao Viejo, 170m x 130m x 30m tall, dominates the site, looking across wide expanses of barren sands to the ocean. Its principal facade is decorated with tiers of polychrome Moche friezes, so far only partly uncovered, showing warriors fighting, captives naked and bound, and an executioner holding a captive ready for his ritual blade.

Other designs are based on aquatic creatures including saltwater stingray and freshwater catfish.

Here archaeologists found a 100kg funerary bundle containing the preserved body of a young Moche woman carefully wrapped in 26 layers of finely woven

textiles, now known as the **Lady of Cao**.

In life her body had been intricately tattooed with snakes and spiders. She was buried with a strangled sacrificial companion, gold head dresses, nose ornaments, sceptres, necklaces and spear throwers. She is thought to have been either a female ruler (which would be the first found in Peru) or a highly venerated warrior priestess.

An excellent artfully curated museum at the site explains the site's long history and its importance for the Moche. It displays some of the material found, with a gallery devoted to the Lady of Cao herself.

There are several other Moche sites between Trujillo and Chiclayo; San Jose del Moro is right by the road and worth a stop.

Chan Chan

The Chimú appeared as the Moche culture disintegrated and could be said to be an extension of the Moche.

They were centred at Chimor, close to the ocean just north of Trujillo, where they built the city of Chan Chan as their capital.

Chan Chan is the large adobe city ever constructed and today it is one of the most developed archaeological sites in the region. Its main features have been reconstructed, and possibly re-imagined, to create an extremely impressive overall impact.

The Chimú expanded and over-ran their Sican rivals to the north, but they were soon subsumed by the Incas, bringing to an end the long history of the Moche.



■ From Chiclayo



Sipan

The Moche archaeological site of Sipan stands 30km inland from Chiclayo. It includes the pyramid of Huaca Rajada, which was excavated in the late 1980s. Several royal tombs were found, including the stunning tomb of the **Lord of Sipan**. A site museum displays recently found items, but the most important finds are displayed in the large, world-class **Royal Tombs Museum** in Lambayeque where the main treasures are beautifully displayed.

The museum's architecture and layout, spread over 4 floors, reflects the structure of the pyramid. The sheer magnitude, wealth and dazzling splendour of the collection will make you wonder why the Lord of Sipan is not yet as famous as Egypt's Tutankhamun.

There are golden crowns, nose adornments, ear roundels of gold, turquoise and wood, pectorals of spondylous shell, collars of gold spiders and of gold feline heads inset with shell teeth, necklaces of precious stones and ceramics with beads the size of golf balls half gold and half silver to represent the sun and moon.

The display includes a close reconstruction of the burial chamber where the Lord of Sipan was found. Be sure not to miss the final room when replicas of many of the treasures you have just seen are, weirdly, brought to life. Life-size Moche automatons wearing their full golden regalia move about and play musical instruments—their golden adornments glittering as they turn their heads, move their arms and beat their drums. A vivid portrayal of the awesome sight a king and his court must have made.

Huaca Ventarron

Huaca Ventarron is a temple pyramid built of adobe, including a section that has been carbon dated to 2000BC (just as the Middle Kingdom was getting underway in Egypt) making it the oldest in the Americas.

Its builders, the Cupisnique, are clear ancestors of the Moche—the Moche's culture of ritual decapitation appears to have come down from them.



Sican

The Sican, or Lambayeque, culture evolved after the decline of the Moche and is closely related to it.

A large elegant contemporary museum displays golden artefacts, ceramics and other finds from tombs excavated at Batán Grande, including the magnificent **Lord of Sipan**, whose lavish goods rival those of the Lord of Sipan.

Sican culture, while reflecting its Moche roots, shows notable advances in style and substance. Its artworks and artefacts are finer and more complex (and less concerned with violence). There is evidence of trade with other societies along the South American coast, with spondylous shells from Ecuador a prominent example. In another parallel with Ecuadorean cultures, elite Sican burials adopt the seated position in deep

cylindrical chambers. Our 'Lost Civilisations' itinerary in Ecuador makes for some intriguing comparisons.

Their centre at Batán Grande declined and was burned and abandoned between 1075 and 1100, relocating to Tucume.



Tucume

Establishing themselves at Tucume, also known as the Valley of the Pyramids, the Sican built 26 pyramids around a promontory inhabited by a mythical stingray and continued their thriving economy as expert seafarers, traders, and metallurgists.

Three locations at Tucume were excavated by Thor Heyerdahl, the Norwegian ethnographer who developed the theory that the Sican sailed their reed boats to colonise Easter Island. The site museum has more.

Eventually, in 1375, Tucume, and with it the Sican, were over-run by a rival post-Moche culture, the Chimú from Chan Chan.





Northern Andes

CAJAMARCA

At Cajamarca on 16 November 1532, Atahualpa, the last Sapa Inca, was captured by Francisco Pizarro and his 150 soldiers, at a moment when the Inca had at his disposal an army of thousands. To save his life, Atahualpa agreed an astonishing ransom, promising to fill a hall on Cajamarca's main square three times over: once with gold and twice with silver.

The hall, now known as the Ransom Room, has been preserved and is a telling witness of this momentous encounter which brought about the fall of one of the world's great empires.

Cajamarca is a beautiful Andean town, the Cusco of northern Peru, with flight connections to Lima. It has a small colonial centre with many fine old houses around the Plaza de Armas—some converted into good hotels or restaurants. A major gold mine in the hills has brought wealth and controversy.

CHACHAPOYAS

The unforgettable journey from Cajamarca to Chachapoyas follows winding mountain roads across two sierras divided by the deep valley of the Marañón river.

Chachapoyas ('Chacha' to the locals) is a pleasant place, with a fine church and whitewashed buildings with balconied windows around its Plaza de Armas.

The town takes its name from a great pre-Incan civilisation that flourished in this part of

northern Peru—the Chachapoya—whose name means 'People of the Clouds'. They first appear in 750AD and flourished across a wide area on the eastern side of the Andes until they were subsumed into the Incan empire in about 1475.

In his BBC series, 'The Lost Kingdoms of South America' the British Museum's Dr Jago Cooper recounted how in the absence of writing the Chachapoya developed sophisticated methods of recording and recounting stories using string *quipu*, how they traded extensively between the Amazon and the coast, inhabited mountain tops, lived as equals choosing leaders only in times of war, practised sorcery with hallucinogens, and adopted uniquely egalitarian and thoughtful burial practices.

The most startling and impressive of their mountain-top settlements is the great fortress citadel of **Kuelap** (see box opposite), astride a hilltop commanding all it surveys. Notwithstanding important differences Kuelap has tempting parallels with the much later Incan citadel of Machu Picchu.

GOCTA FALLS

Gocta Falls, at 771m, is one of the world's tallest waterfalls—two and a half times taller than The Shard in London—but it was only 'discovered' in 2002. Locals had been loath to defy the curse of the falls' resident serpent-cum-mermaid that would be cast on whomsoever should expose her secret home.

Gocta's narrow cataract tumbles in two stages down a precipitous cliff into a huge amphitheatre. In the dry season the falls are spectacular, in the wet season they are awe-inspiring. There is a moderately easy 5km walk to the falls, see our 'Northern Peru Explorer' on page 32.

PRE-INCAN BURIAL SITES

High limestone cliffs are a feature of this part of the Andes, and the Chachapoya took advantage of them for their burials. Climbing sheer rock faces to inaccessible ledges and cliff-caves, they laid their dead to rest high above the valley floors, in secluded safety. Sometimes the mortal remains were stowed in hollow figures looking out from the hillside, others were placed in caves bricked up to look like little cottages, with doors, windows and roofs.

There are good examples of these cottage-like burial sites at **Revash**, dating from around 1250AD, decorated with paintings of felines, llamas and geometric symbols. Not far from here, by the side of a gorgeous lake, the Lake of the Condors, herdsman chanced on six Chachapoya tombs packed with mummies and grave-goods. 219 of these mummies are now held in a superb museum at Leymebamba—the best on the Chachapoya—which also displays ceramics, ritual objects and weavings.

Where to stay in Northern Peru

The impressive sites of northern Peru are only just coming to travellers' attention. Hotels are far fewer in number—although that number is growing—but there are enough good options in the key locations.



Libertador Trujillo TOP RANGE

Trujillo

High quality property, the best in town, with a superb location on Trujillo's main plaza with a view of the cathedral and surrounding colonial buildings. Rooms vary greatly in size but even the smallest are very well appointed with high quality bed linens, a/c, cable TV, 24 hour room service. Leisure facilities include sauna, gym and small outdoor swimming pool and terrace.



La Xalca Hotel MID-RANGE

Chachapoyas

A beautifully renovated building 4 blocks from the main square in Chachapoyas with an interior courtyard garden. All rooms have double bed, private bath with hot water, cable TV and free wifi.

Breakfast is the only meal served, but there are restaurants in walking distance for other meals.



Chaparri Lodge MID/UPPER RANGE

Chaparri Reserve (see box on p18)

An eco-lodge of adobe construction with simple yet charming facilities set in the dry forest Chaparri Reserve 75km from Chiclayo.

Its pretty bedrooms have private bathrooms, solar heated showers and are designed for natural ventilation. There is a lovely al fresco dining area. There is no mains electricity so you will need to pack a torch.

Owned and staffed by people from the local community, Chaparri Lodge is a master class in sustainable tourism, the 'greenest' lodge in Peru. It has the first reed bed water treatment facility, and even a solar-powered fridge for cold beers. As yet, however, very little English is spoken.

Chaparri makes a delightful place to relax amid nature. Hummingbirds visit to drink and bathe at dawn. There are on-site nature trails of varying length, good birdwatching opportunities and knowledgeable resident guides (Spanish speakers). Horse-riding is available. Or you can simply relax in a hammock and read a book amid the peace and tranquillity of this beautiful place.

Spectacled bear is the star animal. Other interesting species regularly seen here are Peruvian White-tailed Deer, Sechuran Fox and large Collared Peccary.



Casa Andina Select, Chiclayo UPPER RANGE

Chiclayo

A sensible choice situated on the edge of the city in a contemporary building. The hotel has 130 rooms spread over seven floors, all have sound proof windows. There is a restaurant, sauna, gym and good sized swimming pool surrounded by lawn with palm trees and sun loungers at the rear. Complimentary wifi throughout.



Gocta Lodge MID/UPPER

nr Chachapoyas

An attractive, good quality, contemporary country lodge set in the Cocachimba Valley at the start of the trail leading to Gocta Falls, 40km from Chachapoyas. 8 rooms and 2 suites all with a view of Gocta waterfall from their balcony or terrace. The lodge has a restaurant and has an attractive terrace with a nice swimming pool with loungers.



Casa Morey MID-RANGE

Iquitos

A rubber baron's mansion on the waterfront promenade with elegant public rooms and a faded library filled with natural history books. It has 14 huge suites with ornately tiled floors, high ceilings, vintage private bathrooms with some DIY plumbing solutions, AC, wifi and cable TV. Furnished on a shoe-string but our favourite in the city.

Worth a mention

Costa del Sol Wyndham Trujillo MID/UPPER RANGE

An excellent resort style property with 120 rooms set around 2 impressive swimming pools with extensive lawns. A nice, quiet haven in the outskirts of the city.

Los Horcones de Tucume Lambayeque MID/UPPER RANGE

Attractive 12 room property imaginatively constructed in a modern adobe style with a view of the Pyramids of Tucume. Lawn with small swimming pool. Working clay bread oven. Isolated, 17 miles from Chiclayo and little English spoken but makes a nice place to simply relax.

Costa del Sol Wyndham Cajamarca TOP RANGE

A renovated mansion with a prime location next to the cathedral. 71 rooms all with TVs, safe deposit box, wifi and double glazing. There is a swimming pool, gym, spa, casino and hair dresser.

Kuelap

Kuelap is the region's real archaeological highlight and yet, due to its isolation, little archaeological research has been carried out and few tourists visit. Its sheer size and grandeur amazes, coupled with its magnificent location presiding over the Utcubamba valley—with the great canyon of the Marañón river across a narrow ridge. Approaching the ruins from below, you look up to a single platform stretching 600m along a ridge top. Some repair and reconstruction has taken place, mainly of the small, circular shaped houses, however the maze of well-preserved structures demonstrates the engineering prowess and artistic nature of this ancient people. A simple repeated geometric frieze represents the eyes of the jaguar.

Cordillera Blanca

Huaraz

The Andean city of **Huaraz** (3053m) is set below magnificent snow-capped peaks of the rugged towering Cordillera Blanca mountain range. It lies mid-way between Lima and Trujillo; a full day's drive from both.

Chavin

From Huaraz day trips are possible to the astonishing **Chavin de Huantar** archaeological site. This was a key place of pilgrimage in Peru's first empire, with a powerful oracle that foretold the future. The Chavin universe had three levels: the heavenly realm of birds, the world of humans and plants, and the underground world of the dead represented by a snake. At the Chavin site you enter a labyrinthine pyramid, to reach a carved stone pillar at its heart. This stela, known as the 'Lanzón' directs the flow of energy from heaven into the underground for the prosperity of crops.

On the way to Chavin on the Pampa Santa Maria de Buenos Aires, look out for **Puya raimondii**, the world's largest bromeliad. These giants take 80–100 years to bloom. A single flower spike rises to 10m with 3,000 flowers that generate 6 million seeds dispersed by hummingbirds; exhausted with the effort, the plant then dies.

Trekking

The dramatic mountain scenery of the Cordillera offers fabulous walking and trekking. One of our favourites is the day hike to the aqua-turquoise glacial lakes of Laguna Llanganuco and Lake 69 at 4550m, best from April to early October.

Getting there

A direct flight operates between Lima and Huaraz but if time and budget permit, we suggest private transfers overland to enable visits to further major sites of pre-Incan archaeological interest.

Coastal sites

On the coast between Trujillo and Huaraz are the ruins of **Sechin** in the Casma Valley from 1600BC. Here carved stone slabs of its perimeter walls show a procession of triumphal armed warriors with the gruesome torture and human sacrifice they inflict. All very gory: eye sockets spurt blood, limbs are severed, and prisoners decapitated. Also on the coast, but south towards Lima, are the important archaeological sites of **Chimu** and **Coral**.





The Amazon

It is an exciting and moving life experience to be in the heart of an Amazon rainforest, in the midst of raw nature at its most complex and intense.

Getting to the Amazon is relatively easy in Peru. You can choose to explore the world of the forest from a jungle lodge, or on a small river boat on an expedition cruise.

They both act as the base for expeditions into the forest with a small number of fellow guests led by an knowledgeable guide.

The day starts early. The first expedition might begin at 6:30am or even earlier. Normally you will arrive back at the lodge or your boat in the late morning for lunch and a rest. The second trip will not usually start until mid-afternoon, returning by dusk. Often an optional night walk will be laid on for an hour or so after dinner, but then it really is time for bed.

The variety of excursions depends on the location and the season. You may be walking forest trails, exploring by small boat, climbing into the canopy on towers or high walkways, quietly watching animals or birds from a blind, or visiting a local community at their invitation.

It's a full-on experience, but although you are out and about and active it is seldom physically challenging – anyone with average fitness and health should have no difficulty. And everything is optional – it's your holiday after all.

LIFE IN THE FOREST

So here you are. You've put on your lightweight trousers and your long-sleeved shirt, donned your walking boots (or the lodge's rubber boots if it's wet). You've got a hat, your camera, plenty of water and maybe a

pair of binoculars. You rolled on some insect repellent after your shower. You've had a great breakfast. You're all set.

You meet up with your guide for the day, and say hello to the handful of others in your group. There's a short briefing and the guide checks everyone is ready. Off you go.

Walking in the forest is a very special experience. A few steps away from the lodge and you are completely enveloped by it. You walk for a while to get deeper inside, voices become subdued and every so often you change places so that no one is always at the front or left at the back. The guide stops and points to something he's seen. Monkeys—a whole family leaping across the branches above you. A brilliantly coloured bird singing lustily, another scarcely visible skulking in the leaves. Manakins dancing at a lek. A web of social spiders like a small cloud, leaf cutter ants marching across your path bearing their precious cargo. A huge kapok tree towering up into the sky. A strangler fig slowly embracing its host.

They are not all there at once, but appear here and there. By the end of the walk you will have seen a score of different remarkable things. And on your next walk you will see another score, different from the first.

LIFE FROM THE WATER

One of the best places to see wildlife outside the forest itself is an oxbow lake, which generally hold much more wildlife than the main rivers. You might arrive from the main river on a trail or by boat through a small channel, opening out onto an idyllic scene

of still waters surrounded by lush greenery. Fish jump and plop, birds take off and land. As you tour the lake you start to see more. Monkeys appear in the trees, scampering away, or hanging there daring you to approach. Macaws fly over in pairs. Given luck and the right conditions you may see a family of giant otters feeding and playing. You will see birds, lots of them, out on the open water, stepping across lily pads, skulking under cover on the shoreline, fluttering up to catch insects, buzzing about in little flocks in the trees.

And if you didn't count yourself a birder before, you may wonder whether you might take it up. Proper birders can get carried away at this point, as the opportunities grow to see ever rarer or more spectacular species (umbrella bird anyone? great potoo? paradise tanager?).

A slow ripple on what looks like a piece of floating wood announces a black caiman, and perhaps dozens more. The more you look, the more you see.

River dolphin appear on oxbow lakes that still connect with the river, but generally you will see them as you travel on the main river, and only in the northern Amazon. They crest the surface a few times, then disappear for an unfeasibly long time before popping up somewhere you weren't watching. There is a widespread Amazon myth that at night they can adopt the form of handsome men and seduce young girls—the obvious explanation for surprise pregnancies.

Lodges in the Southern Amazon

Our HOTEL GRADES are explained on p46

■ Tambopata

The Tambopata and Bahuaja-Sonene reserves form a continuous zone of protection from the Andes to the Bolivian border, where a Bolivian reserve takes over. More is needed, but this is a considerable area and the wildlife is excellent. Access is good, thanks to flights to Puerto Maldonado from Cusco (30 minutes) and Lima.

Madre de Dios River

The Madre de Dios is a large, but not colossal, river which drains a great proportion of Peru's southern Amazon. Several high quality comfortable lodges are located downriver from Puerto Maldonado, most within relatively easy reach of the airport.



Hacienda Concepcion UPPER RANGE
Madre de Dios 30min by boat from Pto Maldonado

A good place to relax after a busy trip to the Andes, Hacienda Concepcion is set on a former cacao and rubber plantation. It has 8 well appointed rooms and 12 cabanas, fully screened, with private bathrooms and hot water. The accent is on comfort and relaxation as well as wildlife and nature. Guests can take an excursion to the canopy walk bridge at its sister property Reserva Amazonica across the river. Electricity 16h a day.

Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica TOP RANGE
Madre de Dios 45min by boat from Pto Maldonado

The most luxurious jungle lodge in Peru. A well-designed ecolodge at the heart of a 42,000 acre private ecological reserve. 35 rooms in four cabana options, with stylish bar, excellent restaurant and lovely spa. The resident guides are excellent. A full range of expeditions is offered at various levels of strenuousness, and with specials for children. There is a canopy walkway a quarter of a mile long 100ft above the forest floor.

Sandoval Lake Lodge MID-RANGE
Lago Sandoval 45min by boat from Pto Maldonado to landing point

An excellent large lodge in a stunning location on the far shore of a large oxbow lake, home to families of giant otter and a great variety of waterbirds. Easily accessed, well-run, and with a good variety of expeditions this is an excellent choice for a short easy experience of the forest and its wildlife. To reach the lodge there is a 30min forest trail from the river landing, staff take your bags, and a boat ride across the lake.



Heath River Wildlife Centre MID-RANGE
Rio Heath 3-5hr by boat from Pto Maldonado

Medium-sized lodge on the small Heath River which marks the Bolivian border (the lodge is actually on the Bolivian side). The forest is low but varied. Star attractions include an excellent clay-lick much used by parrots and macaws, and Pampas del Heath—a wide savannah in the midst of rainforest. The mix of eco-zones makes for long bird lists. A very high canopy platform is accessed by ladder by the brave.



Tambopata River

Three lodges along the Tambopata river, run in collaboration with the Infierno community. Wildlife is good, guides are excellent, and there are good interactions with local people. Conditions are simple. Each lodge is lightly constructed with bedroom compartments formed by split cane dividers under a high communal roof, one side open to the outside and no screening. Beds are protected with mosquito nets. Wonderful for jungle lovers, not for the bug-phobic.



Posada Amazonas MID-RANGE
Tambopata River ½h by truck + 1h by boat from Puerto Maldonado

The first lodge of the three. 12 simple classic rooms lit by hurricane lamps and candles, 16 superior rooms with own power points. All rooms have private bathrooms. This lodge offers a very enjoyable mixture of nature viewing and ethnographic experiences. Intermittent wifi. Activities offered make it the best choice of the three for teens. There is a 10min walk to reach the lodge from the river landing, staff take your bags.

Refugio Amazonas MID-RANGE
Tambopata River ½h by truck + 2½h by boat from Puerto Maldonado

Further upstream is Refugio Amazonas with 32 rooms in 4 wings connected to a two-storey lodge with lobby, dining room, bar, lounge. All rooms have private bathrooms. Very good wildlife viewing expeditions and a canopy tower. Other activities: kayaking, jungle biking, canopy climbing with ropes, catch and release fishing. Best lodge for younger children with a special interpretive nature trail and playground. There is a 10min walk to reach the lodge from the river landing, staff take your bags.

Tambopata Research Centre LOW/MID-RANGE
Tambopata River 4h by boat from Refugio Amazonas

Last in the line, a more spartan 18 room lodge/field study centre 500m by boat from the world's largest macaw clay lick, a major reason to visit. We recommend 3 nights to maximise your chance of seeing the macaws at the lick. Rooms connect by corridor to 8 shared bathrooms (cold water, flush WCs). Requires a night at Refugio Lodge on the outbound journey.



Manu

Manu, in the southern Amazon, is truly stunning but requires effort. It is a rugged and enthralling 2 day journey by road and river from Cusco. You can fly by small plane, but that's missing the point—Manu is a step beyond, an almost complete removal from the world of humans, where nature thrives entirely on its own terms in one of the most pristine environments on earth.

Manu had been virtually inaccessible and was in a undisturbed state, when the park (now the Manu Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site) was created in 1973. Today the vast majority of the main reserve is set aside as 'untouchable': strictly off-limits to almost all outsiders. Ecotourism is limited to isolated areas equivalent to just 0.5% of the park.

Deep within are tribal communities. Some are not in contact with the outside world at all, others only at their own rare initiative.

Although the areas for eco-tourist visitors are small as a proportion of Manu's huge size, they are well chosen and provide stunning examples of what lies far beyond.

Planning your Amazon trip

Seasons

Wildlife viewing is possible all year round although river levels vary dramatically.

In low water periods (generally July to September) many excursions are taken on foot along forest trails. River beaches are exposed, and navigating smaller rivers may become slow. These are the best months to see ground-dwelling mammals. The high water months (generally December to May) are the best for viewing canopy species such as sloth and monkeys.

At this time of year many excursions are taken by boat. From June to mid-September the south Amazon can be affected by cold fronts ('*friges*') blowing up from Patagonia, which can last 3 days. Pack a light fleece in case you're unlucky.

North or South?

Both are excellent, but there are some differences that may influence your choice. Iquitos in the north is a major city with an intriguing history, a dramatic location overlooking the Amazon itself, and a busy river port with boats heading to strange-sounding destinations. Puerto Maldonado in the south is a relatively new town, and much smaller, but easier to reach.

A notable feature of southern forests are the clay licks that attract flocks of macaws and parrots. These are not a feature of the north. On the other hand, rivers in the north are home to pink dolphin, and giant Victoria Regia waterlilies are found in its lakes. Neither exist in the south.

The south has a much more pronounced wet season (as well as high water) between January and March, and can be very hot at that time too.

Choose the north at that time of year: it tends to get less rain (its rain comes fairly evenly throughout the year) and is not so warm.

Pacaya-Samiria in the north is especially good for river cruises in high-water months.

River cruises are only possible in the north.

Our knowledge

We have stayed at all the Tambopata lodges listed here on both rivers, all the Iquitos lodges, all but one of the Manu lodges, sailed on one (so far) of the Amazon cruise boats and inspected the others. We have also stayed at many other jungle and wildlife lodges in South and Central America, over a long period, and visited many more.



Manu Wildlife Centre

UPPER RANGE

nr mouth of Manu River, 2 days from Cusco (or 2h from landing strip)

Excellent well-built, well-run lodge, in a great location in tune with Manu's spirit and sense of place. 30 miles of forest trails through terra firme and transitional flood plain forest. 10 species of monkey including Black Spider Monkey, Emperor Tamarin and Monk Saki. Over 560 species of birds. Two canopy platforms. Tapir lick with viewing hide. Large macaw lick reached by short boat ride. Excellent guides keep you busy.

Spacious lodge building with dining area, bar, lounge. 22 individual cabins with en suite bathroom, flush WC, hot water. Evening mozzie net

turndown service. Electricity at lunch and evenings in the communal lounge, not in the cabins. Limited wifi. Bring own wellies.

The lodge supports the preservation of a 50 square mile pristine rainforest reserve. Staffed from local communities.

Visiting researchers and scientists usually on-site and happy to discuss their work.



Manu Learning Centre

MID-RANGE

nr Atalaya

1.5-2 days by road from Cusco

Crees Foundation promotes education and sustainable enterprise among local communities in a Manu buffer zone. They operate this busy lodge in Andean foothills. Visitors and volunteers, many from USA, experience the world of the forest and its issues, with opportunities to join in local projects, cook with ingredients from the lodge's bio-garden and yoga. This is the only lodge on these pages we have not stayed at ourselves.

Worth a mention

Lodges in the cloud forest

Breaking the journey to Manu from Cusco are small rustic lodges in the cloud forest. Excellent birding, with Andean Cock of the Rock a highlight.

Lodges within Manu Reserve

Spartan but well-kept jungle camps provide the only accommodation within the reserve with a lack of amenities that is something to celebrate. We stayed in Romero Lodge and Aguaje Camp, both were perfect to the task; there are others. Some have shared bathrooms.

Lodges in the Northern Amazon

■ Pacaya-Samiria

Upstream from Iquitos there is little traffic on the river and the forest is dense and low-lying. Soon you reach the place where the Peruvian Amazon begins, where two great rivers from the Andes—the Marañón and the Ucayali—converge. The huge Pacaya-Samiria reserve protects the area between the rivers. The first section is seasonally flooded forest dissected by slow creeks overhung with large trees—very rich in wildlife and birds, and a wonderful setting for luxury expedition cruises. The lovely Mayuna Lodge is not far from the reserve.



Mayuna Lodge nr Pacaya-Samiria, 3hr from Iquitos

A lovely low-key nature-focussed ecolodge close to Pacaya-Samiria reserve.

Rooms are on stilts, simply furnished, with comfortable beds, tiled private bathrooms and private balconies with hammock. The rooms are fully screened and airy, with screened windows (not glazed). Electricity is provided in the afternoon to charge camera batteries etc.

Expeditions with excellent resident guides (including a specialist birding guide) explore varzea and terra firme forest and river islands. Typical birds are toucans, parrots, nunbirds, jacanas, kingfishers, herons, panguanas,

cormorants, horned screamer, hoatzin, and the critically endangered Wattled Curassow. Spix's Guan is seen, and Black-spotted bare-eyes, Red-and-white spinetail, Ash-breasted, Spot-backed and Black-tailed antbirds, Lesser wagtail-tyrant, Collared trogon and Royal flycatcher.

In a 3-night visit it is possible to see 380 species of birds and 5 species of monkey, plus Victoria Regia the largest water lily, and pink river dolphin. Conditions permitting, night walks and boat trips find caiman, nightjars, nighthawks, pottos, owls, tarantulas and many amphibians.

MID-RANGE

■ Iquitos

Downstream from Iquitos the Amazon is wide and busy with local traffic and ferries to Brazil or Colombia. For a taste of the forest you don't need to journey far, and with a little more time you can venture deep into isolated areas. Three lodges under the same management offer different styles.



Explorama Lodge 1½-2h from Iquitos

MID-RANGE

A pioneer in Amazon lodges, Explorama has 40 well-kept thatched rooms tucked into the forest, with private bathrooms, flush WCs, cold water showers. The large lodge building has a dining area, bar and lounge.

Ceiba Tops 1h from Iquitos

UPPER RANGE

Pleasant jungle resort with swimming pool, trips to villages, some forest.

ExplorNapó 1½h from Explorama Lodge

MID RANGE

Rustic nature lodge deep in the forest with excellent birding, including several rarities. Access to ACTS field station and 500m canopy walkway.

Amazon cruises

Experiencing the Amazon from a small expedition cruise ship is an excellent choice, particularly after a busy time travelling in the Andes.

You fly from Lima to Iquitos, are met at the airport and escorted to your boat in time to settle in for the evening at the start of a 3-5 night cruise, returning either to the airport or to spend time in Iquitos.

There are no cruises in the south.



Aria

TOP RANGE

Iquitos—Pacaya-Samiria

A contemporary-style small expedition cruise ship, with high standards of comfort, service and experience throughout.

Her 16 'design' suites all have picture windows, AC, en suite bathrooms. Upper decks are spacious with bar, open and shaded sun areas. Excellent dining.

Expeditions into different environments in the Pacaya-Samiria reserve are by comfortable launches from the mother ship with excellent personable guides; good wildlife; thoughtful visits to local communities.



Delfin I and II

TOP RANGE

Iquitos—Nauta—Pacaya-Samiria

Two luxury expedition cruise ships sailing from Nauta, 2h by road from Iquitos. Delfin I has 6 spacious suites with balconies (4 deluxe, 2 master suites with whirlpools). Larger Delfin II has 14 suites without balconies (inc 4 master suites with near 180° panoramas). Wildlife expeditions by launch into Pacaya-Samiria. Kayaking, SUP, fishing also offered.

Cattleya Iquitos

MID-UPPER RANGE

Small river boat with comfortable cabins cruising Pacaya-Samiria from Iquitos. Good range of expeditions and activities. Moderate prices.



Classic Peru
Clever modules to build your perfect trip to Peru.
A mouse click away at
geodyssey.co.uk/classic-peru

Classic Peru modules

There is so much to see in Peru that you are bound to struggle to fit everything in, especially if you are at all short of time.

With this in mind we designed a clever collection of travel modules that are easy to choose from online.

The modules make very good use of each day, without rushing. They fit together neatly to create excellent itineraries that are comfortably paced and enable you to get the most from your holiday.

Inca Heartlands

The core 'Inca Heartlands' module visits Cusco, the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu.

Anyone visiting Peru for the first time will almost certainly want to see these, so this is a core module that is always included in all Classic Peru trips.

Everywhere else

Then it's up to you. You choose other modules from the Classic Peru collection to visit other parts of Peru.

You can venture into the Amazon, step on floating islands on Lake Titicaca, journey across the high plains, see condors soaring over the Colca Canyon, visit ancient Moche pyramids, fly over the Nazca lines, or laze on a Pacific beach.

You can also cross into Bolivia to explore La Paz and even the salt flats of Uyuni.

You'd need a month to do it all, but it's amazing what you can see in two weeks.

Choose your hotels

Each module offers different levels of accommodation.

There are some very upscale hotels and some excellent comfortable mid-range hotels aimed at the general traveller. And others in-between.

You can pick different levels of hotel for each different module you choose, so there's lots of flexibility at the click of your mouse.

Choose your style of travel

To get an insider's view of each location and see the main sights, it makes a lot of sense to go with a local guide.

You can choose to join up with a guide leading a group of other visitors, just for a day or a half day.

Or you can select to have our own private guide - more expensive of course, but a more individual experience.

All our guides are experienced, highly-rated and add a lot to the trip.

You will want some free time too, so you can explore for yourself, make your own discoveries and develop a taste for local life in your own way.

We've built a certain amount of free time into each module, and you can add more if you've days to spare.

Prices

Best of all we are able to keep prices low.

You can do more, see more, and stay in some wonderful hotels, often for less (sometimes a lot less) than you can find elsewhere.

■ Take your first steps with Classic Peru

Our website has a clever tool to help you build your trip. You'll see how your selections fit together and the extra options you can choose. It's all at:

www.geodyssey.co.uk/classic-peru

Tailor-made Peru

Our specialists designed these trips to be the best of their type. You can choose them just as they are, 'off-the-peg', to start on any date.

Each of them is fully customisable, to stay in different hotels, to choose different activities each day (or none at all), or to travel in a different way. It's up to you.

We can also design a trip for you from scratch on a fully customised basis. You can use these designs as a starting point. Browse through them to see which appeal to you the most, then contact us to talk through your ideas.

Peru by train

To Machu Picchu

The line to Machu Picchu starts at Cusco's Poroy Station, runs through the Sacred Valley with stations at Ollantaytambo and Urubamba and follows the narrow river valley to Machu Picchu Pueblo. Buses then ferry you up to the citadel.

Belmond Hiram Bingham

Runs as a luxurious day trip with lunch, gourmet dinner, live music, cocktails and wine. A 2½h tour of Machu Picchu citadel is followed by afternoon tea at Sanctuary Lodge.

An observation car is provided on the outbound journey. The return journey, with dinner, makes a great way to end a visit to Machu Picchu and can be booked separately.

PeruRail Vistadome

Comfortable carriages with windows that curve into the roof to give better views. Includes some refreshments, with folkloric dances and 'fashion show' on the return.

PeruRail Expedition

Standard carriages. Basic refreshments.

IncaRail

Rivals IncaRail run their train from Ollantaytambo to Machu Picchu Pueblo with executive and first class carriages.



Cusco–Lake Titicaca

A single track runs between Cusco and Puno on Lake Titicaca across vast stretches of the altiplano—the Andes high altitude grasslands.

The line passes through isolated villages (sometimes in the middle of street markets in full flow), across wide plains dotted with alpacas, by small farms where red-cheeked boys wave sticks at the family llama, and rattles across wide vistas that stretch to distant mountain ranges with fearsome peaks coated with snow.

This has recently been connected with the line onwards from Puno across the altiplano down to Arequipa. Belmond have introduced a luxury touring and sleeper train service which operates in either direction between Cusco and Arequipa, stopping at Puno for trips on Lake Titicaca which are included. The whole luxurious journey is a 2 night trip, with a 1 night option between Cusco and Puno. Call us to find out more.



Peru Odyssey

Visit Peru's most iconic sites, and discover what lies beyond

Lima

Day 1 You are met at Lima airport on the arrival of your international flight and driven to your hotel in the city for 2 nights.

Day 2 A day in Lima to explore this wonderful city. You are collected from your hotel for a morning tour with a guide. On towering cliff tops at Miraflores you visit the Parque del Amor, where mosaics decorated with romantic poetry look out over the Pacific. In the midst of the city itself you visit the site of Huaca Pucllana, a centre for the pre-Incan 'Lima' culture.

At the Plaza de Armas, the heart of colonial Lima, you see the Government Palace and the City Hall, and step inside the Cathedral if it is open for visitors (the pre-Incan Huaca Huallamarca pyramid is the alternative). Finally you visit the impressive San Francisco Monastery, the height of Spanish baroque; its library and catacombs date from the earliest colonial times.

You are returned your hotel around lunchtime with the rest of the day for you to explore Lima for yourself. You might ask the hotel to order you a taxi to the wonderful Larco Museum, for example.

The Sacred Valley of the Incas

Day 3 A driver picks you up from your hotel in time for your early flight to Cusco, where you are met and driven down into the Sacred Valley with your local guide. You pause at Awanacancha at a community project where you can get up close to llamas, guanacos and alpacas, and see how their wool is spun, dyed and woven into traditional textiles.

Approaching the Sacred Valley, the dramatic Incan fortress of Pisac appears high over the valley entrance. After visiting the ruins you stop in the town at its daily market, with stalls for local ladies in hats and billowing skirts, and for the curious traveller. Further along the valley you visit the Inkariy Museum and arrive at your hotel. Sleeping here, at a significantly lower altitude than Cusco, helps to acclimatise more gently.

Day 4 This morning you are collected from your hotel to explore the Sacred Valley, its long history and its traditional ways of life.

Farmers till fields by hand or ox-plough beside the tumbling waters of the Urubamba river, small boys shepherd llamas and alpacas, sturdy housewives bargain in busy markets, and artisans create finely-worked handicrafts. You visit the magnificent Incan fortress of Ollantaytambo, with its finely-made temples, observatories, grain stores and terraces guarding the far end of the valley.

In the mountains above the valley you arrive at a dramatic plateau with spectacular panoramas of distant snow-capped mountains. Your guide shows you the circular terraces of the Incan site at Moray, said to be their centre for agricultural experiments, and



14 DAYS / 13 NIGHTS.

This is a suggested design for a tailor-made holiday to start on any date. Our specialists can adjust the itinerary, hotels and activities to suit you.

, on a beautifully designed journey of rich experiences.

the salt pans of Maras, where tier-upon-tier of gleaming salt pans are stepped into the hillside. Later you board the train down the narrow river valley to Machu Picchu Pueblo, below the Inca citadel. At the station you are met and taken to your hotel in the village for 1 night.

Machu Picchu

Day 5 B At first light the bus zigzags up to the ruins of Machu Picchu where your private guide shows you the main citadel complex. After the guided tour you can soak up the atmosphere, explore the citadel some more, or walk out to the Inca bridge or the Watchman's hut. To hike up Huaya Picchu or Machu Picchu mountain you need us to apply for a permit in advance—they are limited in number, so please book early. In the late afternoon you travel by train and road to your hotel in Cusco, for 3 nights.

Cusco

Day 6 B This morning your local Cusco guide meets you at your hotel to visit Inca sites around the city. At the great fortress and sun temple of Saqsawaman you walk among massive Inca stone walls at the jaguar's head of the Inca city, with wonderful views across Cusco and beyond.

At the small site of Qenko you delve into Inca beliefs, entering passages carved into a sacred rock that lead to its revered divining stone. You visit Inca baths at Tambo Machay, where a mountain spring cascades from a rock channel at just the right height for a (rather short) Inca to enjoy. At nearby Puca-pucara you see a lovely example of a classic Inca post-house, or *tambo*, of the kind that marked each day's journey on Inca roads throughout their empire.

In the afternoon you tour the city itself. Stopping beside the church of San Cristobal there is a lovely panorama of Cusco on your way to bustling St Peters Market—its aisles stuffed with Andean produce. You next visit Qoricancha (p5), the most important temple in Inca times, with walls once lined with gold. In the oldest, most atmospheric part of Cusco you visit the narrow street of Hatunrumiyoc flanked by the walls of the palace of Inca Roca (on which the Spanish built their Archbishop's Palace—now the Museum of Art). A long sloping wall of magnificent Inca 'pillow' stonework of green diorite runs beside the alley; near the centre is a 12 sided stone intricately worked to fit each neighbour exactly. Hatunrumiyoc runs towards the Plaza de Armas, Cusco's impressive main square, where you visit the Cathedral (p6).

Later you should have some free time left to explore this lovely city yourself and perhaps choose your restaurant for dinner.

Day 7 B A free day to get to know Cusco, a frequent winner of 'world's favourite city' awards. Churches and museums vie with

art galleries and craft shops, photogenic streets bustle with colour and life, while lovely cafes and restaurants await the traveller just when you might start to wilt.

Lake Titicaca

Day 8 BL A scenic journey by comfortable tourist bus across the altiplano to Puno, with a lunch break and comfort stops at archaeological sites and places of cultural interest.

The first stop is the beautiful chapel in Andahuaylillas. At Racchi, the temple of the Wiracocha god has an immense 20m high adobe wall that once supported the largest single roof in the Inca empire. At the Pucara Museum with its stone monoliths and ceramics you might buy a pair of little bulls, the 'Toritos de Pucara' that bless houses throughout the Andes from their rooftop perches (they stand on the roof of our meeting room in London too!). At the end of a journey of about 8 hours, sometimes longer in wet weather, you arrive at Puno beside Lake Titicaca and are driven to your hotel for 2 nights.

We can arrange for you to reach Puno by train or by air if preferred.

Day 9 BL A day by boat on Lake Titicaca starting with time on the floating reed islands of the Uros community in the bay near Puno. You walk about on the soft squidgy reeds, meet the people, and learn about the extraordinary life of the Uros.

Onwards into the lake for 1½h you reach the rocky island of Taquile, home to master weavers. After a greeting by the shore it's a steep puff up a well-paved slope to the village at the top of the island for a traditional lunch with a wide views of Lake Titicaca and the chance to hear about their traditions and buy some of their high quality work.

A homestay on Taquile is possible if you can add an extra night.

Altiplano

Day 10 B Sn A journey over the altiplano by tourist bus. Stop for photos at Laguna Lagunillas, where Andean Flamingos are usually seen. You pass the 'stone forest' of Imata with rocks eroded into shapes of trees and people. Another stop is at a look-out point at the Patapampa Pass, with panoramic views of mountains, including the mighty volcanic peak of Ampato (6288m), where the 'Juanita' mummy was found.

Arriving at Chivay, at the head of the Colca valley, the rest of the afternoon is free to relax and explore: you might visit its outdoor hot springs.

Colca Canyon

Day 11 B Free day to relax in the scenic Colca Valley.

Day 12 BL Very early this morning after breakfast you are picked up and driven along a road that follows the contours of the valley through traditional villages beside pre-Inca farming terraces above the river as it plunges into its deep canyon. Reaching the Condor Cross viewpoint high above the canyon a succession of condors rise from the canyon to wheel on morning thermals below and above you. You return via the colonial-era hamlets of Maca and Yanque and lunch in Chivay.

You rejoin your journey by tourist bus through Aguada Blanca and Salinas reserves with very good chances to see wild vicuna, to the 'White City' of Arequipa and your hotel for 2 nights. The evening is free to relax or explore Arequipa.

Arequipa

Day 13 B A morning free in Arequipa: shopping for fine woollens perhaps, or visiting the ice maiden museum (take a jumper).

In the afternoon you are collected for a tour of the White City, starting in the district of San Lazaro's picturesque streets, then heading to Carmen Alto with wide views across the countryside to the three majestic volcanoes of Misti, Chachani and Picchu Picchu—often with coverings of snow. You stop in Yanahuara, then return to Arequipa's colonial centre to the Plaza de Armas and Cathedral, before entering the Santa Catalina monastery's maze of cobbled streets, brightly painted walls and small flower-filled plazas.

Onwards

Day 14 B In the morning you are collected from your hotel and driven to Arequipa airport for your flight to Lima arriving in time for evening international flights to the UK, or for onwards travel in Peru, perhaps to Paracas and the Nazca Lines, the desert kingdoms of the North, or Iquitos in the northern Amazon.





13 DAYS / 12 NIGHTS

This is a suggested design for a tailor-made holiday to start on any date. Our specialists can adjust the itinerary, hotels and activities to suit you.

Luxury Peru

Nicely paced, with fine hotels, your own private guides for most excursions, few long drives, and enough time to relax and enjoy the places you are visiting, this is a close-to-perfect trip to Peru for just two weeks away. Best from May to September, but also good in late March and April and in October too.

Lima

Day 1 You are met on arrival at Lima airport off your chosen international flight and are transferred to the nearby airport hotel.

The Sacred Valley

Day 2 BL After breakfast you are collected from your hotel and escorted back to the airport for your flight to Cusco, where you are met on arrival and driven to the Sacred Valley for a 3 night stay.

You will be touring en route to your hotel. First you pause at a village cooperative where llamas, alpacas, vicunas and guanacos are kept for their wool. There are demonstrations of shearing, spinning, dyeing and weaving the wool into traditional textiles. Entering the Sacred Valley, you visit the Incan site of Pisac, a complex of ruins high on a hilltop overlooking the small traditional town. Descending to the town you visit the daily market, with stalls of local produce and crafts, and travel along the Sacred Valley through fields and meadows beside the Urubamba river. You visit the small Inkariy Museum of Peru's ancient civilisations, and arrive at your hotel further down the Sacred Valley.

Day 3 B A day to relax and enjoy your hotel in the Sacred Valley.

Day 4 BL Your local guide comes to your hotel to accompany you on visits to three of the Sacred Valley's most important sites. You first visit the intriguing circular bowl on the altiplano at Moray, quite possibly an Incan agricultural research centre whose descending terraces create 20 micro-climates.

Below Moray, on the steep sides of the Sacred Valley itself, you visit the salt-pans of Maras dating back to colonial times. Tiers of evaporation pools are fed by a natural salt spring, and carefully tended by local families to produce salt for the table. The array of glistening white arcs makes a spectacular sight. After lunch at a local restaurant, you arrive at the important Incan town of Ollantaytambo. You visit the Temple of the Sun, on a commanding site above the town, with walls of the finest Incan stonework and wonderful views across to mountain peaks of the Vilcabamba. You return to your hotel after a busy day.

Machu Picchu

Day 5 B This morning you board a 'Vistadome' scenic train for the wonderful ride on the single track that follows the Urubamba river as it tumbles deeper into the mountains, arriving at the village of Machu Picchu Pueblo, below the ruins.

You check in at your hotel and take lunch there or in the village, then travel by bus up to Machu Picchu itself, the Lost City of the Incas, perched on a mountain top at 2400m and lost for 400 years until its rediscovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911.

By ascending to the ruins shortly after lunch the main morning crush of day trippers should have begun to disperse. With luck you will experience Machu Picchu in relative peace, just as it should be.

Day 6 B You might like to return to Machu Picchu to see it in the early morning, and before the site gets too busy. We provide tickets for this just in case. In the late afternoon, after a day in this unforgettable place, you take the train through to Cusco, the imperial capital of the Inca Empire. (It is possible to upgrade to the legendary Hiram Bingham train, with dinner on board, for this memorable journey). In Cusco you stay 3 nights at a central hotel.

Cusco

Day 7 B After breakfast, you visit the ruins of the massive Incan Saqsawaman complex overlooking the city, with guide.

In the afternoon you explore the city of Cusco itself on a guided tour. Starting in the San Cristobal Plaza, with its panoramic view over the city, you visit St Peter's Market, packed with stalls selling all kinds of local produce, including more varieties of potato and maize than you imagined possible.

You visit the astonishing Qoricancha Temple, whose walls were once lined with gold, the Hatun Rumiyoq, pass through the craft quarters of the city, and visit the Inca Roca Palace (today the Archbishop's Palace). You pass dramatic Inca walls and stop at the famous stone with twelve sides, before continuing to the main square and Cusco's Cathedral, which houses priceless colonial paintings including a Peruvian interpretation of the Last Supper where guinea pig is served.

Day 8 B A free day to explore Cusco by yourself.

Lake Titicaca

Day 9 B You are collected from your hotel for your flight to Juliaca where you are met and driven to Puno on the shore of Lake Titicaca for an overnight stay. We can arrange for you to reach Puno by luxury scenic train if you prefer.

Day 10 BLD At 7am Suasi Island Lodge's own boat departs from its pier in Puno ferrying you and other guests across Lake Titicaca to their private island close to the distant shore.

On the way you call at the floating reed islands of the Uros community. You walk, squidgily, on the reeds and learn about the Uros people's extraordinary way of life. To keep afloat the islands are topped up with fresh reeds every 2-3 weeks. The Uros see themselves as the oldest and most distinguished community on the earth, and are very hospitable to the upstarts who come to visit.

Your boat then reaches the rocky island of Taquile, home to masters of textile crafts. The women spin yarn and weave using backstrap looms to create intricately designed belts while the men fish, cultivate potatoes and are experts at knitting. There will be an opportunity to hear about their traditions and buy their high quality handicrafts. Crossing Lake Titicaca you arrive on the other side at Suasi Island and dock at the small pier below your lodge.

You arrive around midday, in time to settle into your room before lunch. On sunny days lunch may be served on the garden terrace overlooking the lake, or even at the waters edge.

In the late afternoon you might join others for a walk on the island with the resident guide, perhaps to a hill top lookout for a superb view across Lake Titicaca at sunset. After dark on a clear night the skies are ideal for star-gazing the southern constellations.

Day 11 BL A morning free to relax or explore Suasi island on foot or perhaps by kayak. The boat departs shortly after midday, returning directly to Puno for 1 night, a crossing of a little less than 3 hours. A picnic lunch is provided on board, but bear in mind that the lake can get choppy: you may prefer to wait until you reach dry land. To avoid the crossing you could at extra cost stay on the island and leave next morning. A short zodiac ride takes you to the shore, and the rough road direct to Puno's Juliaca airport.

Lima

Day 12 BD From Puno, you visit the pre-Incan cemetery of the Hatun Colla chiefs in Sillustani, on the shores of Lake Umayo. This is famous for its funerary towers or 'chullpas' up to 6 meters tall. Continuing to the airport at Juliaca you catch your flight to Lima, where you are met on arrival and driven to your hotel in the Miraflores district, with some free time to relax.

In the evening you visit the Larco Museum to see its fabulous collection of pre-Incan art and artefacts, including dinner at the museum's splendid restaurant.

Day 13 B Most of today is free for you to enjoy Lima in your own way. You might make a special thing of lunch, sampling Lima's very fashionable, and excellent, gastronomy. We could arrange a guide for you today at modest additional cost. At the appropriate time you are taken to the airport by private vehicle for your chosen flight home.

You could extend this trip in several ways, eg to include an Amazon cruise, or a trip to the Galapagos Islands.





15 DAYS / 14 NIGHTS.

This is a suggested design for a tailor-made holiday to start on any date. Our specialists can adjust the itinerary, hotels and activities to suit you.

Peru in Our Winter

From December to March the weather in the high altiplano can be poor. This is not a good time for Lake Titicaca or Colca. However, this season is excellent for the deserts of the north, with their dramatic sites from pre-Incan kingdoms. Here is our perfect trip to Peru at this time of year. It works well at other times too: nicely paced, with mostly private guides and few long drives, avoiding the highest altitudes.

Lima

Day 1 You are met on arrival at Lima airport and transferred to your chosen hotel in the city. The rest of the day is free to relax after your journey.

Day 2 B Your guide comes to your hotel for a morning tour of Lima as an introduction to the city. You visit the Parque del Amor in Miraflores for its views of the Pacific, and visit the pre-Incan site of Huaca Pucllana. In Lima's historic centre you pass the Government Palace and the City Hall on the Plaza de Armas, and visit the Cathedral.

You also visit the impressive San Francisco monastery a highlight of Spanish colonial baroque with one of the oldest libraries in South America.

You are returned to your hotel with the rest of the day free for you to get to know Lima for yourself.

Day 3 B Today is free for you to explore Lima independently. We suggest joining a shared tour in the evening which visits the Larco Museum, with its world-renowned private collection of pre-Columbian art, and stops at a tavern in the Pueblo Libre district for local snacks and maybe a pisco sour (Peru's gift to the world). It continues to the Park of the Magic Water Circuit on Wednesdays to Sundays, or the artsy Barranco district on other evenings.

Trujillo

Day 4 A morning flight to Trujillo (p18) in the north, where you are met on arrival and driven to your hotel for two nights. In the afternoon your private guide takes you on a walking tour of Trujillo with its illustrious past and a pleasant 'eternal spring' climate.

Day 5 BL This morning you visit the major archaeological sites outside the city: the Sun and Moon pyramids of the Moche civilisation and Chan Chan from the Chimú era, followed by a catch of the day lunch at the nearby fishing village of Huanchaco. Fishing boats made of reeds line the beach.

Chiclayo and the Treasures of the Moche

Day 6 B You are collected from your hotel by a private driver for the journey on the desert coast road to Chiclayo (3hr). The Andes are the closest to the ocean in this part of Peru so the mountain profiles to your right are impressive. You stop to visit the Lady of Cao museum (p19) en route.

The afternoon is free to relax. Your hotel has a pool and there are several interesting sites in the area, which we can arrange for you to visit at modest extra cost. These include the Bruning Museum, the Valley of the Pyramids at Tucume, the Lord of Sicán museum, and Batán Grande. Let us know your preference in advance.

Day 7 B Morning visit to the archaeological excavation site of the Huaca Rajada—an adobe pyramid 45min drive SE of Chiclayo where

the treasures of the Lord of Sipán were found. In the afternoon visit the world-class Royal Tombs Museum where the treasures from that pyramid are beautifully displayed.

Chaparrí Reserve

Day 8 BL Today you head into the countryside to the Chaparrí Reserve (p18) a protected dry forest that is home to a range of endemic and threatened species, most notably Spectacled Bear and the endangered White-winged Guan. It is a 2h drive from Chiclayo, the final 15km is unpaved. Return at the end of the day.

Arequipa

Day 9 B Transfer to Chiclayo airport for a flight to Lima and onwards flight to Arequipa. You are met on arrival and driven to your hotel. In the afternoon you might stroll by yourself in Arequipa's colonial centre to visit the Santuarios Andinos Museum, with its 600 year old Incan ice maiden.

Day 10 B Today you are picked up and taken on a tour of Arequipa, starting in the district of San Lazaro, and Carmen Alto with its view across farming terraces to the three majestic snow capped volcanoes Misti, Chachani and Picchu Picchu which stand over the city, the district of Yanahuara.

You return to the colonial centre and visiting the Plaza de Armas, Cathedral and Santa Catalina Monastery, one of Peru's most important religious buildings.

Your afternoon is free to explore. The market is a treat, with huge numbers of different types of potato and corn on display, and a 'witches market' of folk remedies. Arequipa has good shops for high quality llama, alpaca and vicuña woollens.

Day 11 B This morning you are taken to visit the Monasterio de la Recoleta Museum (closed Mondays), which dates from the 1600s. Then at Casa del Moral you taste the life of the colonial elite in a mansion built in 1730, one of Arequipa's best examples of colonial baroque architecture. Its ornate sillar façade is decorated with pumas with serpents flowing from their mouths; period furniture, paintings and sculptures within.

Your afternoon is free. We suggest a visit to the Sta Catalina convent, although this would make a lot of religious architecture in one day. The Mario Vargas Llosa exhibit would make for balance.

The Sacred Valley

Day 12 BL Morning flight to Cusco and onwards by road to the Sacred Valley, stopping at Awanacancha, where you can pet and feed Andean camelids such as llamas and alpacas, and where the locals show their traditional spinning, weaving and dyeing techniques.

At Pisac you visit the daily market in the main square. There is a charming small 'botanical' garden with hollyhocks, cacti, arums,

agapanthus and varieties of pulses, corn cobs and potatoes, just off the main square (modest entry fee locally) if you wish.

You drive through the main part of the Sacred Valley to reach the Incan fortress of Ollantaytambo with its temples, observatories, grain stores and stone-walled terraces. Overnight in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, your base for one night.

Machu Picchu

Day 13 B You board a train at Ollantaytambo and travel beside the Urubamba River into the mountains of the Vilcabamba to reach Machu Picchu Pueblo where a bus takes you to the citadel of Machu Picchu 'The Lost City of the Incas'. Here you have a guided tour of the ruins, its terraces and ceremonial shrines, perched high among the mountains with dramatic views in all directions.

You return by bus down the mountain to the village for a late lunch at one of the restaurants in the area (not included). At the arranged time, you catch a return train and onwards by road to your hotel in Cusco, your base for the next 2 nights.

Cusco

Day 14 B This morning you visit the nearby ruins of Tambomachay with their water foundations, Kenko amphitheatre, Puca-pucara (the Red Fortress) and the mighty Sacsayhuaman Fortress.

After lunch you explore Cusco itself. You'll see a blend of Spanish colonial architecture over Inca foundations, and learn about Inca society and the remarkable story of its downfall.

Visit the Koricancha or Temple of the Sun and the 17th century baroque cathedral, then explore San Blas the artists' quarter with steep streets and old Inca buildings and Spanish mansions.

Day 15 B Transfer to Cusco airport for a flight to Lima in time for international flights departing in the late afternoon.

If you have more time you could visit the Amazon near Iquitos (p23, 25), which is the better Amazon option at this time of year.





PHOTOS: Trujillo, Kuelap citadel (John Thirte, Geodyssey), Spectacled Bear at Chaparri (Ken Canale), Gocta Falls, Peruvian Inlises temple (John Thirte, Geodyssey)

13 DAYS / 12 NIGHTS

This is a suggested design for a tailor-made holiday to start on any date. Our specialists can adjust the itinerary, hotels and activities to suit you.

Northern Peru Explorer

Travel in spectacular scenery among dramatic places that speak of Peru's vivid Incan and pre-Incan past. Cajamarca—where the great Inca Atahualpa was captured by a handful of Spanish conquistadors, the fearsome citadel of Kuelap above valleys rich in pre-Incan sites, and the pyramids of the desert kingdoms of the coast. Stride out to Gocta Falls (2.5 times the height of the Shard) and relax in nature at Chaparri. Lots of travelling. Only practicable between May and September.

Day 1 You are met on arrival at Lima airport after your international flight, and transferred to the nearby airport hotel.

Cajamarca

Day 2 B You are collected from your hotel for the morning flight to Cajamarca in the northern Andes, where you are met on arrival and driven to your hotel for a 2 night stay.

When you have settled in, your local guide shows you this atmospheric Andean city—a northern Cusco.

Cajamarca holds a key place in the history of South America as the setting for the capture of the great Incan emperor Atahualpa by the Spanish conquistadors, which led to the collapse of the Incan empire. In a bargain for his life, Atahualpa filled a 'ransom room' three times over: once with gold and twice with silver.

Evening free for a stroll and to sample one of the city's restaurants.

Day 3 B Just outside Cajamarca you visit the pre-Incan necropolis of Ventanillas de Otuzco, where an auspicious cliff face was carved with hundreds of small window-like funerary niches.

You continue to the impressive site of Cumbe Mayo, with great views of the city below, where an aqueduct system 9km long was elegantly crafted in the rock 1200 years before the arrival of the Incas to bring water from the wet Atlantic watershed to the drier slopes on the Pacific side of the Andes. 3000 year old rock carvings from the ancient Chavin era testify to this region's long history.

Back in Cajamarca there should be time to visit the daily market. If your energy levels permit, you might tackle the steps on Santa Apolonia hill to the 'Inca Seat', from where the Inca addressed his subjects. There is a nice view of the city below.

The road to Leymebamba

Day 4 B An early start for the varied 9 hour journey to Leymebamba on one of Peru's most scenic routes.

The road rises through farmland dotted with dairy cattle, into the dry puno grasslands of the Andes, and then descends through lush cloud forest into the Marañón Canyon, one of the world's deepest. The road twists, turns, lurches up and down and throws its traveller from side to side, but the wilderness and sheer drama will keep you mesmerised. After crossing the Rio Marañón you commence a dramatic ascent to 3000m (the highest point of the journey).

Drawing closer to your night's resting place, the road drops down once more into gentle farmland beside rivers that tumble gently along valley bottoms and arrives at Leymebamba.

You visit the superb Leymebamba Museum which holds 219 of the 800 year old mummies from the Laguna de los Condores site, and a large collection of Incan and pre-Incan artefacts from the region.

Kuelap Citadel

Day 5 BL This morning you drive with your guide to the great mountain-top citadel of Kuelap, from the pre-Incan Chachapoya empire (p20). You explore its very impressive ruins, and learn about what is beginning to be revealed about the people who built it. It is a dramatic and beautiful site, a massive fortress with panoramic views of Andean peaks and canyons in every direction. You continue to your lodge in the area for 3 nights.

Karajia Sarcophagi and Quiocta Caves

Day 6 BL This morning you are driven with your guide to the village of Cruzpata. Following a rough trail, you walk a short distance until the path turns inwards to the bottom of a rugged limestone cliff. Gazing upwards, you see a collection of six huddled figures perched on the cliff face seeming to survey the unfurling countryside. These mysterious sarcophagi are the final resting place of elite Chachapoya warriors and have been watching over the valley for 750 years.

In the afternoon you explore Quiocta Caves, well off the beaten track, with huge stalactites and stalagmites. There is no electricity, so be sure to come armed with a torch.

Gocta Falls

Day 7 BL Today you have an early-ish start to hike (5 hours in total) to Gocta Falls, at 771m one of the world's tallest waterfalls, 'discovered' in 2002. Locals had been reluctant to defy the curse of the falls' resident mermaid on whomsoever should expose her secret home. A 5km trail leads through grassland and cloud forest to the first viewpoint to see the full height its two-tier cascade.

Andes to the coast

Day 8 BL After breakfast you are collected for the long journey to Chiclayo. Your route winds through the lovely Utcubamba canyon, to join a trans-Andean road across the continental divide and into one of the driest deserts on earth. Bearing south, you turn onto the Pan-American Highway and arrive in Chiclayo in the mid-afternoon, with time to explore the town or relax.

Evening free for you to sample local specialities at one of the town's restaurants.

Lord of Sipan treasures and to Chaparri

Day 9 BLD A day of discovery as you learn about the Moche civilisation. Your guide escorts you to the 4000 year old Huaca Ventarron, the oldest adobe pyramid in the Americas, and to the nearby Huaca Rajada pyramid where the treasures of the Lord of Sipan were discovered. There is a small site museum.

You then visit the superb Royal Tombs Museum in Lambayeque which holds the Lord of Sipan's treasures. Housed in a modernist

building that reflects the pyramid's multi-levelled, dark interior, the dazzling splendour of the collection will make you wonder that Sipan is not more widely recognised.

Bedazzled by ancient gold, you are driven to Chaparri Reserve (p18) and the calm simplicity of Chaparri Lodge (p21) for 2 nights.

Chaparri Reserve

Day 10 BLD A free day to explore Chaparri Reserve, whose dry forests protect an important population of Spectacled Bear.

El Brujo and Trujillo

Day 11 BL A leisurely start this morning, before a journey south through the lush Jequeteque and Chicama valleys, first irrigated by the Moche civilisation who brought life to this desert.

You may stop at the small Moche site at San Jose del Moro before arriving at the major El Brujo archaeological complex (p19) with its Moche polychrome reliefs and the museum of the magnificent 'Lady of Cao'.

Arriving in Trujillo in the afternoon, you have a little time to explore its atmospheric colonial centre as the evening approaches.

Day 12 BL This morning you visit the Huaca del Sol and Huaca de la Luna pyramids (p19) where wall after adobe wall of vivid friezes were hidden for over 1500 years.

You visit Chan Chan, the largest adobe city ever built, the imperial capital of Chimu civilisation whose empire stretched 600 miles from Guayaquil in Ecuador to the Carabayllo Valley north of Lima.

After a morning of dramatic archaeological sites, you stop for lunch at the simple fishing village of Huanchaco, which is famous for its reed boats—a colourful farewell to this amazing region. Then it is time to check-in at the airport for your late flight to Lima, where you stay the night.

Lima

Day 13 B You are collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and driven to the airport for your international flight home.



A Month in Peru

If you are lucky enough to have a month at your disposal then you really should spend it in Peru. You must see the iconic sites of the Incan heartlands around Cusco and Machu Picchu, and the extraordinary Lake Titicaca, but a little extra time allows you to go beyond these—into the Amazon, up to the kingdoms of the northern coast, down to the Nazca lines—and to spend a little longer in each place. Time that will be richly rewarded.

Lima

Day 1 You are met at Lima airport from your international flight and driven to your hotel in the city for 2 nights. Rest of the day free.

Day 2 B This morning you join a half day guided tour of Lima, described on day 2 of Peru Odyssey (p28), with the afternoon to rest or explore Lima by yourself.

Day 3 B A private driver collects you from your hotel, with your bags, and takes you to the private Larco Museum of pre-Hispanic art (p14). You could lunch *al fresco* on the pretty terrace of the museum's restaurant (not included) before the drive to the airport for your flight to Arequipa, to be met and taken to your hotel.

Arequipa

Day 4 B After a leisurely start, this morning you are taken to visit the Andean Sanctuaries Museum (p13) and Juanita's 600 year old Incan ice mummy. After lunch you are given a tour of Arequipa, starting in the district of San Lazaro, then to Carmen Alto with its fine views across to the 3 majestic snow-capped volcanoes which stand over the city, and to the district of Yanahuara.

You return to the colonial centre and visit the Plaza de Armas, the Cathedral and the evocative Santa Catalina Monastery (p13). You should also have time to stroll around the city by yourself. You might visit the bustling market or browse the city's shops for llama, alpaca and vicuna woollens—some are of very highest quality.

Colca Canyon

Day 5 BL This morning you are picked up from your hotel for the journey by road across high Andes plains to the Colca Canyon. You pass through the foothills of Chachani Volcano through the private reserve of Pampa Canahuas, which protects wild vicunas. The road ascends to the Patapampa look-out point (4910m), and then down to Chivay (3600m), at the head of the Colca Canyon. Here you stop at a local restaurant for a simple lunch. You are dropped off at your hotel with the rest of the afternoon free to relax or explore. You are acclimatising, so you should take it easy. In the evening you could visit the thermal baths above Chivay, or perhaps do some star gazing—there is an astronomical observatory and small planetarium with nightly talks; low key but fun.

Day 6 BL Very early this morning after breakfast your local guide picks you up and takes you to explore the Colca Canyon and the Condor Cross viewpoint, described on day 12 of Peru Odyssey (p29). After lunch at Chivay you set off to Puno, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, by tourist bus. This is a journey of about 5 hours with several stops to stretch your legs and take photos on the vastness of the high altiplano. Arriving at Puno you are met and driven to your chosen hotel, with an evening free to explore the town.

Lake Titicaca

Day 7 BL A day on Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable lake. Leaving Puno by boat, you visit the floating islands of the Uros community not far from the city. You walk, squidgily, on the spongy reeds and learn about their extraordinary way of life (p10). Your boat navigates onwards for 1½hr to reach the rocky island of Taquile, home to a community of master textile makers. The women spin yarn and weave with backstrap looms to create intricately designed 'chumpi' belts, while the men fish, grow potatoes on their terraced plots, and do the knitting. It's a bit of a puff up a well-paved slope to the village at the top of the island where you are rewarded with a traditional lunch and a great panoramic view of Lake Titicaca. There are opportunities to hear about their traditions, and to buy their high quality handicrafts.

Across the Altiplano

Day 8 BL A scenic journey by comfortable tourist bus across the altiplano, the reverse of the journey described on day 8 of Peru Odyssey (p29), arriving at Cusco for 2 nights. We can arrange for you to fly to Cusco or travel by train if you prefer.

Cusco

Day 9 B Your local guide arrives at your hotel this morning for a day of many highlights, described on Day 6 of Peru Odyssey (p29).

Sacred Valley of the Incas

Day 10 BL Today you enter the Sacred Valley. On the drive from Cusco you pause at Awacancha where you can get up as close as you might wish to llamas and alpacas, whose wool is shorn, dyed and woven on site by traditional methods.

You continue to Pisac and visit the Incan hilltop fort guarding the valley. Terraces on the hillside below are still in use. Descending to the town you stop to visit the daily market. You visit the Inkariy Museum, which focuses on Peru's ancient civilisations, before arriving at your hotel in the Sacred Valley for 2 nights.

Day 11 BL This morning you are driven on country roads to visit the dramatic Incan site at Moray, where deep depressions cut into the land were terraced to create what is thought to have been a centre for Incan agricultural experiments. You continue to the salt pans above Maras. Here complex channels divert the stream from a naturally salty spring into several hundred shallow, terraced ponds tiered into a narrow hillside—an array of white arcs glistening against the greens of the Sacred Valley below.

In the afternoon you visit the very important Incan ceremonial site dramatically set above the town of Ollantaytambo, with temples, observatories, grain stores and stone-walled terraces.

Day 12 B A morning free to relax and soak up the special ambience of the Sacred Valley. In the afternoon you board the train to Machu Picchu Pueblo—a 1½ hour ride into the secret mountains of the Vilcabamba. On arrival you are escorted to your hotel in the village for the night.

Machu Picchu

Day 13 B First thing this morning you head up with your guide by bus to the ruins of Machu Picchu itself.

At the 'Lost City of the Incas' you have a guided tour of the principal parts of the citadel. Afterwards you have free time to explore, hike to the Inca bridge or the Watchman's hut, or just relax in this special place. (Permits obtained in advance are needed to hike up Huaya Picchu or Machu Picchu mountain.) You descend in the late afternoon for the train back to Cusco, where a vehicle is waiting to transfer you to your hotel for 3 nights.

Cusco

Day 14-15 B Two free days to enjoy the amazing city of Cusco.

Southern Amazon

Day 16 BLD Morning transfer to the airport for your flight to Puerto Maldonado in the southern Amazon. You are met on arrival by a representative from your jungle lodge and transported by river to the lodge, usually with other guests arriving that day. See page 24 to find out more about the choice of lodges in this area.

Day 17-18 BLD Two days of shared expeditions in the rainforest with the resident guides from your lodge.

Day 19 B Back to Puerto Maldonado this morning for your flights via Cusco to Lima, where you are met and driven to your hotel.

Paracas

Day 20 B You are collected from your hotel in Lima in the morning for the journey by shared minibus to your hotel in Paracas for a 3 night stay, with the afternoon to relax by the pool or walk on the shore. Paracas seafood is fabulous.

Ballestas Islands and the Nazca Lines

Day 21 BL After an early breakfast take a 2hr shared boat trip to see the Ballestas Islands, Peru's 'Little Galapagos', an important marine sanctuary and seabird colony (p15). Your open boat takes you among the islands, but not ashore. Return mid-morning, in time to get ready for your flight over the Nazca Lines

At the time of writing, flights over the Nazca Lines are operated with Cessna Grand Caravans with 12 passenger seats, each a window seat, but plane types vary. The whole flight lasts 70min from Ica. You do not land at the lines. The pilot and co-pilot fly over twelve of the Nazca figures so that passengers on both sides of the plane can enjoy them. They identify them as they appear. On your

way to Nazca look out for the natural oasis at Huacachina. When the flight returns to Ica you will meet and transferred back to your hotel in Paracas. The rest of your afternoon is free.

Day 22 B A morning relaxing by the coast before you cruise by express bus back to Lima (you are driven to the bus station and helped aboard). You are met on arrival and driven to the airport for your flight to Chiclayo where you are met and driven to your hotel.

The Moche

Day 23 B A day to discover the remarkable Moche civilisation. First you visit the desert site of the Huaca Ventarron temple pyramid. A section of mural has been dated to 2000BC making this the oldest surviving adobe pyramid in the Americas.

You visit the nearby Huaca Rajada pyramid where the stunning artefacts of the Lord of Sipan were found. Its treasures are on show at your next stop—the Royal Tombs Museum at Lambayeque, a building designed to reflect the pyramid's multi-levelled, dark interior. The dazzling splendour of its collection will amaze you—and make you wonder why Sipan and the Moche are not much more widely recognised.

The Sican

Day 24 B This morning you explore the Pomac Forest and the Batan Grande pyramids of the Sican culture (p19), then visit the Sican Museum. You are later driven to the delightful Chaparri Lodge (p21), your base for 2 nights. Somewhat isolated, with little English spoken (so not for everyone), this lodge is one of our absolute favourites in Peru.

Chaparri Nature Reserve

Day 25 BLD A free day today to explore the Chaparri Reserve (p18), which protects a dry forest habitat that is home to a range of endemic and threatened species, most notably the Spectacled Bear (of Paddington Bear fame) and the endangered White-winged Guan. You may like to rise at dawn, grab a coffee and sit quietly by a small pool to watch the hummingbirds drink and bathe.

Trujillo and the Lady of Cao

Day 26 B A leisurely start before the journey south to Trujillo on the Pan-American Highway. You pass through lush valleys that recalling the ancient civilisations whose irrigation systems brought life to this desert. You visit the El Brujo archaeological complex with its Moche polychrome reliefs and the Museum of the Lady of Cao (p19), arriving in Trujillo (p18) in the afternoon with the evening to explore the city's atmospheric colonial centre.

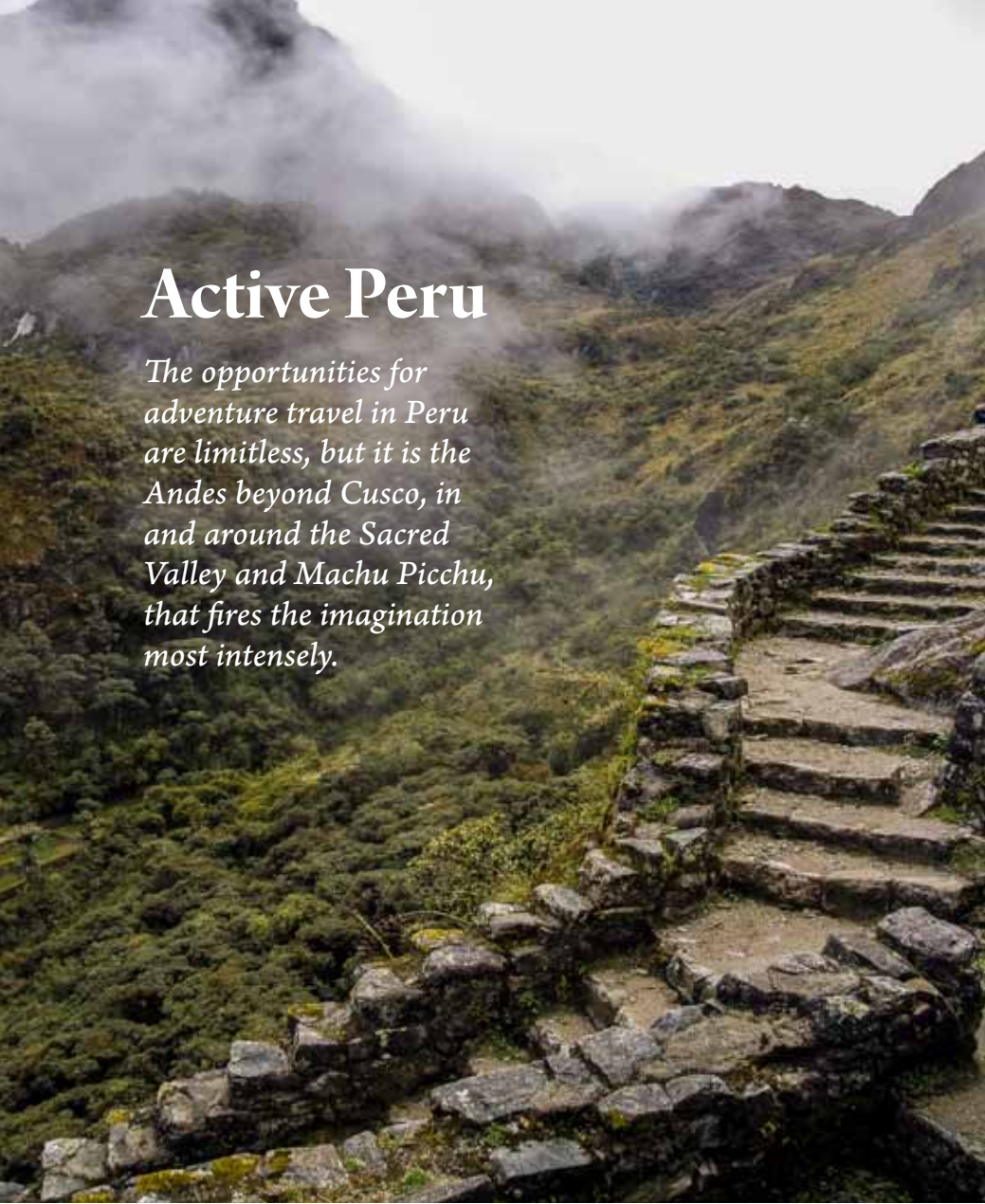
Day 27 BL This morning you visit the Moche pyramids of the Sun and the Moon where wall after adobe wall of vivid friezes were hidden for over 1500 years, then on to Chan Chan, the largest adobe city ever built, the imperial capital of Chimú civilisation whose empire stretched 600 miles from Guayaquil in Ecuador to the Carabayllo Valley north of Lima. Lunch at the fishing village of Huanachaco famous for its reed boats: a farewell to this amazing region, returning to overnight in Trujillo.

Day 28 B A morning free in Trujillo. You may like to visit the quirky toy museum, or the elegant mansion that was home to Simon Bolivar. There's also the Casa de la Emancipación where independence from Spain was declared. In the afternoon you are driven to Trujillo airport for a flight to Lima in time for onwards international connections in the late evening.



Active Peru

The opportunities for adventure travel in Peru are limitless, but it is the Andes beyond Cusco, in and around the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu, that fires the imagination most intensely.



The Inca Trail

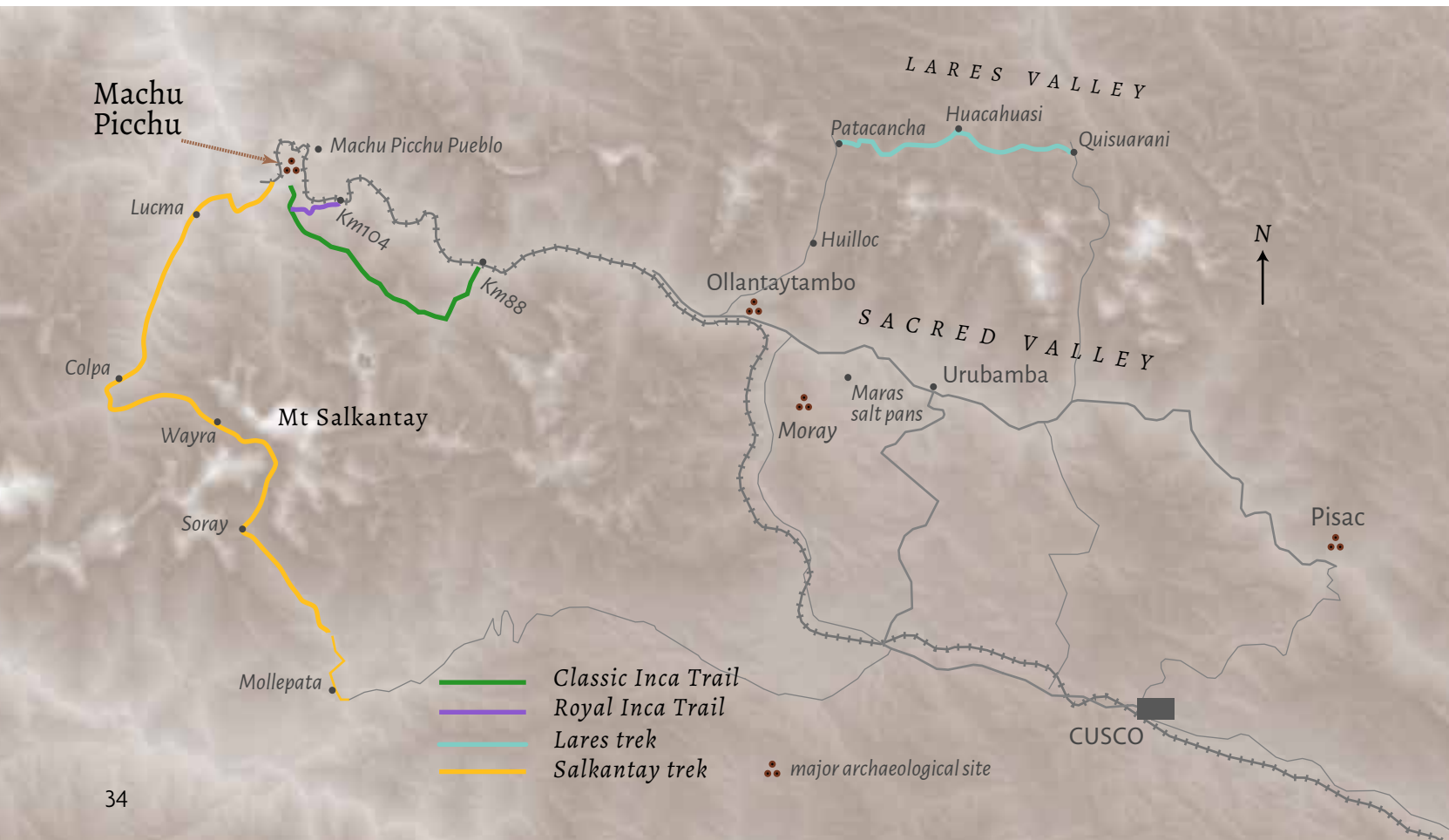


The Classic Inca Trail

The long-established way to walk the Inca Trail over 4 days, the Sun Gate facing Machu Picchu at dawn, tour the ruins and return to Cusco on that day.

Km 82 to Huayllabamba

Day 1 You are collected from your hotel early and driven through the Andean countryside to the start of the Inca Trail at Piscacucho at Km82 on the Cusco to Machu Picchu railway, at an altitude of 2750m. You cross the Urubamba River and follow its winding valley to the ruins at Llaqtapata. After lunch, the trail continues to your camp at Huayllabamba at 3000m. The support team will have powered on ahead of you, so you will arrive to assembled tents and tempting aromas wafting from the kitchen tent. Supper is served early, and you head to bed after your full day's walk.





Walking the Inca Trail

The Incas created long distance routes throughout their empire, but it is their switchback trail that runs through the mountains of the Vilcabamba to arrive above Machu Picchu that is top of most people's lists of life challenges.

These days the number of people who are allowed to walk the Inca Trail is controlled by a rigorous licensing system which fills up as much as 9 months in advance for some dates. Send us your booking in plenty of time and our local partners will make the arrangements in your name. All three Inca Trail versions require permits, even the 'Royal' Inca Trail.

The Inca Trail is generally rated 'moderate'. Best times are May-September (cold at night June-August). Closed February.

4 DAYS / 3 NIGHTS • PERMIT REQUIRED • CAMPING 3 NIGHTS • CHALLENGING FROM CUSCO

5 DAYS / 4 NIGHTS • PERMIT REQUIRED • CAMPING 3 NIGHTS • CHALLENGING FROM CUSCO • INCLUDES A DAY AT MACHU PICCHU

A Quieter Inca Trail

By starting the trail later on the first day you avoid the 'crowds' and camp in quieter places. You arrive at Machu Picchu in the relative peace of the afternoon on Day 4, a lovely time to see it, and return again the next day for a full experience of the citadel.

Huayllabamba to Pacamayo

Day 2 BLD After a substantial breakfast we set off on the hardest day of the Inca Trail. You walk through the Huayllabamba Valley with the landscape smoothly changing from sierra to puna. In Yunca Chimpa you start the day's first ascent to Llulluchapampa at 3750m. You take a break at the top before facing Warmiwañusca, the notorious 'Dead Woman Pass' which rises to 4200m. As you ascend, your efforts are rewarded with breath-taking views across the valley below. On reaching the top you will be thankful for the downhill stretch to Pacamayo at 3600m where you have lunch and camp for the night.

Pacamayo to Wiñaywayna

Day 3 BLD Today will be the longest, but also one of the most interesting days thanks to the number of archaeological sites en route. The first is Runkurakay, half way up the mountain pass of the same name (3860m). Descending into lush cloud forest you reach the Sayamarca fortress, the largest collection of archaeological ruins thus far and strikingly beautiful. After lunch, the path leads on to Abra de Phuyupatamarca and takes you through a stone tunnel cut in the mountain side. Walking on, you glimpse Phuyupatamarca ('Town Above The Clouds') at the valley bottom with neat terraces and vistas stretching out to Salkantay and the surrounding peaks. From here an Inca stairway plunges 1000m down to the equally impressive Wiñaywayna at 2650m. Not far from here you settle for the night, taking advantage of the hot showers and small bar.

Wiñaywayna to Machu Picchu

Day 4 B The final day starts at dawn. Hiking for approximately an hour the anticipation builds with every step you take. Using a torch to light your way, you climb one final staircase to arrive at Intipunku, the Sun Gate (2700m). At this early hour, the grand citadel is hidden beneath a blanket of morning mist but as a natural hush falls on all those gathered, you wait patiently until the cloud slowly lifts to reveal the glorious ruins below, a truly unforgettable sight. You then descend to Machu Picchu itself (2450m) for a guided tour of the citadel. Later you return to Cusco by train.

Km82 to Llactapata

Day 1 LD You are picked up from your hotel and taken by bus to Km 82, the start of the Inca Trail. After a quick briefing and time to meet your support team of porters, you start walking along the banks of the Urubamba river. In the late afternoon you arrive at your camp at Llactapata (2788m) beside Incan ruins. Your guide will show you the ruins before dinner and an early night.

Llactapata to Llulluchapampa

Day 2 BLD This morning you hike up the Cusichaca valley to Huayllabamba, the last inhabited hamlet on the trail. The trek then continues upwards following a mountain stream, with hummingbirds, stunted cloud forest and the occasional llama along the way. You camp at Llulluchapampa (3680m), a grassy spot with beautiful views over the valley.

Llulluchapampa to Phuyupatamarca

Day 3 BLD An early morning start to tackle what is arguably the hardest and longest day of the Inca Trail. This morning you reach the highest point in the trek, Warmiwanusca (or Dead Woman's Pass), at 4200m. After some time at the top of the pass you descend into the Pacamayo valley, before heading up again, this time past the Inca ruins of Rucuracay. This second high pass reaches 3998m with spectacular views on a clear day over the Vilcabamba

mountains. Continuing down to the Sayamarca ruins, you can stop to see the ruins, and take a breather. Then you walk along the ridge, passing through tunnels before you reach a slight ascent which brings you to the ruins of Phuyupatamarca ('the town above the clouds' at 3650m) and your camp for the night.

Phuyupatamarca to Machu Picchu

Day 4 BL Start this morning at Phuyupatamarca to see the sun rise over the surrounding snow-capped mountains. After breakfast and a farewell to your team of porters (with traditional song and dance), you trek down through the cloud forest on an Incan stairway to reach the ruins of Winay Wayna, often surrounded by swallows and orchids. After lunch and some free time at the ruins you continue down to the Inti Punku, the Sun Gate, with its gorgeous view of Machu Picchu. Walking into the Machu Picchu citadel, you have some free time to explore, before catching a bus down to Machu Picchu Pueblo and celebrating your return to civilisation.

Day 5 B You return to the Machu Picchu citadel in the morning for a full tour and then catch the train back to Cusco.

The Royal Inca Trail

2 DAYS / 1 NIGHT • PERMIT REQUIRED • NO CAMPING • MODERATE FROM SACRED VALLEY • INCLUDES A DAY AT MACHU PICCHU

Much shortened to reach the ruins in a day, so no camping.

Day 1 LD Early this morning you are transferred to the train station in Ollantaytambo, where you catch an early train to the halt at Km 104 for the start of the 'Royal' Inca Trail.

You only need to carry a day pack on the hike, as your main luggage goes directly to your hotel.

The first part of your trek is uphill to the Incan ruins of Winay Wayna, full of orchids and swallows. The path leads you through cloud forest to Inti Punku, the 'Sun Gate', and your first stunning view of the Machu Picchu citadel in its dramatic mountain setting. You descend an easy stone path to reach the ruins, arriving in the peace of the late afternoon with time to walk among them.

You hop on a bus down to Machu Picchu Pueblo, to stay the night at a local hotel.

Machu Picchu

Day 2 B First thing this morning, or at a time you decide with your guide, you head up by bus to the ruins of Machu Picchu (p7), the Lost City of the Incas. You explore key parts of the ruins with a guide, then there is time to explore, to walk to the Inca Bridge or the Watchman's Hut, or just soak up the atmosphere.

(The short rather strenuous hike up Huaya Picchu behind the citadel requires a separate permit issued in advance: ask us as early as possible to apply for this for you.)

In the late afternoon you board the train to Cusco.

Alternative Inca Trails

If the Inca Trail is fully booked for your dates, or if you fancy something different anyway, there are several excellent treks in the region that are really good alternatives and do not require permits.

The Choquequirao Trek is tough and remote. The Lares Trek is 'challenging' and special for its interaction with local communities. Both involve well-run camping. The Salkantay Trek is also challenging but goes between lodges (hot showers, good dinners, no camping).

Choquequirao trek

7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS • CAMPING 5 NIGHTS • TOUGH

The lost city of Choquequirao*, to date only reachable on foot, stands perched on a hilltop protected by deep canyons and fierce rivers, guarding the Vilcabamba for the retreating Incas. The trek to Choquequirao forms the first part of this route deep across remote mountain landscapes to Llactapata, rediscovered by Hiram Bingham, lost to the jungle, and discovered again in 1990s, and Machu Picchu.

Day 1 By road from Cusco to Cachora. Trek switchback trail descending into Apurimac canyon.

Day 2 Cross the Apurimac river, tough trek up to Choquequirao.

Day 3 Explore Choquequirao

Day 4 Short ascending trail to a pass then down 1400m passing Pincha Unuyoc ruins to Rio Blanco. Up the other side to beautiful camp at Maizal.

Day 5 Past abandoned silver mines to Abra San Juan pass at 4000m with spectacular views of Cordillera Vilcabamba, then rugged descent to dirt road and waiting 4WD to camp at Lucmabamba.

Day 6 Spectacular Incan trail into pristine cloud forest to a ridge and the ruins of Llactapata with magnificent views of Machu Picchu. Descend to a train halt and ride into the village from behind the mountain.

Day 7 Early morning visit to Machu Picchu and tour the citadel. Afternoon return to village for the wonderful train journey to Cusco.

* well off the map on p34 to the west



5 DAYS / 4 NIGHTS • CAMPING 3 NIGHTS • CHALLENGING FROM SACRED VALLEY

Lares Trek

The Lares Valley lies just beyond the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Over 5 days you reach passes up to 4200 metres, walking among communities living traditional Andean ways of life.

Cusco to Quisuarani

Day 1 LD By vehicle into the Andes to start an acclimatisation hike on an ancient Incan trails through a narrow canyon, where Inca burial tombs can be seen. Further up the valley you meet the vehicle and drive deeper into the mountains to Quisuarani (4200m), for your first night's camp.

Quisuarani to Huacahuasi

Day 2 BLD Early breakfast and set off on foot out of the Quisuarani Valley. You will meet colourfully dressed villagers along the way, and see some of the beautiful weavings the area is known for. The trail borders a reforestation project, home to several endemics. Passing waterfalls and crystal lakes you reach Cuncani where a picnic lunch awaits. In the afternoon you take a short hike over the ridge and down to Huacahuasi and your camp for the night. Those with extra energy can take an Incan trail to Lares hot springs.

Huacahuasi to Huilloc

Day 3 BLD Now acclimatised, today you head over the highest point of the trek at 4100m and then descend towards the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Taking it slowly, and with time to stop and admire the scenery and beautiful lakes, we hope to make the high pass by lunch for the best views of Mt Veronica's snowy peaks. After lunch, an old mule trail leads down to Patacancha where a support

vehicle waits to take you to the hamlet of Huilloc. Traditional dress is worn by all and Quechua spoken. Tonight you camp in a field by the village. (If you have limited time, you can take the support vehicle to Ollantaytambo, overnight there and catch a morning train to Machu Picchu Pueblo.)

Ollantaytambo & Machu Picchu

Day 4 BL Today's walk starts with a short, sharp climb to the rarely visited ruins of Pumamarca. After visiting the site, you carry on following an ancient Inca trail along the many terraces in the Huilloc Valley, walking through eucalyptus forests along the way. Your trek ends at the magnificent Incan ruins of Ollantaytambo. After lunch and a chance to explore, you board the afternoon train to Machu Picchu Pueblo. Check into your hotel with the rest of the afternoon free to explore.

Machu Picchu

Day 5 B First thing this morning you head up by bus to the ruins of Machu Picchu (p7), the Lost City of the Incas. You explore key parts of the ruins with a guide, then there is free time to explore or walk to the Inca Bridge or the Watchman's Hut. (The short rather strenuous hike up Huaya Picchu behind the citadel requires a permit: ask us as far in advance as possible to apply for this for you.) In the late afternoon you board the train back to Cusco.



Day walks

It's not a great idea to start a hefty trek without a few days adjusting to your surroundings and the altitude.

The Sacred Valley is the perfect place to stretch your legs, enjoy a few day walks and let your body catch up.

Here are two great day walks which will help enormously. They are a great way to have some active days in your trip even if you don't want to go trekking.

More

Biking There are great opportunities for biking in and around the Sacred Valley, and longer routes such as the 12 day ride from Lake Titicaca to Machu Picchu and the descent (mostly) from Cusco into Manu.

Rafting Great opportunities for rafting, including 2 and 3 day wilderness adventures up to grade IV on the spectacular Apurimac.

Horse-riding Strong stable comfortable mountain-bred horses, with day-rides and multi-day treks among village communities and on remote trails.

More treks Such as the 'Ausangate', a high tough and wild trek requiring acclimatisation, below the glaciers of Ausangate's towering 6200m peak.

SUP At the other end of the spectrum you can go stand up paddle-boarding (lessons provided) on a beautiful lake set in stunning Andean scenery.



MORAY TERRACES & MARAS SALT PANS

Your guide collects you from your hotel for a very memorable (and moderately easy) day walk. You begin at the village of Chincheros, crossing plains with long views of snowy peaks to the Incan ruins of Moray where you stop for a picnic lunch and to explore the ruins: a set of descending circular terraces that form an amphitheatrical bowl (p8).

Following mule trails you traverse an open plain with long mountain views and then descend to the spectacular salt pans of Maras (p8), a look-out point above the Sacred Valley. You descend to the valley bottom, where you are picked up by vehicle and transferred back to your hotel with the rest of the afternoon free.



HUILLOC TO OLLANTAYTAMBO

With your guide you are driven up to the small hamlet of Huilloc, where the locals speak Quechua and wear traditional clothing. You start the days walk with a short steep climb up to Pumamarca, a well preserved set of Incan ruins with a spectacular view over the valley. You follow an Incan trail down along terraced slopes valley, stopping en-route for a picnic lunch, to arrive in Ollantaytambo and its dramatic ruins. Your vehicle is waiting to return you to your hotel.



7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS • NO CAMPING • CHALLENGING FROM CUSCO

Salkantay Trek

This alternative Inca Trail goes to higher altitudes and is considered 'challenging' or 'tough'. This version stays in the lodges of Mountain Lodges of Peru (see below, a horseback alternative is also offered). A similar camping trek is also possible.

Cusco to Salkantay Lodge

Day 1 LD After an early breakfast, your guide collects you from your hotel in Cusco. En route you take a short break to visit the Inca ruins of Tarawasi.

You take a winding mountain road to Marcocasa, where you begin a beautiful 6hr trek to Soraypampa on the old 'Camino Real' to Salkantay Lodge, whose name comes from Mt Salkantay's majestic peak (6270m), sacred to the Incas and the highest in the region. Your guide holds a briefing by the fireside followed by aperitifs and dinner.

Humantay Lake

Day 2 BLD Today you take an optional acclimatisation hike above the lodge to Lake Humantay, fed by the hanging glaciers of Mt Humantay with amazing views. Lunch at the lodge with the afternoon at leisure, perhaps in the outdoor Jacuzzi.

Overnight at Salkantay Lodge with gourmet food and warm, comfortable beds.

Salkantay Pass

Day 3 BLD The big day! With an early start, you hike up the Rio Blanco valley, skirting the peak of Humantay opposite Salkantay itself. At Salkantay Pass (4638m) we stop to take in dramatic views of the Vilcabamba range, with the glaciated south face of

Salkantay towering above us. Andean Condor are often seen. Hot lunch en route. Descend to overnight at Wayra Lodge.

Descent into Cloud Forest

Day 4 BLD After a leisurely breakfast you continue your descent along the Salkantay River, through increasingly verdant scenery with warm air from the jungle below, colourful butterflies and orchids. At Colpa Lodge you are greeted with a *pachamanca*, festive meal baked in an earth oven. Colpa Lodge lies at the junction of 3 rivers, with panoramic views of lush green mountains. Afternoon to relax or explore trails. Overnight at the lodge.

Santa Teresa Valley

Day 5 BLD Today you hike along the valley of the Santa Teresa river through banana, granadilla, and avocado orchards and coffee plantations with excellent organic coffees (we visit one en route). A hot picnic lunch is served by the river, then it's an hour's hike to arrive at a support vehicle for a short drive (30min) to the start of the Llactapata Inca trail to Lucma Lodge, in an avocado orchard. Overnight at the lodge.

Llactapata Pass

Day 6 BLD After a hearty breakfast, you tackle the last day of your trek. You head uphill for 2-3h towards Llactapata Pass (2736m),

where you come upon a distant but spectacular view of Machu Picchu: a view few travellers ever see. A short break to explore the Llactapata ruins, then lunch is served at a viewpoint looking to Machu Picchu.

You begin your final descent to the Aobamba River through lush bamboo forests, orchards and coffee, boarding a train for a scenic ride (1h) to Machu Picchu Pueblo.

Check in at an award-winning hotel for a celebratory dinner with your guide.

Machu Picchu

Day 7 BL After a very early buffet breakfast at the hotel, you make your way to the bus station for the ride up to Machu Picchu Sanctuary.

Your guide will give an introductory 2h tour of the ruins, after which you have the option of climbing the steep staircase of Huayna Picchu (about 2h) which affords great views of Machu Picchu.

You meet up with your guide and return by bus to Machu Picchu Pueblo for a late lunch and your train to Ollantaytambo (1½h), where a private vehicle drives you back to your hotel in Cusco (1½h more), arriving in the early evening.

Expedition lodges

Outdoor-focussed lodges with opportunities for active experiences each day, supported by skilled and experienced guides. At the end of each day you dine well and sleep soundly.

A time to relax, revive, energise, engage, explore, and relaunch.

explora Valle Sagrado and Mountain Lodges of Peru are superb examples here. At Lake Titicaca, the excellent **Titilaka** (p17) has a similar philosophy, with excursions, activities and expeditions on and around the lake from its calm well-tuned lakeshore lodge.



explora Valle Sagrado

TOP RANGE

Sacred Valley

New to Peru, explora grew up in Patagonia with a fabulous lodge at Torres del Paine, then added lodges in Atacama, Easter Island, Salta and El Chaltén in Argentina, and Uyuni in Bolivia. Earnest in its philosophy, explora sets high standards for itself throughout.

Its lodges adopt clean low architectural lines, restrained stone/plaster/timber/textile interiors and the comfort of simple things well done. explora Valle Sagrado is a mother ship for explorations by foot bike or vehicle, selected by you each day, into mountains, high plains, or Incan sites. 50 rooms dedicated to silence and rest - without wifi, TV or minibars. Great food. Lovely spa.



Mountain Lodges of Peru

TOP RANGE

Mountain lodges along two trekking routes

Woven closely with the landscape and local culture, MLP's lodges provide comfort, quality and support along two spectacular trekking areas. There's a 7 day trek to the 'other' side of Machu Picchu from Salkantay (see above) with an alternative on horseback, treks of 5 days and 7 days among the communities of the Lares Valley, and other chances to be active. The lodges, each of about 6 rooms, are in wonderful locations, and offer fine food, hot showers and Jacuzzis, warmly presented rooms for relaxing nights between active days.

Peru for families

Fantastic places to see, amazing things to do, and extraordinary experiences for the family to share. Great places to stay, direct flights and brilliant organisation make it all possible.

Tell our specialists what your family enjoys best, and we will design something just for you - refining it with you until everything is just right for everyone.

Here's an example with lots of fun activities. Quieter options are available too!



Peru Family Adventures

A great holiday for an active family. Lots to see. Lots to do. Lots of fun on a fixed departure of this trip (designed for families) or your family's own private trip. Everyone gets a wonderful

Lima

Day 1 You are met on your arrival at Lima airport and taken to a nearby airport hotel (you will see the city on your return), ready for your early flight to Cusco next morning.

Adventures in the Sacred Valley

Day 2 **BL** Fly to Cusco, where you are met by your guide and driven to your hotel in the lovely Sacred Valley (90min, lots to see on the way). After lunch at the excellent Wayra restaurant, your guide takes you to a pottery studio where, under the watchful eye of a local craftsman, your family can try their hands at creating their own 'masterpieces'. Your evening is free to relax at the hotel.

Bike like an Inca

Day 3 **BL** After breakfast you set off with your guide on sturdy mountain bikes on a country track beside the Urubamba river, a perfect way to soak up the beauty of the Incas' Sacred Valley. A patchwork of small fields growing corn, kiwicha, and quinoa lines your route, the smallholders take a break to nod or wave. After an hour or two you cross the river into the market town of Pisac for a well-earned lunch. The market's morning bustle is over, so you wander easily among the stalls of artisan crafts, herbs and spices, or fruit and vegetables. Look for farmers from remote mountain villages with potatoes to barter for tropical fruits brought up from the jungle: a scene that has not changed in centuries. Your bikes are stowed and a short drive takes you back to your hotel.

SUP splashabout, 'pachamanca' lunch and a hike

Day 4 **BL** This morning you are driven to Lake Huaypo, among fields of sunflowers with fantastic views to the snow-capped Urubamba mountains. You help prepare a 'pachamanca', a traditional meal of meat and vegetables baked with hot stones set in the earth and covered over. Then it's time to try SUP—stand-up paddle-boarding—under the instruction of expert guides. This fantastic new sport has spread fast around the world and this is a spectacular place to try it out against a fabulous backdrop, with expert safety-first training. With lots of splashing about everyone should soon pick up the skills, wobbling at first but growing in confidence as you venture on to the lake. Once off the water, it is time to uncover your earthen oven and enjoy the succulent pachamanca lunch you prepared earlier.

In the afternoon you drive (15min or so) to the spectacular salt pans of Maras: a hillside terraced with pools of salt that has been worked by hand for generations. Glistening under the sun, they are a photographer's dream. A mule track, used to ferry the dry salt to the valley, leads back to your hotel after another memorable day.





14 DAYS / 13 NIGHTS.

o. Lots to share. Join other families and share the s with children 7-14 years old), or let us customise al time—including you!

Machu Picchu and the 1 day 'Royal' Inca Trail

Day 5 BL Assuming you were able to book far enough in advance for us to obtain the necessary permits in your name (p38), this morning catch a train from Ollantaytambo to Km104 for the start of the 'Royal' Inca Trail described on p38. You only need to carry a day pack on the hike, as your main luggage goes directly to your hotel. You arrive at Machu Picchu in the peace of the late afternoon with time to explore the ruins. You hop on a bus down to Machu Picchu Pueblo, to stay the night at a local hotel.

If no Inca Trail permits were available by the time you booked, you would continue with your guide by train beyond Km104 to Machu Picchu Pueblo itself, where there are some interesting options you can choose. One is the pretty hiking trail to Mandor waterfall (the site of Hiram Bingham's base camp), where there is an orchid garden that is also a good place for butterflies and cloud forest birds. Another option is to explore the market and shops of Machu Picchu Pueblo, and relax in the hot springs. Or choose an extra visit to Machu Picchu itself; buying the bus and entrance tickets direct.

Day 6 BL Starting at a time you decide with your guide, you head

up by bus to the ruins of Machu Picchu (p7), the Lost City of the Incas. You explore key parts of the ruins with a guide, then there is time to explore, to walk to the Inca Bridge or the Watchman's Hut, or just soak up the atmosphere. In the late afternoon you board the train back to Cusco, where a waiting bus takes you to your hotel.

Cusco: Incan fortress and Incan chocolate

Day 7 BL Your guide collects you to see the magnificent Incan fortress of Saqsawaman that stands guard over the city (p6), with spectacular views from the top of its mighty ramparts and a system of tunnels just waiting to be explored. A 20min walk brings you back down to Cusco, with free time for lunch and to explore the city on foot.

In the late afternoon it is time for chocolate: the Incas liked it and so do you, but how is it made? Your chocolatier host recounts the story and helps you make your very own bar of Peruvian chocolate.

Whitewater rapids, llamas and condors

Day 8 BL This morning you are driven to rapids in the Urubamba river at Pinipampa, where conditions are excellent for beginners. Your expert guides show you all you need to know to ride the rapids safely in your trusty inflatable canoe. Whatever your age, you are sure to get off the water grinning from ear to ear.

A tasty lunch at a local restaurant then it's time to meet the locals: the four-legged variety. Get close to llamas and alpacas, and see how the traditional cloth is woven and dyed. Nearby Cochahuasi sanctuary is home to rescued animals, often with macaws, the Peruvian hairless dog, and even pumas and condors in residence.

Cusco

Day 9 B A free day to explore Cusco, or just relax.

Adventures in the Amazon

Day 10 BLD You are collected from your hotel for your flight to Puerto Maldonado on the Madre de Dios river in Peru's southern Amazon. You are met by staff from your jungle lodge and transferred with others to their HQ in town for a briefing. A 30min drive on a dirt road brings you to a small dock and a covered river boat that speeds you to Refugio Lodge. The journey varies with river level and boat, but is typically 3½h.

From the lodge's dock it is a 10min walk on a cleared forest trail to the lodge itself. Your luggage is carried by the staff.

Day 11-12 BLD Refugio Lodge has excellent programmes of activities led by its resident naturalist guides, shared with other guests.

Boat trips around an oxbow lake look for wildlife such as hoatzin, caiman and horned screamers. At a small clay lick parrots and parakeets can be seen from a special blind. There are great nature walks on good trails through varied forest. A 30m (155-step) metal canopy tower gives great views across the forest canopy.

Refugio Lodge is run in partnership with the local Infierno community. Activities with the community include an ethnobotanical trail, a working jungle farm, and a real Brazil nut concession.

Optional local extras include kayaking, biking, canopy climbing, a children's trail, and a wellness centre.

Lima

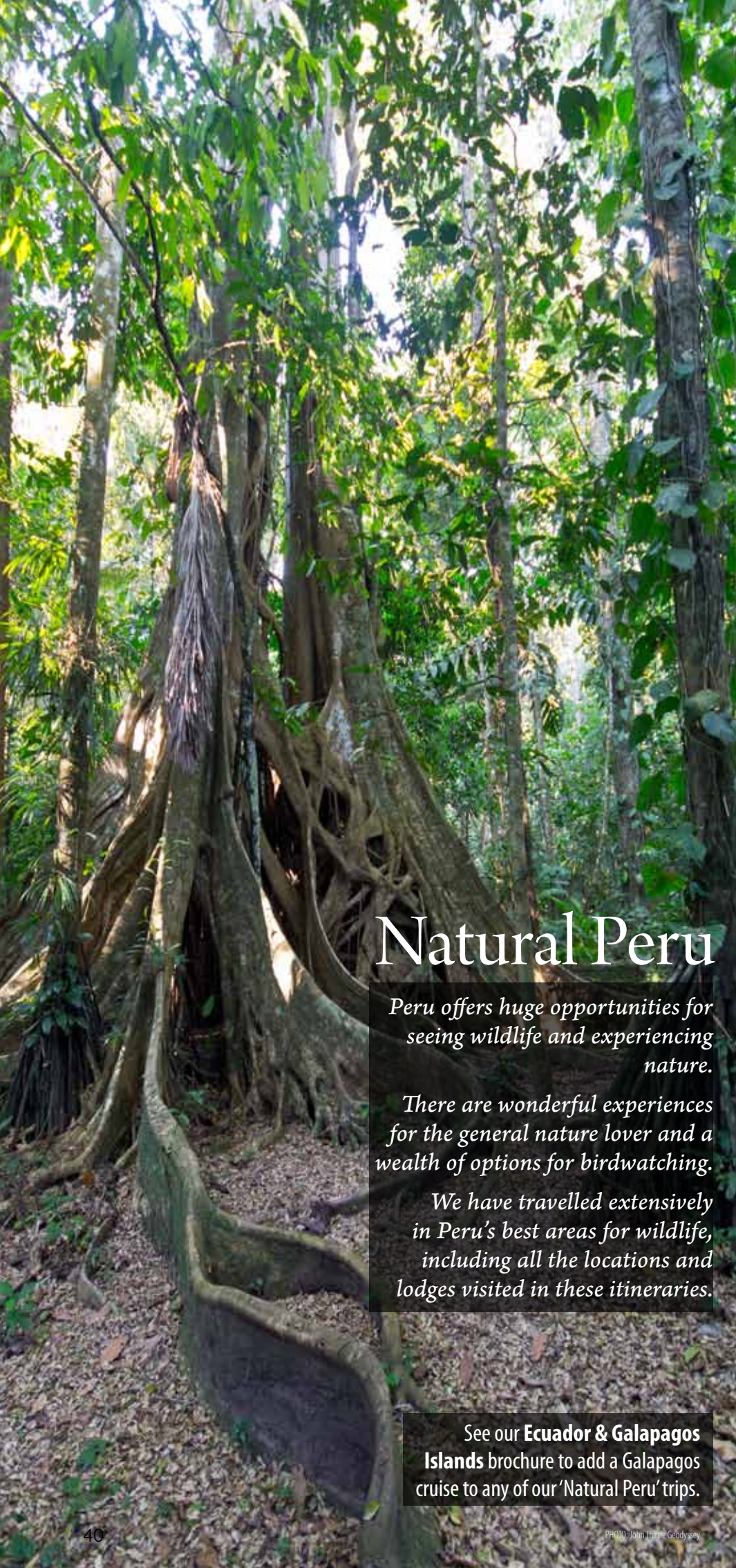
Day 13 B Returning by river to Puerto Maldonado (a shorter journey travelling with the current) you fly via Cusco back to Lima where you are met and transferred to your hotel in the Miraflores district. Later your Lima guide collects you for an evening visit to the Parque de la Reserva (p14), unless a restaurant tempts you.

Day 14 BL With most flights to Europe leaving in the early evening, there is time to visit the splendid Larco Museum (p14) in the morning. You are later transferred to Lima airport in time for your international flight home.

You can easily extend this trip to spend some time at the beach at Paracas, see the Nazca Lines and slide down the sand dunes at Ica.



PHOTO: SAND DUNES AT ICA



PHOTOS: Giant otters, Saper, Monk Saki (John Thirle-Geodyssey)



Natural Peru

Peru offers huge opportunities for seeing wildlife and experiencing nature.

There are wonderful experiences for the general nature lover and a wealth of options for birdwatching.

We have travelled extensively in Peru's best areas for wildlife, including all the locations and lodges visited in these itineraries.

See our **Ecuador & Galapagos Islands** brochure to add a Galapagos cruise to any of our 'Natural Peru' trips.

Peru Nature Explorer

Wildlife in three distinct Amazon rainforest regions, time in the jungle and a river launch. *The wonderful trip into Manu is a moderately rugged group expedition. The itinerary below would start. The Manu trip usually runs weekly from*

Lima

Day 1 You are met on arrival in Lima off your chosen international flight and transferred to your airport hotel.

Iquitos

Day 2 B Morning flight to Iquitos, capital of Peru's northern Amazon where you are met by your guide. Your first stop is the nearby Manatee Rescue Centre where conservationists rear orphaned manatees for reintroduction to the wild. In the centre of Iquitos you have a short walking tour including the riverside promenade where ornate buildings with crumbling façades face the Amazon. There is a small museum of Amazon indigenous cultures, and a restored river steamer from the rubber boom era.

Mayuna Lodge (Pacaya-Samiria region)

Day 3 BLD Off to the jungle! You are collected from your hotel for a briefing at Mayuna's base in Iquitos, to be fitted with rubber boots, and to store luggage you won't need. At their dock you board their covered river launch that will buzz you and other guests upstream for 3 hours to Mayuna Lodge (p26), your base for 3 nights.

You arrive in time for lunch and an afternoon nature expedition with an English-speaking resident naturalist guide. Expeditions into the forest are either on foot or by boat according to the weather and the water level. A special package for birders is possible; be sure to let us know in advance if you would like this.

Day 4-5 BLD Two full days of nature expeditions on foot or by boat into the forest. Extra night walks or boat trips are included if conditions are suitable.

Day 6 BL A nature expedition in the morning. After lunch you travel by river launch arriving in Iquitos at dusk and are taken to your hotel. Perhaps take an evening stroll along the waterfront promenade, visit craft stalls, and select your restaurant for dinner.

The Sacred Valley of the Incas

Day 7 B Morning flight to Cusco via Lima, arriving in the mid afternoon. You are met and transferred directly to your lodge in the Sacred Valley, your base for 2 nights.

Day 8 B Free day to relax in the flower-filled grounds of your hotel. We can add sightseeing tours or walks in and around the Sacred Valley should you wish, at additional cost.

Machu Picchu

Day 9 B Early this morning you board the train for the iconic ride into the Vilcabamba to the small town of Machu Picchu Pueblo, where you take a bus up to Machu Picchu, the Lost City of the Incas, high in its mountain fastness. A guided tour of the citadel is included, which should be quieter at this time of day. You return by train in the late afternoon to be met and transferred to your hotel in the heart of Cusco's historic quarter for a 2 night stay.



20 DAYS / 19 NIGHTS



5 DAYS / 4 NIGHTS

the Sacred Valley, and a visit to Machu Picchu. *which runs on fixed dates, and this affects when April to October, otherwise monthly.*

Cusco

Day 10 B Today is free for you to explore the cobbled plazas, museums and churches in Cusco, stopping lunchtime for the briefing meeting with the group for your expedition into Manu, usually held convivially at the Cross Keys pub.

Manu Expedition

Day 11 BLD With your group you make the descent into the Manu cloud forest described in day 1 of the 'Complete Manu Biosphere Experience' (p43). Overnight at a lodge in the cloud forest.

Day 12 BLD Travelling onwards as described in Day 2 of the 'Complete Manu Biosphere Experience' but continuing direct to the Manu Wildlife Centre Lodge (p25), your base for 3 nights. You arrive in the late afternoon, perhaps with time for a short forest walk with your guide.

Day 13 BLD Early start for the Blanquillo Macaw Clay Lick, a real highlight as flocks of macaws and parrots assemble. In the afternoon you might walk to the canopy tower or along the quiet trails looking for primates like Emperor and Weddel's Saddle-backed Tamarins—the rare Goeldi's Monkey is a possibility.

Day 14 BLD A full day to explore the forest and trails around the lodge. You'll look out for Gray's Bald-faced Saki—a rare monkey of the terra firme forest occasionally seen here, and the common Black Spider Monkey and capuchins. A visit to Cocha Blanco is an option, an old ox-bow lake with a family of Giant Otters, and the bizarre Hoatzin. From forest trails look for manakin leks with males performing dances, and walk to one of the centre's blinds at a large mammal lick where guans and forest parakeets and parrotlets come for clay. There is also an opportunity to visit the lick after dark for mammals. Tapirs, the largest South American land mammal are frequent visitors. There is a specially constructed blind, kitted out with mosquito nets and futons for the wait.

Lake Sandoval Lodge

Day 15 BLD With an early start, you begin a varied journey from Manu to Lake Sandoval. By boat along the Madre de Dios (with lots to look for along the river) to the rickety gold rush town of Boca Colorado on the far bank, then by local taxi for an hour, by ferry across the Inambari river, and by road to Puerto Maldonado airport. Joining up with other guests flying from Cusco you are taken to the lodge's HQ in town to re-pack and store any luggage not needed in the jungle. You are driven to a dock and travel by covered river launch to the entrance of Sandoval Lake Reserve (30min). Your bags are taken separately while you walk a beautiful 5km forest trail that leads to the oxbow lake to be gently paddled on a 2-canoe catamaran to the lodge, your base for 2 nights.

You arrive in time for a late lunch. When the heat of the afternoon has subsided you set out by boat to explore the entire west end of the lake. Red-Bellied Macaws are seen and heard as they return to

the palm forest for the night, with roosting flocks of 500-800 not uncommon. At nightfall you look for the rare black caiman. After dinner, bug enthusiasts may like to check the black light nearby which attracts moths, beetles and praying mantis.

Day 16 BLD An early start to be paddled on the calm waters of Lake Sandoval at dawn, the best time to see Giant Otters at their most active, catching and eating fish. You return to the lodge for breakfast and a forest walk, stopping at a Brazil nut tree to hear its story. In the afternoon you explore the eastern section of the lake which is home to 5 species of monkey. After dinner there will be a night walk in the forest or caiman-spotting by boat.

Lima

Day 17 B A last trip on Sandoval Lake to reach the Madre de Dios for your boat back to a dock at Puerto Maldonado (35min) and onwards by minibus to the airport. Fly to Lima via Cusco, to be met and driven to your hotel in the pleasantly busy Miraflores district.

Paracas, Ballestas Is and Nazca Lines

Day 18 B You are collected from your hotel by your private driver for the 3½h drive to Paracas for 2 nights, passing through coastal desert parallel to the Pacific. To see the Nazca Lines you stop en route at Ica to take a sightseeing flight, which we would need to book for you well in advance.

You arrive at your hotel in Paracas in time to relax by the pool or stroll along the shoreline. There are great options for seafood during your time here.

Day 19 B A morning boat trip to see the Ballestas Islands, Peru's Little Galapagos (p15), arriving back in Paracas around 11am. After lunch your guide takes you into the Paracas National Reserve, a very dry, very pristine, coastal desert. The rest of the day is free.

Day 20 B Morning free at your hotel. Later you are helped safely aboard the comfortable express bus to Lima (4h) where you are met off the bus and driven to the airport (1h) in time for late evening international flights home (or to your hotel in Lima if staying longer).



The Birds of Tambopata

Simple accommodation deep in the forest at lodges well-regarded by birders for many years.

Refugio Lodge

Day 1 LD You are met on arrival at Puerto Maldonado airport and transferred with others travelling to the Tambopata lodges today to their local HQ for a briefing and to store any luggage you won't need. It's then a 30min drive by truck to the village of Infierno where you board a covered river launch, usually with padded seats, and travel to Refugio Lodge (p24) along the Tambopata River (typically about 3h); you glimpse water birds, kingfishers and raptors along the way. It is a 10min walk on a forest trail from the river to the lodge itself. Your luggage is carried by lodge staff.

Tambopata Research Centre

Day 2 BLD Excellent early morning birding close to the lodge, with the option of climbing the viewing tower.

You then make the 4h journey by covered river launch further upriver to Tambopata Research Centre (p24), arriving in the late afternoon for 3 nights.

Day 3-4 BLD Two full days of birding. The area around the lodge offers many forest types and an extensive trail system has been created to visit them.

Extensive varzea, terra firme, mature transitional floodplain forest and palm swamp give a mind-boggling variety of bird-life to enjoy. Large stands of bamboo hold many local and much sought after specialists.

The highlight of any visit here is the most spectacular clay lick in the Amazon: a 50m high cliff that extends for 500m along a river bank, which can attract hundreds of Blue-and-yellow, Red-and-green, and Scarlet Macaws. Smaller macaws include the rare Blue-headed, Red-bellied and Chestnut-fronted Macaws. This is one of the very few clay licks in the Amazon where Blue-and-yellow Macaw are seen. You watch from a beach just across the small river, usually with excellent light for photography.

Puerto Maldonado

Day 5 An early start at 5am to reach Puerto Maldonado in time for those flights that depart after 13:30, to Cusco or onwards to Lima.





PHOTOS: Machu Picchu, Macaw clay lick in Tambopata, Eye-level Andean Condor at Great Canyon*, Swallow Tanager, Sacred Valley (Clom Thirte, Geodyssey)

19 DAYS / 18 NIGHTS

This is a suggested design for a tailor-made holiday to start on any date. Our specialists can adjust the itinerary, hotels and activities to suit you.

Peru Birds and Culture

An excellent birdwatching holiday, with wetlands, puna, scrub, altiplanic lakes, montane forest, lowland rainforest and macaw clay licks, artfully combined with wonderful landscapes, iconic travel experiences, and some of the best Incan sites.

Lima

Day 1 You are met on arrival at Lima airport and driven to your hotel beside an ancient olive grove, now a lovely city park, in the upmarket residential district of San Isidro.

Pucusana and Pantanos de Villa marsh

Day 2 You are driven south from Lima, birding, to the fishing village and weekend retreat of Pucusana. In countryside en route you may find Peruvian Thickknee, Yellowish Pipit, and Short-tailed Field Tyrant. Take a boat trip around the bay at Pucusana for Humboldt Penguin, Inca Tern, Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Seaside Cinclodes, Blackish Oystercatcher, Grey Gull, Peruvian Pelican, Guanay and Red-legged Cormorant. En route back to Lima visit the RAMSAR coastal marsh at Pantanos de Villa for Great and White-tufted Grebe, Andean Coot, Andean Duck, Puna Ibis, Wren-like Rush-Bird, Many-coloured Rush Tyrant, Least Bittern, Burrowing Owl, Cinnamon Teal and White-cheeked Pintail. On an adjacent beach look for terns, plovers, sandpipers and Coastal Miner.

El Olivar Park then Arequipa

Day 3 A stroll in lovely El Olivar Park by your hotel is a civilised way to start the day with a little unguided birding. Amiable upmarket locals bid you "Good morning" in English as they jog, walk and tai-chi amid the century-old olive trees. Many of Lima's common birds are found here: Canary-winged, Scarlet-fronted and Red-masked Parakeet, Blue-and-white and Barn Swallow, Rock Croaking and Eared Dove, Peruvian Shearwater, Oasis and Amazilia Hummingbird, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Vermillion Flycatcher, Blue Gray Tanager, Bananaquit, Saffron Finch, Scrub Blackbird, Shiny Cowbird, Longtailed Mockingbird, Groove billed Ani, Southern-bearded Tyrannulet, Pacific House Wren, Coastal Miner, and Red-backed and Harris Hawk. After breakfast at your hotel you are driven to the airport for a late morning flight to Arequipa. You are met at the airport and taken on a private tour of the 'White City'. On your visit to Santa Catalina Monastery look for Peruvian Shearwater in its flower-filled gardens.

Colca Canyon

Day 4 A morning's journey by road across the altiplano of Pampa de Augada Blanca at 4500m, passing llama, vicuna and Andean Geese, to your hotel in the Colca Canyon. Afternoon free.

Condor Cross, Lake Lagunillas to Puno

Day 5 An early start to Condor Cross on the lip of the canyon. Here you have a very high chance of eye-level views of Andean Condor gliding soaring and circling past you on thermals rising from a precipitous section of the canyon, flying so close you can hear the wind in their feathers. Lunch at Chivay then drive (4hr) across the Salinas y Aguada reserve to Puno on Lake Titicaca. The tourist bus pauses for a photo stop and leg stretch at Laguna

Lagunillas: a short opportunity for puna birds such as Chilean and Andean Flamingo, Giant Coot, Andean Hillstar, Puna Plover, Puna Snipe, Silvery Grebe, and Mountain Parakeet.

Lake Titicaca

Day 6 Lake Titicaca is home to all the high Andean waterfowl including the endangered, flightless endemic, the Short-winged (or 'Titicaca') Grebe. You take a boat trip to the floating reed islands of the Uros and then on to Taquile Island, while watching out for the Titicaca Grebe, White-tufted Grebe, Cinnamon, Puna and Speckled Teal. Back in Puno your hotel garden close to the lake shore may offer Wren-like Rushbird, Many-coloured Rush-Tyrant, Puna Yellow-Finch, Puna Canastero, Mourning Sierra-Finch, Black-throated Flowerpiercer, White-winged Cinclodes, Andean Flicker, Bare-faced Ground-Dove, and Eared Dove.

The Sacred Valley of the Incas

Day 7 Early flight to Cusco to be met on arrival and driven into the Sacred Valley. You break the journey at a wayside enterprise where you can feed llamas and alpacas, and see traditional spinning, weaving and dyeing. At the picturesque market town of Pisac you browse the stalls or, for a small entrance fee, visit a small botanical garden with hollyhocks, arums, cacti, agapanthus and plot of local vegetables, pulses, corn and potatoes. You visit the very fine Incan ruins at Ollantaytambo up steep stone steps. Stay in the Sacred Valley for 3 nights.

Day 8 Two days of excellent birding with a specialist local bird guide, targeting the Abra Malaga region. In dense montane scrub near Penas you search for Great Sapphirewing, Cinerous Conebill, Shining Sunbeam, Rusty-fronted, Junco Canastero and Taczanowski's Tinamou (luck required). Continuing beyond Abra Malaga Pass, with the chance of condor overhead, you take a trail to a patch of elfin polylepis where the critically endangered Royal Cinclodes is found with other polylepis specialists: White-browed and Tawny Tit-spinetail, Line-fronted Canastero, Ash-breasted Tityrant, Giant Conebill, Blue-mantled and Purple-backed Thornbill.

Day 9 Another early start to bird beyond Abra Malaga pass in lush cloud forest and Chusquea bamboo. Star birds here are Imperial Snipe and Parodi's Hemispingus, and the endemics Marcapata Spinetail, Puna Thistle-tail, Inca Wren, Unstreaked Tit-tyrant and Cusco Brush-Finch. Among many others are Scaled Metal-tail, Stripe-headed and Undulated Antpitta, Puna, Diademed and Trilling Tapaculo, Sapphire-vented (Coppery-naped) Puffleg, Sierran Elaenia, Golden-collared Tanager, Andean Ibis and Three-striped Hemispingus, and local endemics Chestnut-breasted Mountain-finch and Creamy-crested Spinetail.

Machu Picchu

Day 10 This morning you are taken to the train station at Ollantaytambo for the train journey to Machu Picchu along the

narrow gorge of the Urubamba river (Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper). You are met at the village and guided to the bus that runs up the switch-back mountain road to the Incan sanctuary itself. Take lunch, then meet your local guide for a tour of the ruins. While exploring the citadel you might take your eyes away from the Incan stonework for Cusco Brush-Finch, Green-and-White Hummingbird, White-tipped Swifts and in the bamboo areas, Inca Wren. Back by bus to the village to stay 2 nights.

Day 11 A free day at valley level, with excellent birding along a seldom-used railway track beyond the village for Sclater's and Bolivian Tyrannulet, Silver-backed, Saffron-crowned, Flame-faced, Rust-and-Yellow and Beryl-spangled Tanager, Grey-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Mitred and Barred Parakeet, Pale-eyed Thrush, Masked Fruiteater, Black-streaked Puffbird, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Capped Conebill, White-eared Solitaire, Highland Motmot, Andean Guan and Andean Cock of the Rock.

Cusco

Day 12 Morning free for further birding or a return to Machu Picchu for a walk to the Sun Gate for a classic view of the ruins. Train back to Ollantaytambo, alight and return by road to Cusco.

Day 13 Your local guide collects you from your hotel this morning for a visit to Sacsayhuaman astride its hill above the city. You return for lunch and then tour Cusco with your guide, visiting the Temple of the Sun, the Plaza de Armas and the Cathedral.

Amazon

Day 14 Travel to the Amazon for 4 nights at a lodge in the Tambopata region (p24) which we helped you select. With extra days and longer logistics you could instead visit Manu (p25) or Iquitos (p26).

Day 15-17 At your Amazon lodge.

Lima

Day 18 Travelling back to Lima by air you are met on arrival and transferred to a city centre hotel for the night.

Day 19 Return to Lima airport for your flight onwards or home.





PHOTOS: Emperor Tamarin, Striped-headed Tumbaco, Manu NP, Ox-bow Lake (John Thistle Geodyssey)



9 DAYS / 8 NIGHTS

Small group trip. Weekly departures April-December, otherwise monthly

Complete Manu Biosphere Reserve Experience

An outstanding small group expedition into truly pristine Amazon forest. The expedition is run by local partners with a vast depth of experience and understanding of this special area, with expert guides whose knowledge of Manu and its wildlife is second to none. An off-grid escape into nature.

Andes to Amazon

Day 1 LD Leaving Cusco after an early breakfast, you join a rugged 'all terrain' bus for the journey to the Amazon. On the long ascent of the spectacular eastern ranges of the Andes, you pass many traditional Quechua communities, with views of snow-capped mountains and high plains dotted with small farmsteads, to reach the picturesque Andean village of Paucartambo. You have time to look around the village, with its colonial stone bridge and handsome plaza. The road then ascends to its last mountain pass, with the Amazon beyond.

You begin the breath-taking descent into the Manu Biosphere Reserve from 3560m to 1600m, from rugged mountain scenery to orchid-laden cloud forest. It's a spectacular journey through changing eco-zones, past cascading waterfalls, with stops along the way. In the late afternoon, you walk into the lodge to the sounds of quetzals, trogons and Gray-breasted Wood-wren. Overnight at either Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge or the nearby Paradise Lodge in the reserve.

Into the Manu Reserve

Day 2 BLD A spot of pre-breakfast birding at a nearby Andean Cock-of-the-Rock lek in the cloud forest. It's a wonderful sight, with up to 25 very smart males, bright red on dapper grey and black, dancing and singing, attempting to attract the favours of the very dull females. After breakfast at the lodge the road continues its descent, passing through the small town of Pillcopata in the 'cultural zone' of the Manu Biosphere Reserve (opportunity to buy rubber boots, Manu Learning Centre p25 is near here), then over the last of the Andean foothills and eventually into lowland rainforest. A while further and we arrive at a small dock on the Alto Madre de Dios river where a sturdy river launch waits. Navigating downstream you pass riverbank communities and the settlement of Diamante, the largest in the area and predominantly from the Piro community, to reach the confluence of the Madre de Dios with the Manu River, and the start of Manu National Park itself.

The boatman turns up the Manu River, leaving the relatively clear water of the Madre de Dios, as we enter its clay-laden waters. We present our permit at the park ranger station at Limala, and may visit an overgrown oxbow lake where groups of parrots and macaws come to roost in the late afternoon.

It is another hour by river to your first lodge within the reserve, a workmanlike structure of wooden rooms and walkways in the forest close to the river bank. You are now deep inside the Manu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site whose protected areas cover nearly 6,600 square miles. Overnight at the lodge.

Cocha Salvador

Day 3 BLD You head upriver to Cocha Salvador—a lake that is as deep into the park as is allowed. Beaches, especially in the dry season, are loaded with nesting birds and feeding herons, egrets,

Orinoco Geese, terns and skimmers. Some will host sunning White and Black Caimans and breeding Side-necked Turtles. Hundreds of Sand-coloured Nightjars roost during the day on logs and beaches and there is a chance of encountering a sunning Jaguar—the world's third largest cat.

You will see several species of primate on this river trip, such as Colombian Red Howler Monkey and the Black-headed Squirrel Monkey. Once at Cocha Salvador some of the time will be spent on floating catamarans slowly manoeuvring to see the animal life of an ox-bow lake from the water. You may encounter Agami Heron or Sungrebe stalking the bank, and Shock-headed and Large-headed Capuchin monkey are usually feeding on fruiting trees nearby.

Specially constructed piers into the lake enable you to look for an extended family of Giant Otters that live here. These, the largest freshwater mammalian carnivores, remain common only in Manu, having been hunted out of most of their former range. Each animal consumes 4-5 kilos of fish daily and often they can be seen tearing lustily into large fish on logs by the lake's edge. Stay one night at a simple lodge or tented camp in the reserve; bathrooms are shared.

Cocho Otorongo

Day 4 BLD This morning you explore the rainforest on extensive trails, getting to know this near-pristine environment, stopping to see plants, insects, spiders, frogs, turtles, and a great many forest birds. At Cocho Otorongo lake there are observation piers into the lake, and a 20m tower in the forest canopy. The plant and tree life is astounding and you'll take a look at some of the medicinal plants used by indigenous peoples in the area. There is a large family of Giant Otters in this lake too. In the afternoon you'll boat back to the first lodge, to a refreshing shower, snacks, iced drinks and dinner.

Manu Wildlife Centre

Day 5 BLD You explore forest trails from the lodge in the morning and then head down river to Manu Wildlife Centre. You should arrive at the lodge in time for lunch and a shower (with hot water). The afternoon is set aside to relax or to explore a trail through the untouched forest to a canopy platform and observation tower. The canopy platform is accessed by a spiral stair.

You can choose to go on a night walk with your guide to a tapir lick. Tapirs, the largest South American land mammal, are frequent visitors to the lick with up to 12 animals appearing in one night. You wait and watch from the comfort of a special blind with mosquito nets and mattresses.

You stay at Manu Wildlife Centre for the next 4 nights. The activities for each day are chosen to suit the conditions and guests' preferences, with a leisurely lunch at the lodge and siesta time to swing in hammocks or watch hummingbirds coming to the butterfly bushes and feeders in the garden.

Day 6 BLD Some trails are especially good for groups of manikins,

perhaps the most enigmatic of neo-tropical birds, who assemble in leks to perform their convoluted mating dances, and you might decide to follow those trails today. You may also choose to visit the canopy tower, or walk quiet trails looking for unusual primates such as the Emperor and Wedell's Saddleback Tamarins—you may even spot the rare Goeldi's Monkey. Late in the afternoon a forest trail leads to a lookout point on a cliff over the river where you can watch roosting flights of parrots and macaws as the sun sets.

Day 7 BLD An early start to visit the Blanquillo Macaw Clay Lick. This is truly one of the world's great wildlife spectacles as hundreds of parrots, parakeets and macaws congregate to eat the mineral rich clay that is essential to their digestion of forest fruits.

A comfortable spacious blind opposite the shallow clay cliffs gets you close to the birds and breakfast will be served. The noise is incredible and the sight of so many brightly coloured birds at the lick is not to be forgotten. Activity at the lick slows down by mid-morning and you head back to the lodge for lunch and a siesta. En route you should watch for Gray's Bald-faced Saki, a rarely-seen monkey of the *terra firme* forest that is occasionally sighted here.

Day 8 BLD Today you might head to Cocha Blanco, an old ox-bow lake, in search of a family of Giant Otters that live there, canoeing around the lake looking for other wildlife, including the bizarre Hoatzin. You might also spy groups of Black Spider and Capuchin Monkeys. Quiet forest trails may yield good sightings of primates and the strange Pale-winged Trumpeter.

Day 9 B An early morning start for the journey to Puerto Maldonado. Motoring along the river to Boca Colorado, flocks of birds fly over the boat and you look out for Capybara, the world's largest rodent, along the river banks.

From Boca Colorado, a frontier gold rush town, you take local transport for an hour to the Inambari river, and then by road to Puerto Maldonado in time to catch an afternoon flight to Cusco, with onward connections to Lima a possibility.

The expeditionary nature of this trip means its itinerary and timings are flexible and may change.



The Galápagos Islands

'The closest thing to Eden on Earth', a visit to the Galápagos Islands is a very special lifetime experience.



The Galápagos islands offer a profound and unique experience of being on equal terms with nature in an arcadian paradise. Their physical beauty, world-class wildlife, and the quality of the best yachts that cruise the archipelago, combine to make a well planned trip to the Galápagos a truly memorable experience that ranks near the top of many travellers' lifetime 'must go there' lists.

Beautiful and remote, the Galápagos was visited so little in history and settled so recently that its animals have not developed a fear of man.

Walking on the islands will bring you right up close to courting or nesting sea birds, sun bathing iguanas, relaxing sea lions or perhaps even a rare giant tortoise ambling to its lunch. More often than not it will be you, not the wildlife, that decides how close you approach. Snorkelling is wonderful, with the thrill of swimming with penguins, turtles and curious young sea lions who seem to like nothing better than to show off their underwater acrobatics around you.

The thirteen major islands of the Galápagos straddle the equator 600 miles west of mainland Ecuador. The best way to see them

is on one of the motor and sailing yachts, large and small, that are based in the islands. Cruising these 'enchanted islands' adds considerably to the overall experience and gives access to the important sites. Hotels are available for the non-nautical.

The archipelago is a national park financed by visitor income. Preservation of its sensitive ecosystems depends on the right balance between wildlife and humans. Key issues include the impact of visitors and their boats, immigration of settlers from the mainland, and introduced species such as feral goats. Tourism, which is tightly controlled to reduce its negative impacts, provides the considerable income needed to fund conservation programmes to safeguard island ecology, notably by the progressive eradication of introduced species that are the greatest threat.

There are limits on the number of visitors overall, and to each particular landing site around the islands. When ashore you must keep to the well thought out system of paths. Boats are tightly regulated in such matters as anchoring and effluent, and long-term allocation to fixed itineraries encourages responsibility for their proper conservation. The end result is a very workable system that achieves its goals while scarcely diminishing the experience of visiting these fabulous islands.

Find out more

Ask for our special brochure for Ecuador & the Galápagos Islands, or visit our website at www.geodyssey.co.uk/galapagos



Choosing a Galápagos cruise

Most visitor sites on the Galápagos can only be reached by sea, so by far the best way to experience the islands is by boat. The combination of marvellous wildlife, a fine quality boat, and first-rate naturalist guides makes for a truly enriching trip.

Cruising on well-crewed well-equipped boats maintained to modern standards far from any mainland is never cheap. So a Galápagos cruise is going to absorb a sizeable chunk of your budget.

It is all the more important to make sure the boat you choose suits how you like to travel. There are different sizes and styles of boat, and different routes around the islands. Although price and quality are not always in lock-step, the higher the price the more comfortable the boat will be and the better you will be looked after.

A 7 night cruise is ideal for most people, but shorter ones (3, 4 or 5 nights) can work well too.

Getting to the Galápagos Islands from Peru

Flights to the Galápagos start from mainland Ecuador at Guayaquil or Quito. Both connect well with Peru. A good option is to fly from Lima (or, say, Cusco via Lima) to Guayaquil, spend the next day in the city and fly to the Galápagos the following day to join your cruise. Your might fly back from the islands to Quito, spend a day or two (more if you have time), and fly home to the UK from there.



Bolivia

Far and away the most extreme in a continent of extremes, Bolivia is for travellers and discoverers, for that extra step beyond even the majesties of Peru.



Bolivia is for mountains that encircle high plains, for hard lives speckled with magic, for shuffling steps on steep stone streets, for the labour of pick on silver ore, for the purity of salt under sky, and for deep rainforests that span the horizons.

In Peru the Andes rise and divide into two ranges of dramatic peaks, with the high altiplano plains between them. In Bolivia the two sierras grow even taller and the plains spread wider. From the eastern shores of Lake Titicaca, a magnificent 200 mile chain of snow-capped peaks begins behind the great city of La Paz. The western chain skirts the border with Chile with active volcanoes and the very highest peaks.

Between all this altitude, the altiplano plains spread out far and wide, their empty windswept deserts and dry puna grasslands occasionally broken by spurs and ridges, and a few, a very few, lakes and rivers and land that offers a hard chance to grow food.

Southwards this moonscape develops into another fantasy planet as the desert turns into pure white salt stretching for 4,000 square miles—the immense Uyuni salt flats.

Special ecosystems abound. The heavily forested, and intensely birdy, Yungas cover the precipitous eastern slopes of the Andes, before it spreads more gently into fertile valleys, richly cultivated, and the 'garden' cities of Sucre and Cochabamba.



On the way to Sucre from Uyuni lies the town of Potosi, below a mountain of silver ore that has been mined since 1545, producing huge wealth for the Spanish crown, and becoming a byword for cruel forced labour on a massive scale, both underground and in vast open pits. The fine colonial buildings of Sucre and Potosi display the area's legendary standing as a land of riches.

Below lies Bolivia's Amazon: a vast area of lowland, mostly rainforested, spreading across more than two-thirds of the country.

In the north, Madidi national park protects a huge area from 5700m down to 180m, with a handful of wildlife lodges run by local communities. Special reserves have been created for Bolivia's two endemic macaws.

Modern Bolivia is strongly connected to its indigenous heritage and spiritual beliefs. Aymara and Quechua are widely spoken. In the highlands, many variations of flouncy skirts—often in eye-popping colours—are *de rigueur*, souped up for special days with ornate embroidery and maximum sequin sparkle, topped off with a bowler hat and a great spirit of community.

Find out more

Our principal specialist for Bolivia is one of the leading experts on travel in this fascinating country. Find out more on our website at: www.geodyssey.co.uk/bolivia



Just a week in Bolivia

A week is just enough time to explore some truly outstanding aspects of Bolivia.

Lake Titicaca

Day 1 Morning flight from Cusco or Lima to La Paz, then by road to Copacabana on the shore of Lake Titicaca in Bolivia for 2 nights.

Day 2 ^{BL} By boat to Lake Titicaca, visiting Aymara island communities, the Island of the Sun, with the Inca's garden and Pilkokaina Palace, and the Island of the Moon's Inaq Uyu temple.

La Paz

Day 3 ^B Overland to La Paz, with a guided tour of this very special city: its imposing cathedral, fine colonial buildings, winding streets, and the 'witches market'. Stay 2 nights in the city.

Day 4 ^{BL} Drive south to the Valley of the Moon, with natural columns of clay reaching to the sky, and the Valley of the Spirits with the snowy peak of Illimani on the horizon.

Uyuni Salt Flats

Day 5 ^{BLD} Early flight to Uyuni, visiting the 'train graveyard' on your way to the world of the salt flats—the largest and most spectacular on the planet. Overnight at a 'salt hotel' with spectacular views.

Potosi and Sucre

Day 6 ^{BL} Over the puna to Potosi and the silver mines that brought vast wealth to the Spanish empire in the 16th century. Visit the Casa de la Moneda, the Torre de la Compañía de Jesús, San Lázaro Church and the vibrant handicraft market. Afternoon onwards to Sucre, the capital of Bolivia, arriving at dusk for 3 nights in this picturesque UNESCO Heritage site.

Day 7-8 ^B Two days in Sucre with a guided tour and free time to explore this remarkable city yourself

Day 9 ^B Flight to either La Paz or Santa Cruz for flights onwards or back to the UK.



When to visit Peru

April to October

This is generally the best time to visit Peru.

It is the time of least rain in the Andes and the southern Amazon. Many days should be fine and dry, and temperatures moderate, although night temperatures in the Andes can fall to very chilly levels.

July and August are the busiest months for foreign visitors. September and October are less busy, still generally dry, with temperatures rising as spring comes.

The coast should be pleasantly warm, with frequent *garua* mists but no rain.

River levels in the southern Amazon can become very low in the later months, making boat travel on smaller rivers more difficult. For more on seasons in the Amazon see page 25.

November to March

With temperatures rising and more rain arriving, the Andes and the Amazon start to suffer. Road travel can be affected in the worst weather, which generally comes and goes in January and February.

River levels in the Amazon rise to flood the forest, concentrating many animals and birds on higher ground. This is an interesting time for cruises and lodge-based stays in the Northern Amazon, when you can experience the flooded forest boosted by rain that fell in the Andes without much direct rain in this part of Peru at this time.

The coast is typically very hot, dry and sunny at this time of year, with January and February the best months.

How to travel

Domestic flights

Peru is a large country and flying is an obvious choice for the longest distances. The network of routes from Lima to popular locations in the southern part of the country is good, but to the north rather limited. Travelling between Lima airport and hotels in the centre of Lima can be badly affected by traffic.

Private vehicle

A driver that collects you from your hotel in a comfortable car or minibus and takes you exactly where you want to go is a nice way to travel. Costs in Peru can be moderate to high, depending on the region. Best for shorter distances, when time is short, or alternatives aren't available.

Tourist bus

There is a very good network of private buses that run between the main tourist locations and are only for visitors. They are comfortable, the level of service is very good, there is usually an assistant on board who speaks English (and may sometimes provide a commentary), and they stop at interesting places along the way. Some are full coach size, others are large minibuses. Unless they are collecting you from your hotel we provide a guide to see you safely on the bus at the start, and another to meet you at your destination if they are not dropping you at your hotel.

Express bus

The top grades of long distance buses in Peru are very comfortable, with airline seats, full a/c, and even 'in-flight' movies. They bowl along with few stops and are an efficient way to get from A to B, especially if flying is not an option. English is seldom spoken, so we provide a guide to make sure you are safely on the bus at the start, and another to meet you at your destination.

Trains

See panel on page 28.

Transitional months

The transition from wet to dry in March and April can be a lovely time in the Andes particularly, with lush landscapes and plenty of snow on the mountain peaks. Rain tends to fall more at night, but not reliably so.

It gets warmer and wetter as November and December progress. These are still generally good months for travel in the Andes.

Inca Trail

The best season to walk the Inca Trail (or its alternatives) is between May and October, when the weather in the Andes is typically sunny and fairly dry. This is Peru's winter, so Andean nights can be very cold in June, July and August. Things warm up in September and October, which are good months, and begin to get somewhat wetter in November and December. Wet weather makes camping miserable from January, and the trail is closed in February. The trekking season resumes in late March.

Guides and tours

Private guide and driver

A first-rate English-speaking guide and a driver with a comfortable vehicle is the ideal way to experience new places. You relax while you travel, gain some real local insight, and make the most of your time.

Shared touring

In popular places we can provide short tours, usually a morning or an afternoon, which are led by an experienced local guide with travel by minibus or on foot.

Group sizes are kept small, with a maximum of 12 people. The tour is conducted in English, of course, with perhaps one other language.

This is less flexible than a private guide, but much cheaper, and does work extremely well.

Hotel grades

- **MID-RANGE** A good standard option. Comfortable and pleasant but with few frills and at a price to suit the cost-conscious traveller. Guest bedrooms all have private bathrooms, of course.
- **MID/UPPER RANGE** Slightly more expensive, often with more character.
- **UPPER RANGE** A notch or two up, something rather special, with prices to match.
- **TOP RANGE** At the top end of what's available. A notable place to stay, at a price.
- **ULTRA** Well beyond even 'top-range' prices.

Making your booking

Current prices for all our trips are published online: just follow the link for each holiday, or visit www.geodyssey.co.uk/peru. They are also in the insert sent out with this brochure.

It is very easy and straightforward to make a booking with us, and there is no commitment until you are ready to go ahead.

To start the process, just call us or send us an email.

We will talk through your ideas with you and answer any questions you have.

There are several flight options for getting to Peru, which we will outline for you. You can book your flights independently or through us.

If you are in a rush to book your trip, that's fine. If you prefer to take your time, that's good too.

■ **Booking a Classic Peru trip.** Very simple. You just choose which modules you'd like online at our website. We can help you decide.

■ **Booking a tailor-made holiday 'off the peg'**

If you like one of our suggested ideas for a tailor-made holiday (or an Active or Natural Peru trip) just as it is in this brochure, we will send you a more detailed description of the trip and the hotels etc, and answer any questions you may have.

■ **Booking a tailor-made holiday** We can design a trip just for you. Unless you already know what you would like, a good way to start is to pick ideas that appeal to you the most from the different designs in this brochure. Choose from the 'tailor-made' section, or any other.

Then call us with your choices and questions. When you are ready we will prepare a full written proposal,

which we can modify as often as necessary to create your perfect trip.

A tailor-made service naturally adds a little to the overall cost of a holiday, but you're making sure that you get the most from your valuable holiday time and from the rest of your holiday budget.

When you are ready, sign the booking form that we will have sent you and return it to us with your payment (just a deposit if booking well in advance, or full payment closer to departure). Our specialists will then go ahead and make the arrangements for your trip.

Whichever style of trip you book, if something turns out differently than was expected, for example if a hotel happens not to have availability for your dates, we will work to deal with the problem, for example by suggesting a suitable alternative at similar cost, or by re-sequencing the itinerary. It's all part of the service.

Your financial protection

We protect ALL our customers

The air holiday packages in this brochure are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is 5292.

ATOL protection extends primarily to holiday arrangements that include air travel for customers who book and pay in the UK.

Geodyssey also provides equivalent financial protection for customers who do not buy flights from us and for customers who book and pay from outside the UK.

For more information please visit our website at www.geodyssey.co.uk/protection.



Travelling with Geodyssey

We know Peru

Geodyssey's in-depth knowledge of our destinations is legendary. Our Peru specialists have travelled the length and breadth of the country returning to research new ideas, check hotels, meet guides and test routes.

Our knowledge is kept up-to-date by working with our destinations every day, by frequent contact with our local partners, and by the feedback our clients send us when they get back.

All that knowledge is put to use when we are designing trips that really work well for individual customers with their different ideas, tastes and budgets. That's what we enjoy best of all.

Our experts are a helpful bunch, so when you are ready just give them a call and talk things through.

You can do anything

Because we know a lot about Peru we offer lots and lots of choice. Whether it's a relaxing break you are after, a see-it-all touring holiday, something with a wildlife focus, expert bird watching, activities from day walks to serious trekking, and more.

So if you have something special in mind, there's a very good chance that we already have experience of designing something similar. Go on, try us.

Keeping things on track

When we make the arrangements for your trip we are constantly checking to head off anything that might go wrong while you are travelling.

Even so, once you are away enjoying yourself, something unexpected might crop up, something might go awry, or there might be some emergency at home you need to deal with. It's reassuring to know that you have a network of helpful, knowledgeable and resourceful people locally and back in the UK to support you.

We're just a phone call, text, or email away when you are planning your trip, preparing to leave, at the airport, or in Peru.

We are trusted by demanding clients

We've been planning trips to Latin America for our clients every day of every week for over twenty years. They are a great bunch of people: school teachers, doctors, cabinet ministers, business people, retirees, honeymooners, young professionals in couples and groups, birdwatchers, walkers, wildlife photographers, and many more. They are all demanding in their different ways.

At the end of their trip our customers award us very high ratings. 98% rate our specialists as 'Excellent'. So we must be getting things right.

Conde Nast Traveler magazine expressed it well when they chose Geodyssey for their Special Agent list:

"This list represents those who have impressed me the most with their knowledge of specific destinations and types of travel. They also possess a certain degree of frankness, friendliness, taste, the willingness to work with a range of customers and budgets, and an understanding of the types of experiences that Conde Nast Traveler readers want."





This travel brochure is part of a series prepared by Geodyssey on some of our destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

For others in the series please call us or visit www.geodyssey.co.uk.



 **GEODYSSEY**
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



Telephone 020 7281 7788

Fax 020 7281 7878

www.geodyssey.co.uk

enquiries@geodyssey.co.uk

116 Tollington Park, London N4 3RB, England