

THE ESSENCE OF PERU TOUR

The Highlights of Peru: Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Colca Canyon, Nazca Lines, Arequipa & Lima

15 DAYS / 14 NIGHTS

Historic Lima, the Ballestas Isles (the 'Galapagos of Peru'), Nazca Lines, the white city of Arequipa, Lake Titicaca, mystic Cuzco, the Sacred Valley & Machu Picchu: this is THE classic highlights of southern Peru. Winding up the Andes, the gradual climb allows for easier adaption to the altitude, with each day's highlights exceeding the last's. Embark on a two-week journey to the Land of the Incas, where the remnants of their magnificent civilization continue to capture the imagination. Starting in the City of Kings, Lima, you'll learn about the history of the Spanish conquistadors. Journey into the heart of Peru, visiting the mysterious Nazca Lines, the beautiful bay of Paracas, the mythical Lake Titicaca, and of course, the city in the sky, Machu Picchu.

FROM
\$ 3720
per person

THIS TOUR INCLUDES:

- 14 nights in 4-star Hotels
- All Breakfasts, 2 lunches & 1 dinner
- All Tours and Transfers
- All Entrance Fees
- Train Rides and/or Bus Transportation

HIGHLIGHTS

- Lima, Arequipa & Cuzco City Tours
- Paracas Bay Beach Resort
- Ballesta Islands Cruise
- Nazca Lines Overflight
- Colca Canyon & Condor Mirador
- Lake Titicaca & Floating Islands
- Tour of Machu Picchu

ITINERARY



Day 1

ARRIVE IN LIMA, THE CITY OF KINGS

Upon arrival at the Lima airport, you will be greeted by one of our travel representatives and transferred to your Lima hotel. Spend the day at your leisure exploring the fascinating, sprawling capital of Peru. You can also take this chance to try the delicious Peruvian cuisine at one of the local restaurants since Lima is known as the gastronomic capital of South America.



Day 2

LIMA TO PARACAS BAY

Today you will travel to the coastal town of Paracas via coach. Spend the evening walking along the waterfront and enjoying the peaceful bay views of this natural haven.



Day 3

BALLESTAS ISLANDS & ICA TOUR

Today, get to the pier to board a boat to explore the Paracas Bay and its exotic fauna.

Home to hundreds of thousands of seabirds, sea lions, cormorants, and Humboldt penguins, the Ballestas Islands are one of the most breathtaking sights along the Southern coastal desert of Peru. Your motorboat ride will whisk you from the Paracas bay (where you are likely to spot a few friendly dolphins) to the Candelabra geoglyph carved into the cliffside and visible only from offshore. Next, continue to the Ballesta, and make sure to bring a warm, waterproof jacket and a hat for this excursion.

After you have had your fill of the Paracas sunshine, take a private transfer to the nearby city of Ica, where a local guide will show you the dune oasis called Huacachina. Continue about 2 hours to the desert town of Nazca, where you can check into your hotel.



Day 4

NAZCA LINES FLIGHT & TRANSFER TO AREQUIPA

Early in the morning, transfer to the Nazca airport to see the famous Nazca Lines. Due to their impressive size, these 12 lines can only be fully appreciated from the skies. The overflight allows you to see all of them, including the monkey, eagle, and astronaut. The Nazca Lines were etched into the desert floor thousands of years ago but are still visible today due to the incredibly dry climate. There are many theories about the purpose and meaning of the lines, but none of them is conclusive. Take the overflight and try to unravel the mystery yourself!

After your Nazca Lines flight, take a comfortable coach for an eight-hour journey along the south central region of Peru to the high altitude city of Arequipa, nestled at the foot of the towering El Misti volcano. Transfer to your hotel.

Note: Airport tax is not included.



Day 5

AREQUIPA CITY TOUR

Enjoy a delicious breakfast at your hotel and take a three hour Arequipa City Tour to visit the highlights of "The White City." Its nickname is due to the gleaming buildings made of white volcanic sillar stone. Arequipa was once an important city along the trade route between Lima and Santiago.

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Arequipa has preserved much of its colonial architecture, including the Cathedral de San Francisco, La Compañía de Jesús Church, and the Santa Catalina Convent. Walk down the cobblestone streets of Yanahuara neighborhood and take in magnificent views of the city as well as three volcanoes: El Misti, Chachani, and Pichupichu.



Day 6

TRANSFER TO THE COLCA CANYON

Early in the morning, depart to the quiet town of Chivay, located in the Colca Valley. The road winds through the Pampa Cañahuas National Reserve, where you might spot vicuñas, llamas and alpacas. Head to the community of Pata Wasi, from where you can appreciate intriguing rock formations under the gaze of the Misti and Chachani Volcanoes. To help you acclimatize to the altitude, you will stop at a rustic restaurant on the road to drink a local 'mate de coca' or another hot drink.

Take a scenic tour of Tocra, a high plain at about 4,500 m (14,765 ft). Admire the Andean lakes and the local fauna made up of migratory birds and camelids. Reach its highest point, Pata Pampa, to feel the presence of mountain peaks and volcanoes of Ampato, Sabancaya, Hualca-Hualca, Mismi, and the Chila Mountain Chain.

Once you arrive, head directly to your hotel. If you want to take a relaxing break, try a warm soak in the thermal springs of La Calera. Spend the night at your hotel admiring the most beautiful scenery in the Colca Canyon.



Day 7

COLCA VALLEY TOUR & CRUZ DEL CONDOR

Today, delve into the Colca Canyon, where Andean Condors rule the skies. Leave early and head to the Cruz del Condor, the perfect spot for catching sight of the giant Andean Condors flying over the spectacular canyon. A short hike will allow you to peer into the Colca Canyon.

Continue to the Colca Valley and view the canyon and Andean farming terraces built by the Collaguas. Then, visit Choquetico to see its carved stone model of terraces and mountains. Finish the tour with a cultural experience at Maca, an Andean community that experienced an earthquake in 1991, and the town of Yanque, with the most beautiful church in the whole valley.



Day 8

ARRIVAL IN PUNO

After breakfast at the hotel, set off for a 6-hour journey to the town of Puno, on the shores of Lake Titicaca. Check in to your Puno hotel and spend the rest of the day at your leisure. Go for a stroll along the shores, admire handmade crafts of the locals, or take a tour of the Yaravi, the oldest motorized iron ship of the world. Spend the night on the shores of Lake Titicaca.



Day 9

UROS FLOATING ISLANDS & SILLUSTANI RUINS TOUR

No trip to Puno would be complete without a 3-hour boat tour to see the fascinating floating islands of Uros! Discover the ancient tradition of reeds craftsmen, declared an Intangible Cultural World Heritage. Locals have been using this technique to build boats, handicrafts, and even the islands themselves from the Totorá reed.

In the afternoon, enjoy a 3-hour excursion to the Chullpas de Sillustani. These funerary towers, built in the 13th century, were an important area in Puno. From the ruins, approximately 35 km from Puno, you can see the nearby Lago Umayo and other breathtaking vistas.



Day 10

TRANSFER & TOUR FROM PUNO TO CUZCO

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel and meet your guide for a private coach transfer from Puno across the Altiplano to Cuzco. The first stop along the journey will be in Pucara, just North of Puno. Explore these pre-Inca ruins and the ceremonial center built by the Pucara Culture, one of Titicaca's earliest cultures (300 BC to 300 A.D.). The ruins offer a glimpse into the origins of Lake Titicaca's civilization showing clear links to the Chavin culture that flourished in Peru's central mountains. The first temple is U-shaped and was originally decorated with stelae, or carved stone slabs, showing a deity similar to the degollador, or decapitating deity of the Chavin.

Continue to the town of Sucuani and stop for lunch before arriving at Raqchi, a ceremonial center built by Pachacutec. Raqchi shows the ambition and organization skills of Pachacutec's empire. Walk past the Temple of Viracocha and admire the massive adobe brick wall rising nearly 45 ft high and stretching over 270 ft long. Snap some photos and continue to Andahuaylillas, a colonial village with a charming plaza shaded with red-flowered pisonay trees. Walk inside the San Pedro Chapel, nicknamed the Sistine Chapel of America, admire the dazzling frescos and wall-to-wall colonial paintings in one of Peru's most finely decorated churches.

In the late afternoon, arrive in Cuzco, the old capital of the Inca Empire. Check into your hotel and spend the rest of the night at your leisure.

Note: Depending on the day of the week, travelers can upgrade to the Titicaca Train (on request).



Day 11

SACRED VALLEY: PISAK MARKET & INCA RUINS

A must-see full day tour of the Sacred Valley of the Incas takes you from Cuzco along the Urubamba river valley to the towns of Pisac and Ollantaytambo. Pisac is most famous for its market, open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Local farmers and craftspeople bring their goods to town to sell and trade. Stroll through the rows of goods and you are sure to find something to take with you back home and remember your trip to Peru. The tour includes lunch at a local restaurant. Continue to Ollantaytambo, known for its massive cliffside ruins built by the Incas. Enjoy a tour of the ruins and breathtaking views of the valley, before checking into your hotel for the evening. Overnight in the Sacred Valley, halfway between Cuzco and Machu Picchu.



Day 12

FULL DAY MACHU PICCHU TOUR

Have an early breakfast at your hotel and prepare for the tour of a lifetime to see Machu Picchu, the stunning city in the sky. Travel through the Sacred Valley into the cloud forest, where the city of Machu Picchu laid relatively hidden for centuries. The first class Vistadome train, with its glass ceiling, allows you ample room to admire the unbeatable scenery as you take the 2-hour journey towards Machu Picchu. Arrive in Aguas Calientes, the town at the foot of Machu Picchu. Enjoy a short walk over to the shuttle bus station, which will whisk you up the mountain to the entrance to Machu Picchu. There your guide will greet you and take you on a tour of the fascinating city of the Incas.

Gazing in wonder at the extensive stone ruins, steep terraces, and looming cliffs will make you realize why Machu Picchu is one of the natural wonders of the world. The stonework at Machu Picchu is so well-engineered that many of the walls are almost entirely intact since the days of the Incas in the 15th and 16th centuries.

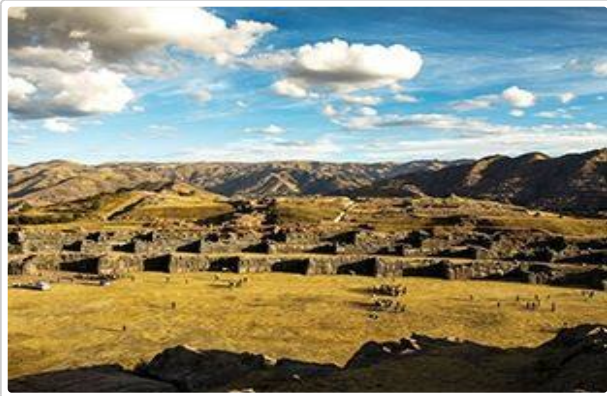
After the tour, wander through the ruins on your own. Take the train to Aguas Calientes, the closest town to the ruins.



Day 13

MACHU PICCHU & AGUAS CALIENTES

Enjoy breakfast in your hotel in Aguas Calientes. If you wish, you can return to Machu Picchu for an extra day to explore the majestic city in the sky. In the early afternoon, catch your train from Aguas Calientes to Cuzco. Once you arrive in Cuzco, you will be greeted by your guide and taken back to your hotel.



Day 14

CUZCO CITY TOUR & DINNER SHOW

Enjoy an early breakfast in your hotel. Discover the fascinating historical and cultural legacy of the Incas in the capital of the Inca Empire on this 4-hour Cuzco city tour. Visit Korikancha, known as the Temple of the Sun during Inca times in the 13th-15th centuries, and the site of the Spanish Convent of Santo Domingo. See the Cathedral, facing the Plaza de Armas in the heart of downtown Cuzco.

Tour the ruins of Sacsayhuaman, located above the city, and enjoy spectacular views of the city. Follow the road up to several other Inca stone ruins, including Q'enqo, Puca Pucara and Tambomachay.

In the evening, you'll be taken out on the town for a night of Andean culture and entertainment including dinner and a folklore show. Dine on traditional Andean food while you are serenaded by a troupe of musicians and dancers wearing traditional garb and performing tunes such as Andean Huaynos, Sikus, Tuntunas, Sanjuanitos.



Day 15

RETURN TO LIMA & LIMA CITY TOUR

After breakfast, your driver will take you to the Cusco airport to catch your flight to Lima. Once you arrive at the Lima airport, a guide will take you on a tour of the city of Lima. Among the highlights of Lima, you will see its colonial architecture and beautiful coastline. Visit the Monastery of San Francisco, the San Isidro olive groves, the pre-Inca worship centers of Huallamarca and Pucllana, the Miraflores Parque Central, and the romantic Parque del Amor. Go to the main square to see the Government Palace, Cathedral, Archbishop Palace, and City Hall. Walk around the old streets with colonial mansions and Moorish balconies, Paseo de la Republica and San Martin Square.

After this Lima city tour, you'll be taken back to the airport for your flight home or to your next destination on your South American adventure.