

Peru Express Tour

Peru Express – 11 Days – 10 Nights

Peru Express is designed for those seeking to experience the essence of the Andes and wanting to unravel some of the mysteries of Inca culture. The tour begins in the colonial city of Arequipa, with cream-colored volcanic stone architecture, its lovely Plaza de Armas, and spectacular views of Misti and Chachani, two nearby volcanoes. Following Arequipa, we visit Colca Canyon, one of the deepest canyons in the world, where mighty Andean condors soar above the rim of the canyon. We also cruise Lake Titicaca, the world's highest (navigable) lake. Here, on Taquile and Uros Islands, ancient traditions co-exist with modern-day life. We symbolically retrace the path of Manco Capac (the founder of Cusco), and visit that city, too – the center of Inca culture and the meeting point between Spanish and Inca culture. Fascination is an understatement when describing the beauty of the Sacred Valley of the Incas; here we find the fortresses of both Pisac and Ollantaytambo, representing the best surviving examples of the architecture of the time – before the arrival of the conquistadores. Finally, you will enter Machu Picchu, to live the legend of the Incas and discover one of the new Seven Wonders of the World!



Price of the tour (per person): USD\$ 1,750

DAY 1. Welcome to Peru

Welcome to Arequipa, colonial in style but well-refined. Today we take a full day to acclimatise before heading high into the Andes. After check-in at the hotel, the morning is free for you to rest and perhaps sip some mate de coca, which helps one acclimatise to the elevation: 2,400 metres above sea level (7,874 feet). In the afternoon, our local guide conducts a tour of one of the most important religious monuments in Peru: the Santa Catalina Monastery. A very imposing structure, the Monastery was founded in 1580. In colonial times, it received nuns from wealthy Spanish families – and our guide will share with us intriguing stories about the nuns of that time and their lifestyles. In the evening, and especially at sundown, enjoy the great view of Plaza de Armas (the main square) and the many bars and fine restaurants that dot Arequipa's downtown.

DAY 2. Arequipa: la Ciudad Blanca (The White City)



Following breakfast, we head for a workshop where craftsmen demonstrate how they work with the local, cream-coloured, volcanic rock called sillar, which gives Arequipa its nickname: the White City. (Sillar is used in construction throughout the city!) Our tour then continues with a visit to the Alpaca Museum. (Four million Alpaca inhabit Peru; they are cameloids from which we get one of the finest fibres in the world, on a par with cashmere). Here, we see how alpaca fibre is traditionally woven, on back-strap looms – a method still in use today throughout Peru. The day continues with a cuisine demonstration featuring typical Arequipeño dishes, and we will see how good you are at cooking!

The afternoon is reserved for simply relaxing and acclimatizing to the altitude. You can wander about the city centre, if you so desire, and do some shopping. This is a good opportunity to buy some alpaca garments, because Arequipa is the centre of alpaca yarn production in Peru – and the world! (More than 80% of the world's alpaca yarn is produced here.) There is a wide variety of shops

from which to choose and we can help advise you in where to buy. We have agreements with some shops and you'll receive a 20% discount. .

DAY 3. The Andes and Colca Canyon



After breakfast, we set off to **Colca Canyon** (3,191 metres, 10,460 feet), the second deepest canyon in the world, and twice the depth of the Grand Canyon in the U.S. Over the course of the trip – around four hours in length – we cross Pampa Cañahuas in the Aguada Blanca National Reserve, home to both vicuña and alpaca. Along the way, there are lakes, altiplano birds, and herds of alpaca. The view up here will take your breath away – metaphorically and in actuality, because of the altitude. Before our decent to Chivay (the provincial capital of the canyon), we climb to one of the highest points on our tour, in fact, at 4,830 meters above sea level (about 15,800 feet!). This is the Mirador de los Volcanes (Viewpoint of the Volcanoes); from here one can see the entire Arequipa volcano chain: Hualcahualca, Sabancaya, and Ampato (all above 6,000 meters, or 20,000 feet).

In Chivay, we sample Andean cuisine: quinoa, alpaca, and mazamorra. Lunch is hosted by Perú InsideOut.

In the afternoon optional stroll around Chivay or possibility to have a bath at the local hot springs.

DAY 4. Cruz del Condor – Puno and the Altiplano



Following an early breakfast, we head to “**Cruz del Condor**” (Condor’s Cross). With a little bit of luck, we’ll watch as incredibly large, incredibly majestic condors soar elegantly above the rim of the canyon.

A bit later, en route to Lake Titicaca, we stop in several Andean communities: Yanque, Achoma, and Maca. And we stop again in Chivay for a buffet lunch (included). After lunch, we continue on our journey to Puno and Lake Titicaca.

The trip to Puno provides us with astonishing scenery: green steppes, peculiar rock formations caused by erosion, and the snow-covered volcano Chachani, in addition to wild vicuña, alpaca, and llama. We encounter several small towns along the way, and a beautiful lagoon called Lagunillas. Here, trout farms can be seen, and Andean Flamingos, if we’re a bit lucky. Finally, it’s on to Juliaca, a city of commercial importance situated between Peru and Bolivia, and at last to Puno where we spend the night in a very comfy hotel.

DAY 5. Lake Titicaca – Amantani



After breakfast, we transfer to the port of Puno. It's here that we depart for **Amantani Island** by boat – a journey of about three hours. **Lake Titicaca**, covering 8,400 sq km and sitting at 3,810 metres above sea level, is the highest navigable lake in the world. Its deep waters are crystalline, the sky is an intense blue, and the glittering high-altitude sunlight stretches out across the altiplano; it's a region of almost intense beauty!

Upon arrival, we retire to the house of a host family to rest and to eat. Amantani is like taking a large step back in time. Without the luxury of electricity, we still enjoy simple meals with our host family, but believe us when we say, This experience you will think back on for a long time to come. In Amantani, we also visit some Tiwanaku ruins and hike to the top of the island to witness the Pachamama (mother earth) ritual. Islanders stage a traditional dance performance in the evening, and visitors (i.e., you) are offered traditional clothes and invited to dance. Before our departure, we buy a few staples (cooking oil, rice, sugar, etc.) – or school supplies for the children – as a gift for our Amantani host family.

DAY 6. Lake Titicaca – Taquile, Uros



Early-morning sunrise on Lake Titicaca is spectacular and a rarefied sunlight seems to envelop the island. After breakfast, we bid farewell to our host family.

On our next stop, we visit Taquile (a 30-minute boat ride from Amantani). For thousands of years, Quechua-speaking islanders have lived here, almost untouched by modern life. Our guide shares a few entertaining stories regarding the use of specific huts and their particular social meaning. Taquileños are known for their fine craftsmanship when it comes to hand-woven textiles and clothing. In what we might see as an odd turn of events, knitting is exclusively performed by males, starting at age eight. Women (only) make yarn and weave. Taquile and its textile arts were proclaimed "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO in 2005.

After a relaxing lunch and a stroll down the hills of **Taquile**, we board our boat once again. Our final destination is the “floating Island” of **Uros** (situated approximately two and a half hours from Taquile).

The Uros are perhaps a bit commercial, by typical tourism standards, but nevertheless ... We believe you will have a great experience here regardless. The 50 or so floating islands of Uros are permanently built using layers of totora (reeds), which grow in the lake. Today, descendants of the Uros tribes speak Aymara. They had fled in advance of the arrival of the Collas and Incas, and have mixed with the Aymara. 2,000 descendants of the Uros were counted in the latest census, but only a few hundred still live there.

We arrive back in Puno and it's time to rest.

Day 7. Puno to Cusco: The Manco Capac's Route



On this day, we take a long ride in a comfortable tour bus to the imperial city of **Cusco** – with several stops along the way.

Our first stop is Pukara, at 3,876 metres above sea level (12,716 feet). Pukara, a town of potters, is the cradle of one of the first civilizations in southern Peru: 200 BC–200 AD. The Aymara-speaking culture flourished in the region of the Collao Plateau, near Lake Titicaca. Pyramid-shaped buildings characterise this very old pre-Hispanic city. Also, we visit the Pukara Lytic Museum.

We arrive at Raya mountain pass later in the day, the highest point of our trip located at 4,310 metres above sea level (14,172 feet). During our stop here, we can stretch our legs; breathe the clean, high-mountain air; and take some photos of grazing llama and alpaca, extending to the broad altiplano horizon. This particular point is the junction of the cordillera, as well as the origin of the Vilcanota knot. Too, the sacred river Vilcanota has its origin here.

We leave Raya pass and travel to Sicuani, for a buffet lunch.

Next, we travel to Raqchi and the “Temple of Wiracocha”: a very large, rectangular, two-story roofed structure that measures 92 by 25.5 metres (approximately 300 by 84 feet).

Our final stop is Andahuaylillas, sometimes referred to as the “Sistine Chapel of Peru”. Dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries, the church was constructed by Jesuits. The walls of the church are covered with a large number of frescoes, and there are numerous ceiling features, too, the highlight being the “Virgin of the Assumption”, a painting belonging to the Cusco School.

Arrival in the imperial city Cusco – and a free night!

DAY 8. Cusco City Tour and Inca sites



Breakfast is served at the hostel and the morning is free for you to enjoy your favourite leisure activity. Lunch hosted by Perú InsideOut. Our local guide takes us for a tour of Cusco in the afternoon. Our destinations include: the great palace of the Inca “Hatun Cancha Rumi” – in Quechua, it means “of the Great Stone Fence” – where we see the famous “stone of twelve angles”, an exceedingly large block of granite with 12 corners and set in a rather famous stone wall; the main square; and the majestic cathedral. Next, we visit the Korikancha “Temple of the Sun”. At the time of the Incas, this was the most important place of worship. In a manner typical of that era, the Spanish built the Convent of Santo Domingo on top of the temple. Later, we visit the following Inca sites, located just outside the city:

- **Kenko** ceremonial centre, considered holy by the Incas.
- **Tambomachay**, a site known as El Baño del Inca (“The Bath of the Inca”). The site contains a number of aqueducts, canals, and waterfalls, which run through the terraced rockwork. The exact function of the site is unknown; it may have been a resort spa for Incan political elite, or a military outpost.
- **Puca Pucara**, a military fort, now a ruins, made of large walls, terraces, and staircases – and part of the defence of Cusco. It’s known as the Red Fortress.

- **Sacsayhuaman**, an impressive fortress which was strategically built on a hill overlooking Cusco. It's famous for its enormous carved stones – many standing over 9 metres high (30 feet) and weighing over 350 tons.

DAY 9. Sacred Valley of the Incas: Pisaq and Ollantaytambo. Night in Aguas Calientes.



Our excursion into the Urubamba valley, “**The Sacred Valley of the Incas**”, begins early in the morning. Our first stop is at Pisaq, at the Inca Ruins there; they lie atop a hill at the entrance of the valley. The ruins are divided into four groups along a ridge: Pisaqa, Intihuatana, Q’allaqasa, and Kinchiracay. After this great experience, we visit the rather quaint Pisaq market where you have the opportunity to view various artisans at work and practice bartering – still a current practice throughout Peru. The market is held on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays.

We travel on to the city of Urubamba where we enjoy a buffet lunch. (Lunch hosted by Perú InsideOut.). After lunch, we follow a scenic route through the Valley to the fortress of Ollantaytambo – the best surviving example of Inca city planning and perhaps the most photogenic of all the cities in the Sacred Valley—with the exception of Machu Picchu. Flights of terraces lead up above the town, and views of the valley below are superb. Ollantaytambo was one of the last cities to see construction by the Incas prior to the arrival of the Spanish.

In the late afternoon, we take a train to Aguas Calientes and then transfer to our hotel.

DAY 10. Visit to Machu Picchu. Return to Cusco



Today, we enter **Machu Picchu**. It is undoubtedly the highlight of the tour, and the highlight of your experience in Peru. Much has been written about this most-famous site, but to experience it, in person, is a memorable day in every visitor's life. We will be at the entrance at 6:00 am to see the sunrise from the cover of Inti Punku – a phenomenal experience that everyone enjoys. Under a clearing sky, with surreal clouds lingering overhead, our guide will share the secrets and the architecture of this Lost City of the Incas with us. For those who climb Huayna Picchu, your effort will be rewarded with a spectacular view of Machu Picchu.

DAY 11. Flight back to Lima

After breakfast, transfer at the Cusco airport to Lima. End of the tour.

(In case you decide to carry out visit to museums or the city tour of Lima, we will be happy to arrange this for you).

The Tour Includes

- All private and public transfers
- Flight Cusco-Lima
- All entrance fees: Arequipa City Tour, Santa Catalina Monastery, Alpaca Museum, touristic entry ticket to the Colca Canyon, Temple of Wiracocha, Andahuaylillas, Kenko, Tambomachay, PucaPucara, fortresses of Sacsayhuaman, Pisac, Ollantaytambo, Machu Picchu, Huayna Picchu
- Boat to Amantani
- Accommodation in three and four stars hotels
- All tours with professional English-speaking guides
- All breakfasts, all lunches, one dinner in Amantani

****Single supplement: USD \$290**

Not Included

- International airfares to and from Peru
- International and national departure taxes at airports
- Other meals
- Personal expenses such as telephone bills, laundry expenses, beverages, etc.
- Insurance against theft, loss
- Other extras not specified

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Tel: +51 54 257093

Cel: +51 964 720 600

Email: info@peruinsideout.com

Arequipa - Perú

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