

INCA TRAIL

Trekking in the
Sacred Land of the Incas



PERU

Inca Trail

They could have followed the valley but they chose the high route to Machu Picchu, with its gorges and passes and climactic mountain views. True Andean highlanders, the Incas knew and loved the countless natural zones that lay within the folds of their vast domain. Their trail to Machu Picchu traverses a startling variety of microclimates, beginning with an arid cactus zone on the Urubamba valley floor, rising through native *Polylepis* forest to bleak high-altitude grassland, and ending in mossy cloud forest draped with orchids and bromeliads.

They celebrated the glory of the snow peaks by setting their trail along a ridge that descended from the sacred summit of Salcantay and ended at Machu Picchu. Wherever some astounding view or prominent natural feature captured their imaginations, they built magical stone outposts -- intricate ceremonial settlements of carved stone hewn from the white granite of the region. These cling to mountain spurs, perch on narrow ledges or spill down plunging slopes, with water channels threading among the houses, as though planted there, without human intervention, by an extravagant nature.

All this was abandoned around the time of the Spanish conquest, lying buried beneath the forest until Hiram Bingham set out in 1915 to follow up his discovery of Machu Picchu with a search for the Inca highway leading back to Cusco. Lucky explorer that he was, he found what we now call the Inca Trail and all the sites along it except Wiñay Wayna, that was not discovered until 1941, by Paul Fejos. Today we can hike this trail, seeing much of it intact and easy to imagine as it was in Inca times.



Machu Picchu



Built as a “royal estate” for the Inca emperor Pachacuti, Machu Picchu is an astounding and perennially mysterious climax to one of the world's most famous journeys: the Inca Trail. Perched high above a sinuous bend in the Urubamba River, Machu Picchu has lured explorers, poets and pilgrims to its mist-wreathed ridgetop ever since its discovery by the American explorer Hiram Bingham in July, 1911.

No one lived here before the Incas. Those mighty empire builders from Cusco discovered this extraordinary place, finding it rich in natural features sacred to their religion. Both inspired and humbled by its dramatic natural beauty, their answer was to create on a vast scale one of the planet's most sensitive and harmonious works of art. The aesthetic genius of its layout and architecture coupled with the durability of its brilliant planning and engineering have given us today this finest of jewels among the UNESCO world heritage sites.

Scholars still argue about the meaning of Machu Picchu: why it was built and what purpose it served, who lived there and when they departed. Most agree that its main intent was spiritual and ceremonial. But clearly its creator, Pachacuti, intended the journey to his sacred city to be a powerful experience in its own right, a pilgrimage whose effort is stunningly rewarded time and again as one follows its winding way among peaks, forests, deep gorges and fairytale ruins. Perhaps if one is to experience the spirit that inspired the builders of Machu Picchu, one truly must walk the length of Pachacuti's white granite highway -- today's Inca Trail.



PERU

InkaNatura Travel

InkaNatura Travel is the most versatile full-service travel agency in Peru. With offices in Lima, Cusco, Puerto Maldonado, and Chiclayo, InkaNatura is there to serve you. Our professional staff is always available and ready to help travel companies to operate in Peru with confidence. Every detail is meticulously planned, and every arrival and departure is carefully monitored.

The latest Inca Trail offerings from InkaNatura Travel complement our extensive portfolio of wildlife and archaeology destinations. The programs below are accompanied by the finest Inca Trail guides, and the staff are well paid and go that extra step to keep clients feeling their best.



Trekking programs

Inca Trail Discovery (5 days/4 nights, 3 nights camping)

Our five-day program allows the traveler time to explore and enjoy the amazing archaeological sites, landscapes and nature along the way. While most other programs force trekkers to speed through the stunning high-altitude Inca Trail, we take the time to enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime experience. We camp the first three nights, enjoying great meals and sturdy tents. The hikes average six to seven hours each day, including time to explore the Inca sites we pass through and to take in the unparalleled scenery. On the fourth afternoon we arrive at Machu Picchu after the crowds have left, and have time to explore the tranquil ruins. After a well-deserved night at a comfortable hotel, we return to Machu Picchu to see the ruins in perfect morning light. In the afternoon we return to Cusco by train. This program is specially designed to offer a more relaxed trek and a deeper understanding of Inca culture.

Inca Trail Classic (4 days/3 nights, all camping)

This is the classic four-day trek along the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. This magnificent hike is for travelers who are in condition to hike up to ten hours, with breaks, in a single day. The pace may be daunting for some, but the beauty and history of the area surround the hiker every step of the way. On the last morning we arrive at Machu Picchu with plenty of time to explore the ruins before returning to Cusco by train.

Short Inca Trail (2 days/1 night, no camping)

This trip allows a taste of the Inca Trail without days of hiking and camping. We begin the hike from the train stop at Kilometer 104 and follow the trail for six hours to the spectacular view of Machu Picchu from Inti Punku, the Gate of the Sun. From here we descend into the world famous "Lost City." After a restful night in a hotel, we return to Machu Picchu at dawn to see the ruins in perfect morning light. In the afternoon, we return to Cusco by train.

PERU

What we include



- A licensed, well-trained, English-speaking guide, who visits the clients the evening before departure to explain the trek and answer any questions.
- Camping Equipment: spacious North Face tents, dining tent, toilet tent, tables and chairs, oxygen bottle and cooking equipment. Trekkers need only bring a sleeping bags and sleeping pads!
- Chef and Assistant Chef preparing healthy, hearty meals cooked with fresh, local ingredients.
- Well-paid and well-treated porters. We supply the appropriate duffel for you to pack and them to carry. You carry only a light daypack.
- Transportation from Cusco to the start of the trail for Inca Trail Classic and Inca Trail Discovery; First Class train - the Vistadome - to kilometer 104 for the Short Inca Trail.
- First Class train - the Vistadome - from the town of Aguas Calientes to Cusco.
- Round trip bus transportation from Aguas Calientes to Machu Picchu archaeological sanctuary on the last morning ("Short Inca Trail" and "Inca Trail Discovery" ONLY).
- Entrance tickets for the Inca Trail and for the Machu Picchu archaeological sanctuary.
- Hotel accommodation at a comfortable hotel or hostel ("Short Inca Trail" and "Inca Trail Discovery" ONLY).

We lend you a special duffel bag for your gear. In order to ensure the fair treatment of our porters, we require that each person limit this duffel to 22 pounds (10 kilograms).

Contact us for prices, a detailed itinerary, pre-departure information, and other suggestions on how to make your adventure the trip of a lifetime.

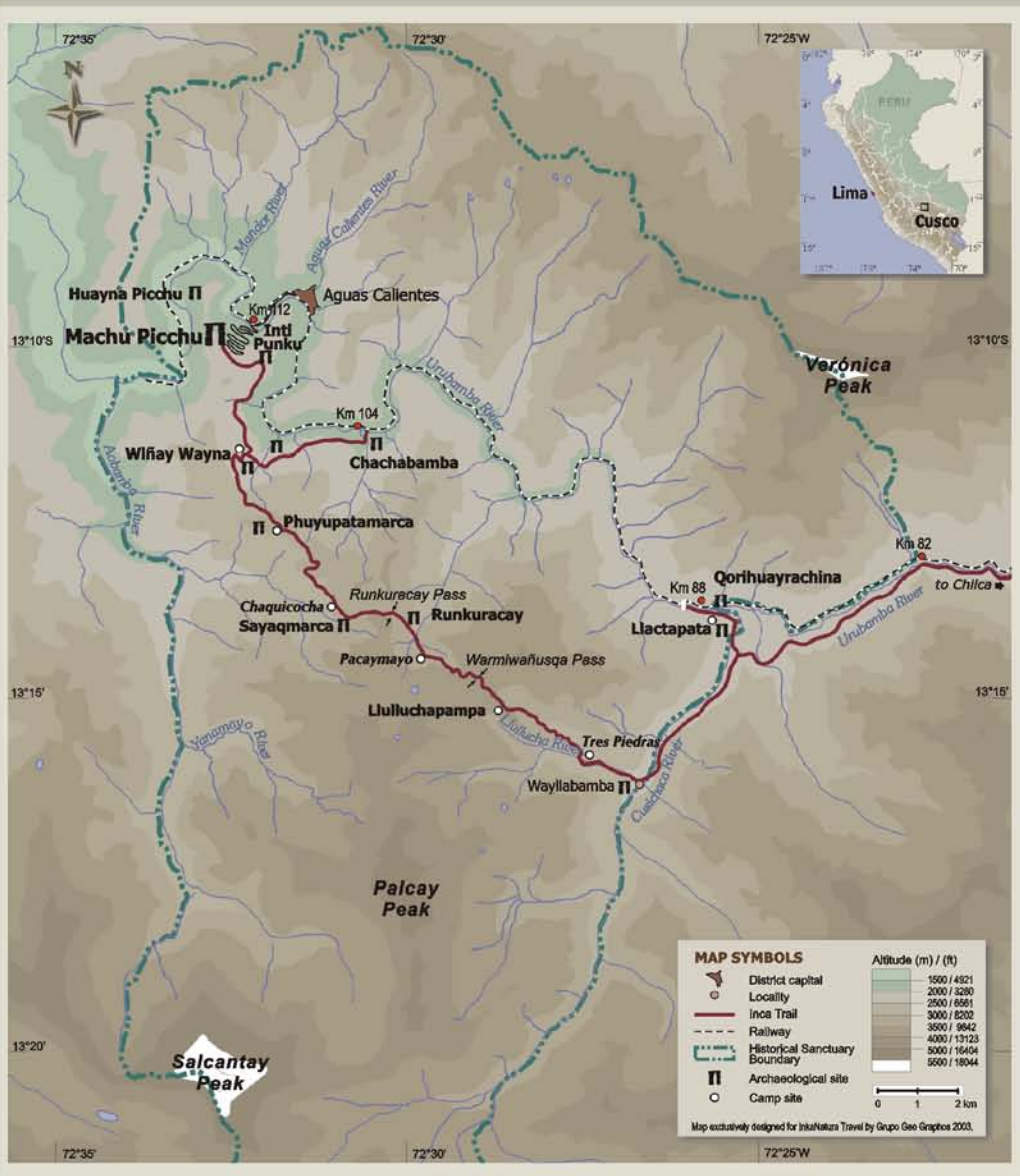


The Leader in Nature and Archaeology

We have several outstanding jungle lodges that complement the Inca Trail with a wildlife experience. Condé Nast Traveler (Dec 2002) described the Manu Wildlife Center as "the finest wildlife lodge in all the Amazon" and Sandoval Lake Lodge as "the budget rainforest alternative to Manu." Our lodges are accessible via a short flight from Cusco, and provide attractions like macaw clay licks, tapir clay licks, Giant Otters, canopy platforms and much more.

InkaNatura Travel is the leading service provider in the Northwest of Peru, an area of rich archaeology. Attractions in the Northwest include the tomb of a Moche Lord in Sipan, the ruins of the Chan Chan palace, the Temple of the Sun and the Moon, and Kuelap-Chachapoyas. An extension to the Northwest can turn an Inca Trail itinerary into an archaeology extravaganza.

InkaNatura Travel also excels in organizing logistics for professional photographers and international film crews. Our experience includes repeated, custom-designed itineraries and logistical support for the BBC, Discovery Channel, and National Geographic, among others.



Llaqtapata. "Terrace Town". This settlement was taken over from pre-Inca people and expanded by the Incas, almost certainly as a center of food production for supplying the Inca Trail sites and Machu Picchu itself. Though well planned and constructed, most of the architecture is utilitarian and repetitive in style.

Runkuracay. A small site about halfway up the climb to the second pass, it overlooks the Pacamayo valley with a superb view back to the first pass, Warmiwasi. It was probably built as a lookout point for watching the highway, and perhaps also as a tambo a traveler's lodging and temporary storehouse.

Sayaqmarca. "Inaccessible Town" in Quechua -- and the site fits its name. Built on a narrow spur jutting westward below the second pass, it commands a sweeping vista of the Aobamba valley and the route ahead all the way to the third pass, while in clear weather the snow peaks of the Pumasillo massif fill the horizon to the west.

Phuyupatamarca. This "Cloud level Town" stands where the trail crosses from south to north of the long ridge leading to Machu Picchu. It is overlooked by flat-topped peaks whose Inca platforms were built for viewing a breathtaking panorama of snow peaks.

Intipata. "Sun Terraces". This is a mainly agricultural complex with a small residential sector, probably built to supplement the food supply to Machu Picchu.

Wiñay Wayna. "Forever Young" -- the name of a perennially flowering orchid formerly abundant in this area. An imposing curved wall culminates in a temple whose doorway faces the snow peak of Wakay Wilka (Verónica). With its chain of ceremonial baths, its intricate maze of houses, temples and workshops, its towering waterfall, and the serene sculpture of its terracing, nothing can compare with the intimate magic of this Inca settlement.

Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

