

CULTURAL WALKING ADVENTURE

Peru

Machu Picchu, Sacred Valley & Cusco



CLASSIC JOURNEYS
THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



“

*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Land of the Incas, Past & Present

Machu Picchu is actually in a jungle. If you take the Inca Trail to the lost city, you approach from above. And the stupendous blocks of stone in its walls are so finely carved that you could barely slip a piece of paper between them. Believe us, Machu Picchu retains the ability to startle and inspire you no matter how many years you've thought about visiting. You will get the shivers the first time you see it, spending all or part of three days at the site (unlike the brief in-and-out visits many tours make). Plus we give you leisurely exposure to the rest of Peru with its conquistador-tinged history, indestructible Inca architecture and spectacular geography. We're in the Andes, so there are inevitable up-and-down trails, but we also offer frequent, easier walking options. And our guide is a native Quechua who'll make you as comfortable in Cusco as you'll be among mountain villagers and llama herders.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ACTIVE HIKING & WALKING
- LOCAL WELL-CONNECTED GUIDES
- PREMIERE HOTELS
- FOODIE FOCUSED
- HANDCRAFTED TRIP DESIGN
- MORE IS INCLUDED

What's Included

- All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

→ INVISIBLE CHECK-IN

When your group arrives, we whisk you and your bags to your room immediately. No waiting – no tipping.

→ PRIVILEGED ACCESS EVENTS

One-of-a-kind access to remarkable people, places and activities arranged just for you.

Terrain

Easy to moderate countryside trails with option to do several more difficult walks.

CLASSIC JOURNEYS ITINERARIES MAY BE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT CHANGES, HOTEL SUBSTITUTIONS, AND OTHER MODIFICATIONS.

DAY 1 »

Cusco

We meet in Cusco, a sort of “Zorro-meets-Raiders-of-the-Lost Ark” city and the ceremonial heart of the Inca empire. We spend the first afternoon exploring the highlights such as the Temple of the Sun. Once, its walls were covered with over 700 sheets of gold studded with emeralds and turquoise.

It's hard to believe that people in the 21st Century still walk through narrow cobblestone streets flanked by Incan stone walls every day. But they do, and we join them as we walk to the Plaza de Armas for a visit to the Cathedral. It's an impressive Baroque reminder of Spanish colonization. If you'd like, join our guide for a short walk to the artists' quarter of San Blas. Whitewashed buildings with bright blue doorways house galleries, studios and small shops filled with weavings, alpaca sweaters and ceramics.

After some time to browse, we take it easy at our 5-star hotel, a converted 16th century monastery. Dinner tonight offers your first taste of excellent Peruvian cooking – a cuisine that is reminiscent of Spanish food with plenty of beef and seafood, all prepared with a special local accent. By the way, Cusco is our highest point during the week. If you've skied at any of the resorts in the western US, you'll find it to be very similar. So today's walks should more than acclimate you for the rest of the week.

MEALS: D

OVERNIGHT: CUSCO

DAY 2 »

Cusco / Pisac / Urubamba Valley

As we continue our way into the Sacred Valley, we depart for the mountaintop ruins of Pisac. How did ancient people without machines build these cities? It's a question you'll all ask again and again - especially when you see these fortified ruins clinging to a rocky spur high above the Urubamba Valley. It's a real act of imagination to grasp how the Incas built aqueducts that fed the public baths here. The views are spectacular, but that can't have been the only reason. As we wind our way along the footpaths, we get a closer look at Inca terraces, which are still in use by local farmers centuries after they were built.

After visiting this amazing place, we drive to a gracious hacienda nestled among the mountains. Here we're welcomed by the family that has occupied this property for over 300 years as we are invited to a lunch of traditional Peruvian specialties. If you'd like, join our hosts for a pisco sour (a popular Peruvian drink, similar to a margarita) in their peaceful garden overlooking the Sacred Valley. After lunch, we have time to wander around the property, enjoying the family's renowned collection of art and artifacts.

MEALS: B, L

OVERNIGHT: SACRED VALLEY

DAY 3 »

Chinchero

Today, we drive to the mountain village of Chinchero, a charming community known as the "town of the rainbow." The town was built as a resting place for the traveling Inca royalty in the 1400s and today is known for its excellent weaving. We've arranged a private weaving demonstration, seeing firsthand the famous Inca weaving techniques passed down for centuries.

OR you can go for a biking adventure. You'll meet up with our biking guides. They'll outfit us all with mountain bikes that perfectly match each rider's size and skill. Then we wheel off to a series of scenic trails and tracks, passing through the Sacred Valley. It sounds somber, but it's anything but! The Sacred Valley is a fertile patchwork of fields. (The ones where the ancient grain quinoa is grown are actually red!) The Andes are the backdrop. We glide through red-roofed villages, under the shade of palm trees, stopping only if the path is blocked by a flock of sheep.

In the afternoon, we stop to explore the salt mines of Salineras in Maras that were mentioned in the chronicles of the conquering Spanish. (Don't feel like mountain biking today? No problem. Your Classic Journeys guide is at the ready to offer an equally enjoyable guided walk in the same area. And if you start the ride and want to opt out part way, our vehicle is nearby to offer a lift.)

After this memorable experience, you will enjoy a picnic lunch with spectacular views of the Sacred Valley. This is not your traditional picnic, you will have your own private chef making you lunch today.

We return to the Sacred Valley in time for a local chef to welcome us into his kitchen to cook an Andean-style meal together. (Hot chocolate truffles, anyone?)

MEALS: B, L

OVERNIGHT: SACRED VALLEY

DAY 4 »

Ollantaytambo / Urubamba

For this morning, we stop in Ollantaytambo, a still-thriving Inca village set below ancient ruins that retain the stonework, narrow streets, and family courtyards of pre-Columbian times. Much of the Inca history in Peru was destroyed by the Spanish, but Ollantaytambo is an important ceremonial site and scene of one of the only major Inca victories against the invading Spaniards. As we explore and visit with the colorfully dressed townspeople, we have the feeling of stepping back into the 15th century. Following our visit, we've coordinated a special visit to a Quechua mountain village unchanged for hundreds of years. It's not far from our hotel, just past flocks of sheep. Here, we're welcomed into a local school with a special opportunity to mingle with the kids and their teacher. (Consider packing pens, pencils and notebooks from home for the village children. Kids may also want to bring some of their spare clothes to share.) Everyone has an opportunity to try out the Quechua words they've learned from our guides.

OR

We're going river rafting! A mid-morning drive takes us to a put-in point on the upper Urubamba River. This dramatic river flows from the high Andes down through the Sacred Valley of the Incas, past Machu Picchu and into the jungle. We'll be on the finest, clearest and most scenic section of the river. It's exciting and unforgettable. Each raft carries 5 to 8 people and the rapids have a degree of difficulty ranging from 2-4. As always, we're in the hands of expert guides so you can focus on just having fun. At the end, we'll relive our new memories over a riverside picnic lunch. Following lunch, we pause in the town of Urubamba for a visit to a pottery workshop to meet our friend Pablo Seminario in his studio. (One of Peru's most renowned ceramists, Pablo has a permanent exhibition at Chicago's Field Museum.) A short walk takes us to the busy Urubamba market, where street vendors still sell livestock, produce, crafts and chicha, a thick white fermented corn drink that was prepared by the Chosen Women in the Inca court, and is still consumed throughout Peru. We return to our hotel nestled among the mountains in the Sacred Valley. The stone-and-wood bungalows, each with its own private terrace overlooking the gardens of fuchsia, are decorated in classic Andean color and style.

MEALS: B

OVERNIGHT: SACRED VALLEY

DAY 5 »

Machu Picchu

If you travel until you're 100, you'll have a few days when you can choose between two more wonderful alternatives: trail or train. Either way, we all start the day with a scenic chug out of the Sacred Valley on the Inca Rail train. Then, at a brief stop by the train, you can choose your adventure for the day.

Will you tackle the Inca Trail? It's legendary, spectacular, and not for the faint of heart. (It also requires an advance reservation, so you have time to prepare physically and mentally. See the note below.) As the train makes its brief stop, you and one of our guides leave the train to tackle a trail that rises in elevation by 1,500 feet over 5-6 hours of sometimes strenuous walking. You'll have unforgettable views of the Vilcabamba mountain range as you ascend through the cloud forest that encircles Machu Picchu. The effort pays off when you reach the Sun Gate – at a point that's actually higher than the site itself. This is the famed view of Machu Picchu you've seen so often. You'll be tired, but you'll have bragging rights forever! From here you descend through the site to reach our hotel. We save the detailed guided tour of Machu Picchu for tomorrow.

Or will you opt for the luxurious train ride? You get breathtaking views without ever getting out of breath. As the valley narrows, the river tumbles through dramatic rapids. Through the picture windows and panoramic roof, you'll see a succession of Incan ruins. Late in the morning, you arrive in Aguas Calientes and check into our over-the-top hotel. The afternoon is yours. You can shuttle up to Machu Picchu for your own personal visit to the site in advance of our guided tour tomorrow or stay at the hotel to enjoy some relaxation. (You'll also have a chance to feel sorry for the many day-trippers who do their entire Machu Picchu visits in one day from Cusco. We, on the other hand, spend two leisurely nights!)

Note: Inca Trail Regulations Regulations created to minimize the impact on the fragile environment of the Machu Picchu Sanctuary allow only 500 people daily hiking the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. One of the memorable included options that we provide you on this trip is the opportunity to walk a section of the Inca Trail. We advise you to reserve early to secure your spot. You'll be pleased you did!

MEALS: B, L, D OVERNIGHT: AGUAS CALIENTES

DAY 6 »

Machu Picchu

Our hotel is just a brief ride via shuttle to Machu Picchu. We don't have to rise with the tree frogs in order to arrive before the onslaught of day-trippers. The explorer Hiram Bingham re-discovered Machu Picchu hidden in the cloud forest in 1911. The task of revealing the site is almost as hard to fathom as the original process of constructing it. We have plenty of time to explore ourselves and hear the stories our guide has to tell.

The Incas worshipped nature, and built many of their structures in harmony with the dramatic landscape. Our guide takes us through the mazes of plazas, chambers and dwellings, explaining the different theories surrounding the city. (Some think it was the home of an Inca ruler, Pachakutec; others speculate that its function was to maintain a reliable supply of coca leaves for the priests and royals of Cusco. And some think that Machu Picchu was a university where the children of the leaders conquered by the Incas were taken to be taught and brainwashed!) A highlight is the round Temple of the Sun. An astronomical observatory; the windows are perfectly aligned to catch the first rays of the sun on the mornings of winter and summer solstices. Since these ruins remained hidden during the Spanish conquest, they were spared from destruction.

After lunch, we have a number of options. Several scenic trails begin right at our hotel. It's also a great chance to do some easy birding with a chance of spotting 16 types of hummingbirds, the unmistakable crimson silhouette of the gallito de las rocas, or maybe even a Technicolor quetzal. You can also take advantage of the exceptional spa services available on the property, take a walk into town, or relax with a cocktail before dinner.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: AGUAS CALIENTES

DAY 7 »

Cusco

Our last morning, we return to Cusco by train, arriving midday. From here, you can fly to Lima for flights home that night, or extend your stay in Peru exploring the famous rainforest or the National Museum and lovely neighborhoods in Lima.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



[Belmond Monasterio](#)

Located in Cusco's historic center, this former 17th-century monastery is now a 5-star hotel. The rooms, furnished in a combination of colonial and modern styles, overlook a garden courtyard surrounded by the original stone arches of the monastery.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



[Belmond Hotel Rio Sagrado](#)

On the banks of the Urubamba in the Sacred Valley, this luxury hotel is built to resemble an Andean village. Serene rooms offer stunning views of the valley. Quiet gardens are perfect for exploring, taking a dip in the pool, or sipping a pisco sour.

NIGHTS: 3 nights



[Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel](#)

Set among 13 acres of tropical gardens featuring over 140 species of orchids, this hotel proudly 100% carbon neutral. Spacious rooms are situated in unique hillside casitas and feature lovely tile floors, carved wood furniture and luxurious bathrooms.

NIGHTS: 2 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

START LOCATION: **Lobby of Belmond Hotel Monasterio**
START CITY: **Cusco**
START TIME: **1:30 PM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Airport**
END CITY: **Cusco**
END TIME: **2:00 PM**