

Peru - Inca Trail Info Pack

General Information

Peru is frequently referred to as the 'Land of the Incas' and has some of the most spectacular and varied scenery in South America. The Peruvian Andes are arguably the most beautiful on the continent and the mountains are home to millions of highland Indians who still speak the ancient tongue of Quechua and maintain a traditional way of life.

Our trekking route will be peaceful and not crowded as it is on a rarely used Inca trail, taking us through some of the most stunning scenery in the world. Starting in the heart of the Urubamba Valley we follow in the footsteps of the Incas, passing snow capped mountains and glacial peaks. We will be walking along a mixture of long steep climbs and descents, on trails that range from well maintained Inca highways, to rocky, dusty paths and dirt tracks. There are lots of big stone steps on the last day of hiking into Machu Picchu. This is a safe route, but we are walking along mountain passes and the trail can be narrow in places. People will be able to set their own pace - it is not a route march.

Our challenge ends walking into the lost city of Machu Picchu, Peru's most famous Inca ruin, which had been abandoned to the forest for over 500 years until it was rediscovered in 1911 by an American historian, Hiram Bingham.

Fast Facts

Area: 1,285,215 square km Population: 29,496,000 (2010 estimate) Capital: Lima (population 8 million) People: 54% Indian, 32% Mestizo (mixed European and Indian descent), 12% Spanish descent, 2% Black, Asian minority Language: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara Religion: Over 90% Roman Catholic, small Protestant population Government: Constitutional republic Time: - 5 hours behind GMT.

Training

Type of training

The majority of those taking part in this type of event are not usually experienced trekkers. It is therefore

imperative that everyone follows a reasonably serious course of training in order to get the maximum benefit. The event is not just a walk; it is a demanding trek in places.

The amount of training you will need to do will depend on your current level of fitness. Training is essential - these events are meant to be a challenge, but the more you prepare the more you will enjoy yourself! If you haven't exercised for some time, please seek your GP's advice.

How should you start your training?

You should begin by walking 2-3 times a week for around an hour. Whatever your fitness, it is better to do four separate hour-long walks than one long walk per week.

As you get into your training, you should increase weekend walks to around three hours, with one or two stops en route. Building up the hours you are walking, so that one month before departure you can hike for around 6-7 hours a day over steep terrain. Maybe take a weekend off and trek both days, this will get you used to non-stop hiking.

Outdoors

You should always wear your boots and socks you plan to take on the event, and get used to carrying a small daypack weighing 4-5kg.

Your daypack should include water, snacks, a compass (if you know how to use one) and a small medical kit. Tell someone where you are going and take a mobile phone with you if possible.

It is essential you find stretches of hilly terrain to get used to more strenuous hiking and get your feet and

ankles used to uneven ground. You must also practice walking up and downhill - downhill can be especially hard on the knees (many hikers find trekking poles very useful).

Indoors

It is always better to train outdoors, but work and family commitments may make this difficult during the week. In this case, they should do other forms of exercise.

Joining a gym and getting a fitness instructor to set a program is a great way to increase good all round stamina and fitness e.g. stepping, jogging, uphill walking on the treadmill and aerobic classes are all good activities plus cycling, swimming and squash.

The trek may seem daunting to some, but it isn't a race and there are no prizes for getting into camp first each night. There will be plenty of support and encouragement to help participants complete their challenge.

Typical Day

While camping we will be up at around 6am! We will be woken with a cup of tea/coffee or coca tea and a bowl of washing water. After an early breakfast in a mess tent (large tent with tables and camping stools) we will normally start walking around 7.30-8am. We walk for 3-4 hours in the morning and then stop for lunch. In the afternoon we walk for 2-4 hours to our overnight camp. In the evenings, we will have a drink and rest followed by dinner. A short briefing will then be given about the next day's trek.

Altitude effects

At altitude there is a shortage of oxygen, so as you climb higher, the air gets thinner. At 4400m (highest point on the trek), the atmospheric pressure is about 50% of that at sea level. The high altitude will be the biggest challenge to us on this trek and there are a variety of symptoms including headaches, tiredness, irritability, nausea and depression. The effects of altitude can be felt from around 2500m upwards. Not everyone is affected by altitude sickness and fitness, size, age or sex has no bearing on how people may be affected.

Your body responds in various ways when it requires more oxygen:

- you breathe faster and deeper.
- your heart beats faster with pressure in the pulmonary arteries becoming increased forcing blood into parts of your lungs which aren't normally used.
- your body expels excess fluid and creates more red blood cells, making the blood thicker.

These changes happen over different time scales. You start to breathe faster right away. Your heart rate rises in minutes. After several days, your blood starts to thicken. If you find yourself urinating a lot that is probably a sign your body is acclimating well.

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS)

AMS symptoms, if mild or moderate often disappear if the victim rests or ascends no further. No expert or text-book can predict who will be affected. Severe AMS can be life-threatening (HACE - High Altitude Cerebral Edema or HAPE – High Altitude Pulmonary Edema). However, if you follow good advice from the Expedition Leader and Guides you are unlikely to experience these. Severe AMS is avoidable and treatable, as long as people are aware of its symptoms and take it seriously. Emergency oxygen and medication for both HACE and HAPE will be carried. **Everyone will be fully briefed about the altitude risks at the main briefing before the trek.**

You can help yourself at high altitude by breathing deeply, walking slowly and by drinking plenty of water. Sleep is also important for the body's adjustment: sleeping pills must be avoided.

Safety

There will be very experienced crew on the trek at knowing when someone has had enough or when they just need a bit of extra motivation. Should anyone show serious signs of altitude sickness they will have to follow the guide/trek leader instructions and a member of the team will accompany them down the mountain. The best way of dealing with acute mountain sickness is immediate and rapid descent – even a few hundred feet can make a marked difference.

Alcohol

This is a demanding trek at altitude. One of the best ways to help reduce effects of altitude is to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids. As alcohol dehydrates the body, alcoholic drinks will not be available to buy on the trek. At the end of the trek in Aguas Calientes, we can buy beer at the local bars.

High altitude medication

Acetazolamide (Diamox): This is the most tried and tested drug for altitude sickness prevention and treatment. The tablets do not mask the symptoms but actually treats the problem. It works by increasing the amount of alkali (bicarbonate) excreted in the urine, making the blood more acidic. Acidifying the blood drives the ventilation, which is the cornerstone of acclimatisation.

For prevention, 125 to 250mg twice daily starting one or two days before and continuing for three days once the highest altitude is reached is effective. Blood concentrations of Acetazolamide peak between one to four hours after administration of the tablets.

Pulmonary function is greater both in subjects with mild AMS and asymptomatic subjects. The treated climbers also had less difficulty in sleeping. Side effects of Acetazolamide include: an uncomfortable tingling of the fingers, toes and face, carbonated drinks tasting flat, excessive urination.

I recommend trying a tablet before you depart for your trek. Diamox is only available from your GP, so they will be the best people to speak to for advice and prescribing the tablets.

After reading all this about altitude it can come across a bit overwhelming. If we take our time with the trek and are sensible we will be fine but it is important you are aware of the potential issues. I have also been using Diamox for years with groups and find it very effective.

Health and Vaccinations

- Typhoid and Hepatitis A vaccinations are advisable. Tetanus and polio vaccinations should be up to date. Yellow fever and anti-Malaria protection is also advisable if people are staying on and travelling to the jungle area, though we will not be going into a jungle area. This is a **guideline only**. You must seek professional medical advice from your GP or local travel clinic
- You should bring your own regular medication with sufficient supplies for the whole trip and a small first aid kit (see packing checklist below)

- In Cusco and around the Urubamba Valley there is a black fly, which is active during the day, and does bite. It is not a mosquito and it is not malaria carrying. As a precaution, it is wise to cover up exposed parts of the body and use a good repellent such as Mosi-Guard.
- The nearest hospital will be no more than one day away.
- Emergency oxygen will be carried with trained medical staff along with a satellite phone.

Packing checklist

Your main luggage bag should weigh no more than 20kg and should **not** be a suitcase, or a rucksack with an outside frame. A holdall or rucksack is the best shape for the horses to carry. It is also a good idea to wear your hiking boots on the plane, just in case any luggage goes astray on the flight out! We can leave items not needed on trek at the hotel in Cusco to keep the weight of our main luggage to a minimum for the horses.

Equipment

- 25-35 litre day rucksack with good waist strap to carry your water, camera and snacks during the trek
- 4 season sleeping bag (see next page for more info)
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Head torch
- Water bottles (minimum of 2 litres)
- Lightweight trekking towel
- Trekking pole(s) – optional (please note they must have rubber tips for the last day into Machu Picchu)
- Camera - *optional*

Clothing

- 2 / 3 Base layers or t-shirts that will wick away moisture.
- Leather or waterproof fabric, ankle high walking/hiking boots (must be worn in)
- 3 / 4 pairs of trekking socks
- Normal underwear
- Thermal underwear (2 long sleeved thermal tops, 1 pair of thermal leggings) - *optional*
- Fleece or woolly hat and scarf
- Wide brimmed sun hat or cap and scarf to cover your neck
- Waterproof / windproof jacket with hood and trousers e.g. Gore-Tex
- Fleece / warm jumper for the evenings

- Down / duvet jackets - *optional*
- Knee length shorts and or lightweight trekking trousers
- Warm trousers for the evening
- Trainers to change into in the evenings
- Casual clothes for travelling, spare day and celebration dinner

Health and hygiene

- High factor sun cream (SPF 30) and lip salve (mountain sun can be very strong)
- Wet wipes (biodegradable if possible)
- Antibacterial hand gel (Important)
- nappy sacks (useful to store rubbish)
- Personal toiletries (please only bring biodegradable products)
- Earplugs (in case of snorers!)
- Toilet paper
- Vaseline / talcum powder

Personal First Aid Kit

- Paracetamol and Ibuprofen, or other painkillers that you are used to taking
- Imodium (loperamide) – used for diarrhoea
- Dioralyte or another rehydration solution that you like the taste of
- Antihistamine tablets – in case of insect bites or other reactions
- 1% hydrocortisone cream – again for insect bites and stings
- Diamox (acetazolamide) – used to alleviate symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness on high altitude treks; please read additional information and if you decide to take it then you will need a prescription from your GP
- A few assorted plasters
- Compeed – specialised plasters for blisters
- Zinc oxide tape
- Insect repellent

If any of the medications are new to you it is advisable to take at least two doses of the tablet well before the trip to ensure that you do not react to them. Ensure that you pack your usual medications to take with you. Ideally pack some in your hand luggage and some in your main bag in case either goes missing.

Miscellaneous

- Photocopy of insurance / passport
- Isotonic drink powder or tablets - *optional*
- Energy bars / chocolate / nuts or energy tablets - *optional*
- Plastic bags/waterproof (to protect sleeping bags/clothes from rain!)
- Swimming costume (hot springs in Aguas Calientes)
- Credit card (in case of emergencies)
- Money belt
- If you wear contact lenses it is advisable to also bring your glasses

Sleeping Bags

Sleeping bags are rated either by season (1, 2, 3, 3+,4, 4+) or comfort level (upper limit, comfort, comfort lower limit or extreme). Stores will differ to how they rate their sleeping bags. A silk liner will also aid warmth within your bag. I would recommend the following:

- Season: 4 - you can get away with a 3 season but may need to wear clothing
- Comfort Level: -10°C

Sleeping mats will be provided.

Boots

It's imperative that you get your walking boots well in advance of the trip in order to break them in and get your feet used to them. Walking boots with tough moulded soles are the best all-round solution, protecting the feet and keeping them warm and dry, providing grip and supporting the ankles, essential on steep slopes. We recommend getting your boots properly fitted at an outdoor store and advise to buy one size larger than normal.

Hiring Equipment

Anyone concerned about the costs of buying all the kit, should check out hiring some equipment from Trek Hire or Outdoor Hire who provide good quality kit : www.trek-hire.co.uk and www.outdoorhire.co.uk.

Travel Insurance

At least 4 weeks before travel you will need to provide me with all your insurance details.

I can recommend the following insurance company:

- SnowCard – Tel: 01295 660836 / www.snowcard.co.uk

There is no obligation for you to take out insurance with them, however, you must be covered by travel insurance to go on the event. You should explain fully to insurance companies what type of trip you are undertaking e.g. a trek at altitude, which includes air evacuation and repatriation. I will ask for a copy of the insurance before we depart.

Food and Drink

All the water on trek will be boiled and safe to drink. Bottled water is available to buy in the hotels. People should not drink the water from the hotel (even for brushing teeth), streams or rivers. Meals will be substantial, but it is still a good idea to bring energy bars and snacks in order to keep you going during the day. Breakfast will consist of cereals and/or bread, with something hot such as porridge or pancakes, plus tea and coffee. A typical lunch will be soup with cheese and salad, plus drinks.

For our evening meal there will be soup followed by a main course with rice and vegetables. Again hot drinks will be served.

We will need to know in advance of any special dietary requirements to advise the airline and our cooks in the hotel and on the trek. I will send this out in the forms with the medical forms.

Accommodation (planned)

Day 1 – Overnight on the flight.

Day 2 – Overnight in a hotel in Cusco.

Day 3 – Overnight in a hotel Cusco.

Day 4, 5, 6, 7 – Camping on trek.

Day 8 – Overnight in hotel, Aguas Calientes.

Day 9 – Overnight in a hotel, Cusco.

Day 10 - Overnight flight Lima.

Day 11 – Arrive UK.

Hotels: TBC.

Whilst we are trekking you will not be contactable.

The room configuration in the hotel is likely to be twin share. Whilst we are trekking we will be sleeping in two-person tents.

Weather

Peru's dry season runs from May to September. The climate should be fairly mild, with strong mountain sun and daytime temperatures reaching around 20-25°C, although it will be colder on the higher passes. It is important to use a high factor sun cream each day. At night temperatures will be very cold, around freezing.

When we begin our trekking each morning, temperatures will still be low, so wear layers that you can shed as the day progresses (these can be carried in your day pack). Please be aware that every trip I have done in Peru has encountered at least one day of rain – so come prepared!

Photography & Video

People wishing to bring their own video/digital cameras should be advised that there are no opportunities to recharge batteries on trek. Batteries and battery packs can drain very quickly at altitude and the extreme cold can affect cameras.

It is always polite to ask when taking pictures of local people.

Passports, Visas and Trek Permits

Passports

You must have at least 6 months validity on your passports from the date of return to the UK.

Visas

A visa is not required by British passport holders. When we enter Peru, we will be asked to fill out a white embarkation card, which must be retained until final departure.

Trek Permits

The Machu Picchu National Park has very strict rules around trekking permits on the Inca Trail and limit numbers to 300 people a day. This affects our last day's trek into Machu Picchu and means we have to obtain a trek permit for everyone. Without a valid permit you cannot trek on the last day. Permits are limited and issued on a first come, first served basis and can only be issued with full passport details. (Name, date of birth, nationality, passport number, issue/expiry dates).

The permit rules are very strict e.g., non-refundable or non-changeable.

Don't worry about the permits I will get all the details from you in plenty of time in order to secure them. **I will need your passport and other details soon, I will send this request out with medical forms but it is important you send these details back asap.**

Money matters

Currency: Peruvian Nuevo Sol (only available in Peru)

Exchange rate: £1 = 4.84 PEN (March 2016)

Participants should take out US dollars in small denominations, which can be exchanged at the hotel.

Credit cards – Visa and MasterCard are widely recognised and useful to have in emergencies.

Approx. £150-£200 spending money is sufficient for drinks, tips and some souvenirs.

Things to buy

There will be a bar at the hotel at the beginning and end of the trek. There is nothing to buy whilst we are trekking until we reach Aguas Calientes. There is very good shopping in Cusco and Aguas Calientes selling traditional Peruvian crafts. On our return journey via Lima there may be an opportunity to have time to do some shopping depending on flight times.

Tips and Gratuities

Our local crew and guides work extremely hard on the trek. If at the end of the challenge you would like to show your appreciation we suggest a tip of £30-£40 per participant. If this sounds like a lot, trust me you'll be happy when you see all they do for us!

Airport Tax

Airport tax per person is payable in advance and is all included in the price so you don't need to pay anymore.

Luggage labels

I will provide luggage labels at the airport when we meet up. recommend one for main luggage and one for hand-luggage.

If You Have To Cancel Your Trip

Cancellation is taken from the date such notice is received and charges will be applied as follows:

Between 8 and 6 weeks notice: 50% of expedition cost.

Between 6 and 4 weeks notice: 75% of expedition cost.

Less than 4 weeks notice: 100% of expedition cost.
Initial deposit is non-refundable.

Booking Checklist

1) Personal and Passport details form: Once I have these I can book the permits - Please send via email.

2) Medical form: , please post this to me or email.

3) Money Due: tbc

Any Questions or issues please contact me: Dompickett1@me.com

Useful websites

Foreign office: www.fco.gov.uk

Lonely planet: www.lonelyplanet.com

Currency converter: www.expedia.com

CNN weather: www.cnn.com

Acceptance of risk

(i) You are aware that this is an adventure trip. In addition to the usual dangers and risks, you should take into account weather extremes, remoteness from medical services and physical exertion for which you may not be prepared before committing to the expedition.

(ii) You acknowledge that the enjoyment and excitement of adventure travel is derived in part from the inherent risk incurred in taking part in activities that are beyond the levels of safety you would normally encounter at home or in the workplace, You acknowledge that this is a reason for your participation.

(iii) You acknowledge that the nature of the expedition requires considerable flexibility and that you must allow for changes to routes, schedules, transport etc. The outline itinerary for the expedition is an indication of what the group may accomplish, and does not form a contractual obligation.

