



MACHU PICCHU

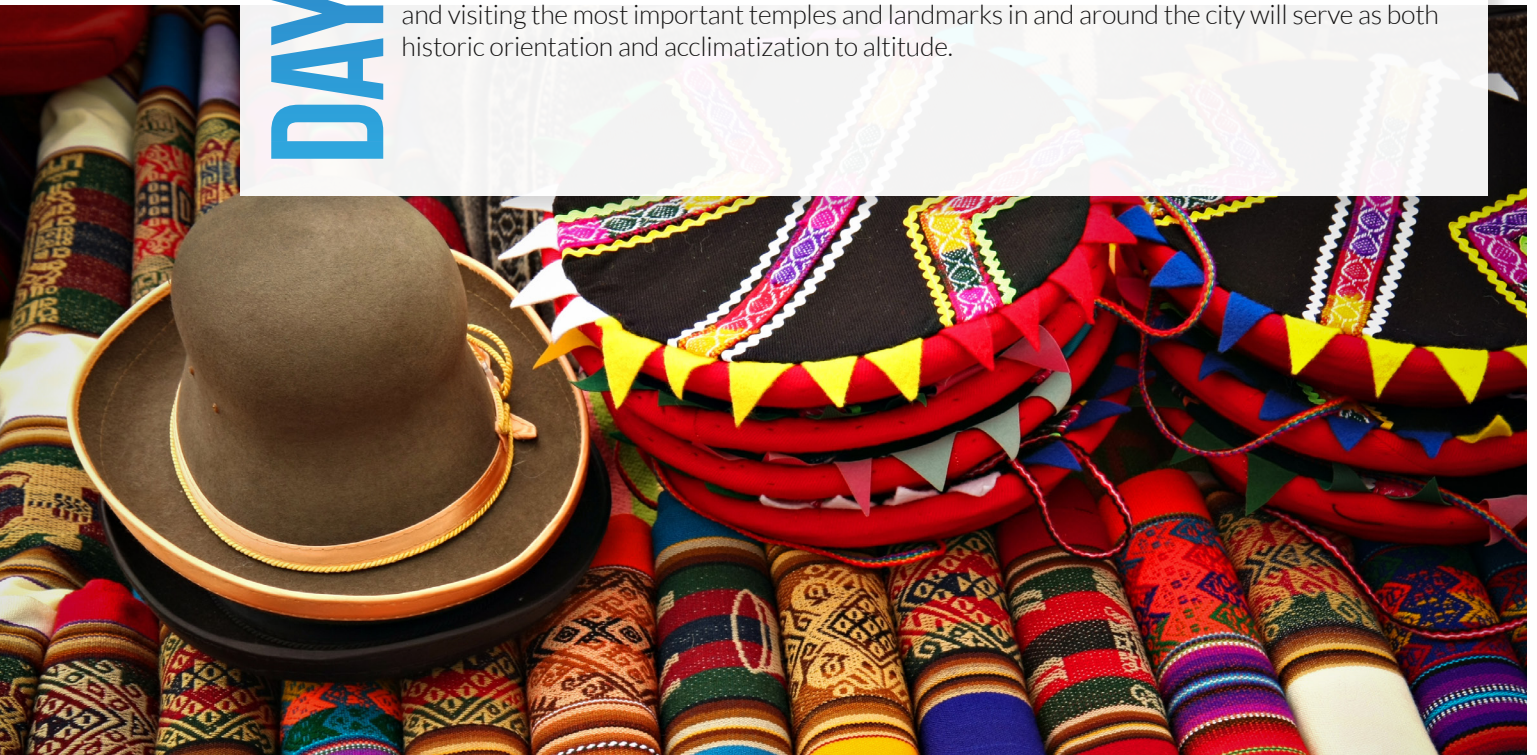
HIDDEN VALLEYS OF SALKANTAY TREK

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN CUSCO

A group briefing and dinner is a chance to get to know your guides and fellow guests, and address equipment and other questions.

DAY 2 CUSCO

Cusco was “the navel of the world,” the Incas said. Walking a variety of urban archaeology sites and visiting the most important temples and landmarks in and around the city will serve as both historic orientation and acclimatization to altitude.





DAY 3 CUSCO TO CHONTA VIEWPOINT TO TOCOBAMBA

Today we get an early start by road to Tomacaya village, and the beginning of your trek. We encounter our first views of the startlingly-steep 20,500-ft Salkantay ("Savage") mountain after a stop to study the ruins of Tarawasi, a walled ceremonial center for the Incas. From there, we continue our drive, winding our way up from the valley floor until we arrive at the community of Chonta. There we begin our short acclimatization hike to the famous Chonta Viewpoint. From the four viewing platforms we'll have the opportunity to see the incredible Andean condor in its natural habitat. Finally, we will drive to 12,600 ft where our camp lies beside a stream. Enjoy views of the Limatambo and Apurimac valleys while adjusting to altitude.



DAY 4 TOCOBAMBA TO TINKOC CAMP

Today we ascend the Tinkoc Valley, leaving behind remnants of ancient forests where we can still see some 500-year old Chachacomo trees as we enter the puna grasslands. We ascend quite quickly this morning, taking advantage of the early morning chill and shade. Later, we descend to the Collpa River at 11,480 ft then hike uphill again to make camp after an overall elevation gain of 2,000ft. Tonight we sleep nestled in the crook of the valley floor at Tinkoc Camp.

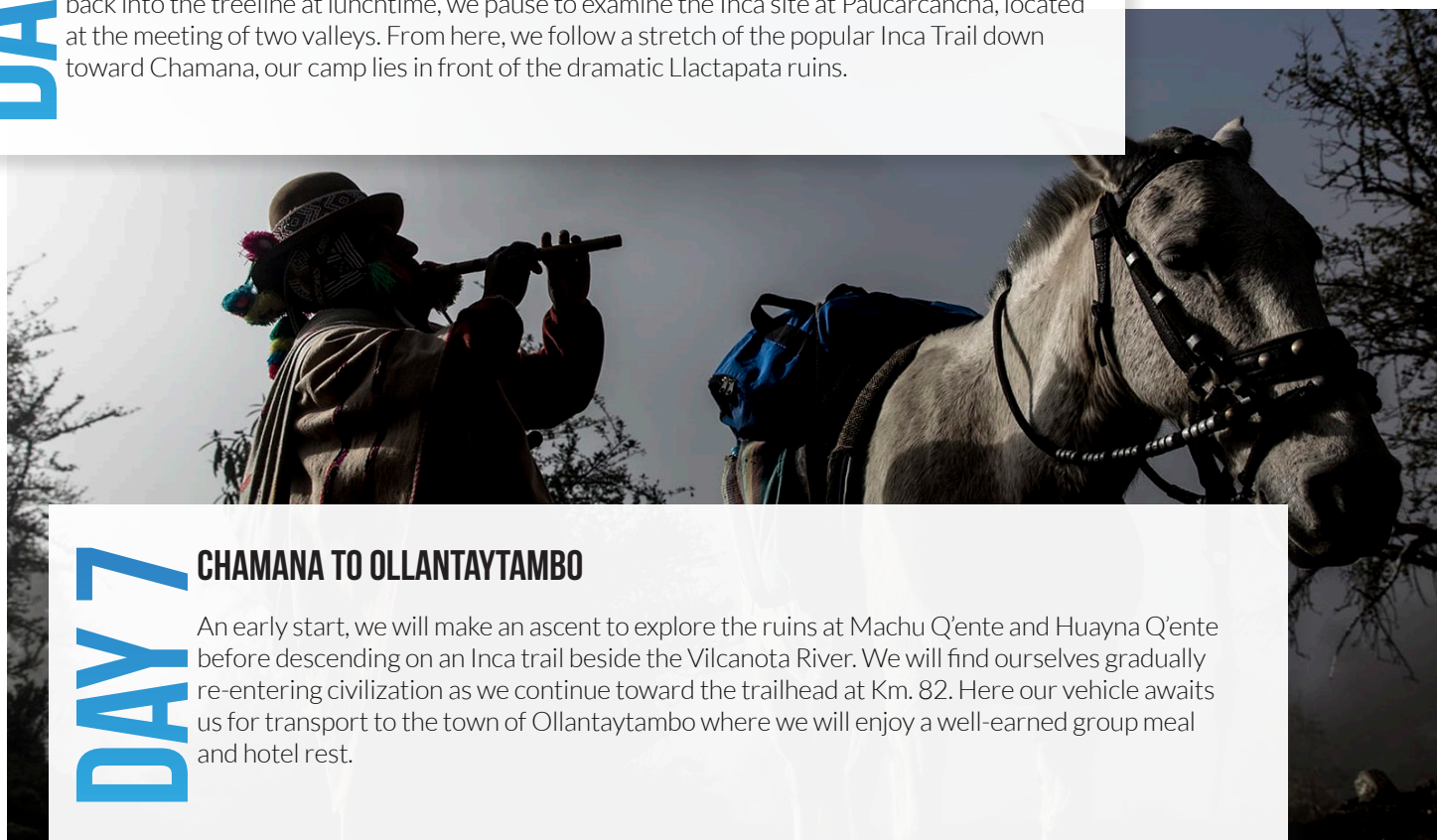


DAY 5 TINKOC-SALKANTAY PASS-PAMPACAHUANA CAMP

The big crossing. This morning we have a long uphill climb on the southeast side of Salkantay, with a chance of condors escorting us over the Tocto Pass at 15,750 ft. Today we slip into a rhythm and experience great solitude and incredible, close-up views of the sacred snow-capped peak. After a few hours, we cross a false pass which will challenge our perseverance; but all is forgotten a short distance later when you finally greet the massive Salkantay dominating the landscape. We will take advantage of these breathtaking views with a hot lunch on the pass where we can enjoy the majesty of the mountain while refueling after our arduous ascent. After lunch, we descend the Pampacahuana valley and camp at a mere 13,000ft amid tremendous, direct views of Salkantay's eastern face, weather permitting.

DAY 6 PAMPACAHUANA TO CHAMANA

From views of Salkantay, we descend the Pampacahuana valley, following an ancient Inca canal still used by scattered farmers and entering the Machu Picchu Historic Sanctuary. Descending back into the treeline at lunchtime, we pause to examine the Inca site at Paucarcancha, located at the meeting of two valleys. From here, we follow a stretch of the popular Inca Trail down toward Chamana, our camp lies in front of the dramatic Llactapata ruins.



DAY 7 CHAMANA TO OLLANTAYTAMBO

An early start, we will make an ascent to explore the ruins at Machu Q'ente and Huayna Q'ente before descending on an Inca trail beside the Vilcanota River. We will find ourselves gradually re-entering civilization as we continue toward the trailhead at Km. 82. Here our vehicle awaits us for transport to the town of Ollantaytambo where we will enjoy a well-earned group meal and hotel rest.

DAY 8

THE MACHU PICCHU TRAIL TO THE SUN GATE

An early train sweeps you along the Urubamba River, dropping us off at Km. 104 deep in the cloud forest. Crossing the roaring Urubamba on a hanging bridge, you climb for 3 strenuous hours to Wiñay Wayna, a miniature Machu Picchu with distinctive waterworks. Cutting across steep ridge lines, you follow this one-time emperor's trail up to the Sun Gate, and the once-in-a-lifetime reveal of the "lost city" laid out below. Descend through the site itself to catch a bus down to town. Tonight we eat and sleep in the quaint town of Aguas Calientes, where the only access deep in this valley is via train or on foot.

DAY 9

MACHU PICCHU/THE SANCTUARY

After breakfast and a 30 minute bus ride, we enjoy a guided visit to the citadel itself, a huge complex of hundreds of homes and sacred sites. By arriving hours ahead of the day trippers, you will have unique access to this showcase of Andean spirituality, architecture, engineering, astronomy, and agriculture. Our guides will share detailed knowledge while also allowing you plenty of time to explore on your own. We take the bus to descend back to Aguas Calientes and, in late afternoon, return via train with panoramic viewing cars to Ollantaytambo and the Sacred Valley.

DAY 10

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DAY 11

DEPARTURE

Departure flight to Lima and connection home.
Meals: Breakfast