



## Trekking the Inca Trail

here's something about the Inca Trail that has drawn people to it for decades. Maybe it's the stunning scenery and the pure mountain air; maybe it's the wildlife or the chance to walk the same paths as the Incas themselves. Or maybe, just maybe, it's because after four days trekking, you come over the last mountain pass and get to see the sun rise over Machu Picchu - the lost city of the Incas...

What's especially nice about the Inca Trail is that it can be attempted even by quite inexperienced walkers so long as they acclimatise properly. We work with expert guides who encourage you to take the trek at your own pace, so you can relax and enjoy the scenery on a trek you will remember for ever.



### Day One - The Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

A spectacular early morning drive back through the Sacred Valley takes us to our trailhead at Km. 82 of the Machu Picchu railway. After getting acquainted with our porters you will set out, crossing a footbridge to hike a gentle two hours down the Urubamba canyon, and then visit imposing sculpted Inca farming terraces and the settlement of Llaqtapata on the banks of the Cusichaca side river. We then climb a short way up the Cusichaca valley to Huayllabamba, the last inhabited village on the trail, where we camp. We include all your meals and equipment while you're on the trail as well, so you don't need to worry about a thing!



### Day Two - The Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

We climb the steep-sided Llullucha valley past a rushing stream and through enchanting subtropical woodland. Crossing the rim of a small plateau, we find ourselves in the puna, the treeless grasslands of the high Andes. The trail traverses an open slope opposite mighty mountain crags as we ascend to the first and highest pass, Warmiwañusca (4,200m). Here we encounter spectacular views of the trail ahead to the second pass, and look back to the sweeping snowpeaks and valleys of the Huayanay massif. We then follow the trail to the floor of the Pacaymayo valley, where we camp for the night.



### Day Three - The Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

This morning, we pick up an Inca stairway and ascend again past the small Inca site of Runkuracay. As we reach the second pass, the landscape opens onto spectacular new views to the snowpeaks of the Pumasillo range. We descend to the ruins of Sayacmarca (Inaccessible Town), an intricate labyrinth of houses, plazas and water channels, perched precariously on a rocky spur overlooking the Aobamba valley. The Inca trail, now a massive buttressed structure of granite paving stones, continues along the steep upper fringes of the cloud forest through a colourful riot of orchids, bromeliads, mosses and ferns. At the third pass pinnacles topped with Inca viewing platforms overlook the archaeological complex of Phuyupatamarca (Cloud-level Town).

Pausing to explore the maze of Inca stone towers, fountains and stairways that spills down the mountainside here, we begin a long descent through ever-changing layers of cloud forest. An Inca stairway partly cut from living granite leads us finally to our camp by the ruins of Wiñay Wayna (Forever Young), the largest and most exquisite of the Inca Trail sites.



#### **Day Four - The Inca Trail to Machu Picchu**

An early morning hike takes us across a steep mountainside through lush, humid cloud-forest of giant ferns and broad-leaf vegetation. Suddenly we cross the stone threshold of Intipunku (Sun Gate) and encounter an unforgettable sweep of natural beauty and human artistry – a backdrop of twisting gorge and forested peaks framing the magical city of Machu Picchu.

We complete the final leg down the royal flagstone walkway, past outlying shrines and buildings and into the heart of Machu Picchu, where we spend the rest of the morning with a guided tour of the highlights and some individual exploring among Machu Picchu's multitude of hidden nooks and corners. In the early afternoon a bus takes us down to the foot of the mountain to the small town of Aguas Calientes, from where you will catch the train back to Cusco.