



Salkantay Trek

Our most popular alternative to the Inca Trail, the Salkantay trek to Machu Picchu really started life as an alternative for when people couldn't secure a permit for the "classic" Inca Trail. However, in recent years this trek has become something of a favourite and many people now rate Salkantay as better than the Inca Trail itself!

It's a little tougher than the classic trek, and takes you a little higher, but the reward is some of the best high-altitude trekking in South America, with views of stunning snow-capped peaks and glaciers before you drop down into the humid semi-tropical environment around Machu Picchu...



Day One - Start the Salkantay trek

We will leave Cusco early this morning and start heading out into the mountains! As spectacular drive brings us to Mollepata, where we will stop for a light breakfast and so everyone can get introduced. Today is a fairly easy day to get you nicely into the swing of things so we will then set off on a gentle hike through the Andean valleys to the Pampas de Silca, about 3 hours walk away, where we will stop for lunch, and then, after a decent rest, walk for around another 4 hours to Soraypampa, where we will camp for the night.



Day Two - Salkantay Pass

Waking up today, the first thing you will see is the majestic peak of Salkantay – hopefully suitably inspiring for what is the longest and probably hardest day of the trek. After a hearty breakfast, we will set off at around 7am and cross the Pampas de Salkantay, with great views of some of the small lakes and moraines which characterise the area, and start climbing up to the Salkantay pass – the highest point of the trail at 4,500m. From here the views of the Umantay and Salkantay mountains, with their snow-covered slopes and glaciers are incredible. Then, looking beyond the pass, we can look down as the mountains taper away into the jungle beyond. We will stop here for lunch, before heading down the other side of the pass to Huayrac, where we will camp for the second night.



Day Three - Santa Teresa

Today is a real highlight for nature-lovers as we begin to head down into the sub-tropical forest environments that are home to so many of Peru's endemic species. We will pass through the Arraniyuc community to the Santa Teresa river, where we will see huge waterfalls cutting the slopes, hundreds of varieties of orchids and bird-life galore before we arrive at our campsite at LLuskamayu. Depending on how we are doing for time, there may be a chance to bathe in the thermal springs in the area and give those tired legs a soak!



Day Four - First sight of Machu Picchu

After breakfast this morning, we will set off towards Sahuayaco, along trails lined with banana, avocado and coffee trees, and also the famous coca plants! After lunch, another 3 hours walk brings us to an amazing lookout point over the lost Inca city of Machu Picchu. We will rest here for a while, before heading down the slopes and crossing the Vilcanota river to the bridge station where we will wait for the train to take us the last few kilometres to Aguas Calientes, the small town at the foot of Machu Picchu, where we will spend the night.



Day Five - Tour of Machu Picchu

Today you will have a full guided tour of Machu Picchu, and because you have stayed overnight at Aguas Calientes, you will be able to get up there early - even before the people on the Inca Trail - and have the site largely to yourselves. After a full day here, spent in both guided and individual exploration, you will return to Cusco by train in the evening.