

THE GRAND ANDEAN EXPERIENCE

10-Day Program

ITINERARY

The Grand Andean Experience to Machu Picchu is a 10-day journey through ancient history, living culture and the magnificent landscape of Cusco and the Sacred Valley of the Incas. This once-in-a-lifetime exploration into the sacred havens of the Incas is equal parts physical, cultural and spiritual journey, a journey of knowledge and transformation gathered while trekking, biking, sightseeing and enjoying the plush comfort of warm, welcoming High Mountain Lodges. Enjoy the uncrowded paths, authentic encounters with local people and the silence and mysticism of the Andes.

DAY 0 | EVENING BRIEFING IN CUSCO

Meet your MLP guide and fellow travelers for a general trip briefing and Q&A.

Time: 6pm

Location: El Mercado, an MLP Signature Property

Address: Calle 7 Cuartones 306, Centro Histórico de Cusco, Cusco

Duration: Approximately 45 minutes*

**We recommend that you stay for dinner at 'La Taberna' in El Mercado, which offers Peruvian and other international cuisine in a cozy, elegant setting*

DAY 1 | EXPLORING PISAQ

After an early breakfast, your MLP guide and driver will pick you up from your hotel in Cusco to begin your journey from the busy streets of Cusco to the Sacred Valley of the Incas, full of lush green fields surrounded by striking mountain peaks. Start your day with either an invigorating hike from the village of Amaru to the community of Viacha, or a visit to the Awanakancha textile center followed by an exploration of the lively town and colorful artisan marketplace of Pisac. Midday, both cultural explorers and hikers will reunite to enjoy exclusive access to the remote community of Viacha, learn about artisanal potato farming practices, and enjoy a traditional "Pachamanca" lunch with the locals. After lunch, either hike or drive to the Pisac archaeological site, an afternoon excursion that offers the unique opportunity to explore the complex free of crowds.

Day 1 Activity Options:

✓ **Cultural (morning):** Excursion to Awanakancha for an introduction to traditional Andean textile weaving techniques and an up-close visit with some friendly llamas, alpacas, and vicuñas, all camelids indigenous

DAY 1 | EXPLORING PISAQ (cont.)

to both this region and other high-altitude regions throughout Peru. Next, you will visit the town of Pisac and explore the unique goods for sale in its famous artisan marketplace.

- / **Active (morning):** Hike from the village of Amaru to the community of Viacha. | **Duration:** Approximately 3 hours | **Hiking Level:** Moderate (max. elevation: 14,200' / 4,328m)
- / **All-Group Activity:** Share a traditional Pachamanca lunch with locals in the community of Viacha, followed by an optional hike (or vehicle transfer) and guided exploration of the Pisac archaeological site.

Meals: L (Viacha), D (Lamay Lodge)

Overnight: Lamay Lodge (9,705' / 2,958m)

DAY 2 | INTO THE HEART OF LARES

The day begins with a visit to the small town of Lamay followed by a scenic drive into the heart of the Lares Valley. Your first stop will be Ancasmарca for a guided tour of this seldom-visited archeological site. Afterwards, choose a visit with the expert textile weavers in the remote village of Choquecancha or a hike amidst turquoise blue lakes and towering peaks to the remote village of Huacahuasi, where both groups meet again to spend the night. Huacahuasi Lodge is operated by both MLP staff and members of the local community through a joint venture aimed at protecting the area's cultural heritage and natural environment—a partnership that demonstrates the evolving role of traditional Andean communities in both the culture and commerce of modern-day Cusco.

Day 2 Activity Options:

- / **All-Group Cultural Activity (morning):** Explore the town of Lamay and visit the archeological site of Ancasmарca.
- / **Cultural (afternoon):** Visit to the remote community of Choquecancha where you will have the opportunity to meet locals and learn from the community's expert textile weavers.
- / **Active (afternoon):**
 - **Option A:** Hike from Quelquena to Huacahuasi | **Duration:** Approximately 2.5 hours | **Hiking Level:** Easy to moderate (max. elevation 12,595' / 3,839m)
 - **Option B:** Hike from Cuncani to Huacahuasi | **Duration:** Approximately 4 hours | **Hiking Level:** Moderate (max. elevation 13,838' / 4,219m)

Meals: B (Lamay Lodge), L (Cultural – Choquecancha; Active – Box lunch en route), D (Huacahuasi Lodge)

Overnight: Huacahuasi Lodge (12,585' / 3,835m)

DAY 3 | THE ROAD TO OLLANTAYTAMBO

Begin the day with a scenic drive to the community of Huilloc. From there, choose a morning hike from the village of Huilloc to the historic ruins of Pumamarca, or an extended visit to Huilloc and the nearby archaeological site of Marcacocha before regrouping for lunch and a midday exploration of the Pumamarca

DAY 3 | THE ROAD TO OLLANTAYTAMBO (cont.)

ruins. After lunch, choose to hike from Pumamarca to Ollantaytambo or drive and spend the afternoon exploring Ollantaytambo town's maze-like alleys and passageways.

Note: Afternoon hikers will meet the rest of the group at the hotel upon arrival in the Sacred Valley.

Day 3 Activity Options:

- / **Cultural (morning):** Visit the local community of Huilloc. Participate, along with the local sheepherders, in a traditional Andean ceremony to honor the Inca gods as protection for the health of the community livestock. Drive from Marcacocha to Pumamarca for an all-group tour of the archaeological site and picnic lunch. After lunch, explore the farming terraces on your way to Ollantaytambo.
- / **Active**
 - **Morning:** Hike from Huilloc to Pumamarca. | **Duration:** Approximately 3 hours | **Hiking level:** Moderate
 - **Afternoon:** Hike from Pumamarca to Ollantaytambo. | **Duration:** Approximately 3 hours | **Hiking level:** Moderate
- / **Optional All-Group Activity (late afternoon):** Visit a locally-sourced Sacred Valley craft brewery (subject to additional cost).

Meals: B (Huacahuasi Lodge), L (Pumamarca), D (Kuychi Rumi Lodge)

Overnight: Kuychi Rumi Lodge (9,284' / 2,830m)

DAY 4 | ON THE WAY TO SOYRAPAMPA

On this day, the first stop is a visit to the Quillarumiyoc archaeological site en route to the mountain village of Mollepata. Enjoy lunch at El Pedregal, a beautiful farmhouse in the village, where you will also have the opportunity to learn about local agriculture and livestock. After lunch comes a scenic ride on the winding mountain road to Challacancha. Here you will begin your hike to our flagship Salkantay Lodge at Soraypampa along a picturesque path called the "Camino Real" (Royal Path). *

***Note:** Although we highly recommend participating in the hike as part of your continued altitude acclimatization, guests may opt out and continue by transport to Salkantay Lodge.

- / **Trekking Time:** Approximately 3 hours
- / **Hiking Level:** Easy to Moderate

Meals: L (El Pedregal), D (Salkantay Lodge)

Overnight: Salkantay Lodge (2,690' / 3,869m)

DAY 5 | HIKE TO HUMANTAY LAKE

After breakfast, you begin an ascent up the slopes that border the plateau behind Salkantay Lodge*. An hour and a half later, your hard work will be rewarded with a first glimpse of the lake's glistening turquoise waters

DAY 5 | HIKE TO HUMANTAY LAKE (cont.)

and the Humantay glacier looming overhead. Upon arrival, you will have a chance to relax, enjoy a snack, meditate in the tranquility of this magical spot, and participate in a traditional ceremony to honor “Pachamama” (Mother Earth). After your descent back to the lodge, the Salkantay staff will be waiting with a hot lunch. Afternoon at leisure to relax, enjoy a massage, or soak in the outdoor hot tub for a spectacular view of the Salkantay Peak at sunset.

**Note: While the morning hike to Lake Humantay is optional, we strongly recommend your participation in preparation for the strenuous hike on Day 3.*

/ **Trekking Time:** Approximately 4 hours

/ **Hiking Level:** Moderate

/ **Optional Activities**

- **Chakana excursion (subject to additional cost):** Horseback/hiking combo up the steep hills adjacent the lodge. The destination—a dramatic lookout point over the Salkantay River Valley marked by an oversized Inca Chakana (cross). This excursion will replace the hike to the glacier lake. **Duration:** Approximately 5 hours (1.5 - 2 hours on horseback)
- **Horseback riding (subject to additional cost):** After lunch, spend a leisurely afternoon exploring Soraypampa on horseback. | **Duration:** Approximately 2 hours.

Meals: B, L and D (all at Salkantay Lodge)

Overnight: Salkantay Lodge (12,690' / 3,869m)

DAY 6 | CROSSING THE SALKANTAY PASS

After an early start, the ascent toward the Salkantay Pass begins. You will circle Humantay Peak, gradually making your way along expansive plateaus connected by enormous boulders, remnants of the Rio Blanco Valley that was once bisected by a fast-flowing river. The last and most challenging part of the ascent is conquering the mountain switchbacks that lead you to the pass, the highest point on the trek (15,213' / 4,636m). The journey continues with a dramatic descent through fields of large boulders and natural stone formations often shrouded in fog, followed by a very welcome hot picnic lunch. After lunch, you will have some time to rest before the final hike through the area's bucolic countryside; its rolling hills will eventually lead you through marsh-like plateaus to the Wayra Lodge at Wayraccmachay.

/ **Trekking Time:** Approximately 4 hours

/ **Hiking Level:** Challenging

Meals: B (Salkantay Lodge), L (en route) and D (Wayra Lodge)

Overnight: Wayra Lodge (12,812' / 3,906m)

DAY 7 | DESCENDING INTO THE CLOUD FOREST

After a leisurely breakfast at Wayra Lodge, you will continue the descent toward the cloud forest along the banks of the Salkantay River through increasingly verdant scenery. The warm air will begin to rise from the

DAY 7 | DESCENDING INTO THE CLOUD FOREST (cont.)

edge of the jungle, accompanied by colorful butterflies and striking orchids. Today you will see more local Andean people as the trail takes you past their simple homes and makeshift fences. At approximately midday, you will arrive at Colpa Lodge, located on a high promontory at the confluence of three rivers. The Colpa staff will greet you with a Pachamanca lunch, a traditional Peruvian meal cooked below ground with hot stones that create a natural oven. After lunch, spend the afternoon lounging in the sun or relaxing in the outdoor hot tub while you take in the panoramic views of the lush green mountains that surround you.

/ **Trekking Time:** Approximately 3 - 4 hours

/ **Hiking Level:** Easy to moderate

Meals: B (Wayra Lodge), L (en route), D (Colpa Lodge)

Overnight: Colpa Lodge (9,414' / 2,870m)

DAY 8 | FOLLOWING THE SANTA TERESA RIVER VALLEY

Today you will hike through the Santa Teresa River Valley along a rolling trail that crosses fertile fruit orchards and bisects streams originating from glacier-fed waterfalls. After a hot picnic lunch by the river and some time to relax, the group will continue for one more hour before you are met by an MLP transport vehicle for the short drive to the bottom of the Llactapata Inca Trail steps that lead to Lucma Lodge. On the way to the lodge you will visit an organic coffee plantation, one of many in the area that produce some of the best organic coffees in the world. You will also begin to notice another shift in the climate; in Lucmabamba, the hot air and increased humidity signal that you are even closer to the edge of the Amazon Jungle.

/ **Trekking Time:** Approximately 5.5 hours

/ **Hiking Level:** Moderate to Challenging

/ **Optional Activities:**

- **Zip Line (subject to additional cost)*:** Located in Santa Teresa (approximately a 1 hour drive from Lucma Lodge)

**Note: This full day activity replaces the Day 5 trek.*

- **Mountain Biking (subject to additional cost)*:**

- **Option A:** Yanama Pass - Hornopampa – Lluskamayo | **Duration:** Approximately 5 hours | **Biking Level:** Easy to moderate
- **Option B:** Hornopampa – Lluskamayo | **Duration:** Approximately 3.5 hours | **Biking Level:** Easy to moderate

**Note: Both options are full-day activities that replace the Day 5 trek.*

Meals: B (Colpa Lodge), L (en route), D (Lucma Lodge)

Overnight: Lucma Lodge (7,003' / 2,135m)

DAY 9 | LUCMABAMBA / FIRST VIEWS OF MACHU PICCHU

After breakfast, depart from Lucma Lodge and embark on a 2-3 hour climb through the cloud forest up a path mostly comprised of original Inca steps. A lush tree line creates green canopies overhead and the constant sound of rushing water suggests that the river is nearby. Your first milestone today will be the top of the peak, the last one before you descend to the Aobamaba River Valley that connects you to Machu Picchu. Upon arrival at the Llactapata Pass (8,974' / 2,736m), you will delight in a southeast view of Machu Picchu, a sight few travelers get the chance to admire. After exploring Llactapata, the Inca tambo (fort) that marks the pass, enjoy a picnic lunch at a mountain lookout point with panoramic views. The final descent along a trail that zigzags down to the roaring Aobamba River will take you through lush bamboo forests, varied fruit orchards, and more coffee plantations. Celebrate as you cross the bridge over the river and take your final steps of the trek en route to the Hidroelectrica train station for a scenic one-hour train ride to the town of Aguas Calientes, on the banks of the Urubamba River at the base of Machu Picchu.

✓ **Trekking Time:** Approximately 4–6 hours

✓ **Hiking Level:** Moderate to Challenging

Meals: B (Lucma Lodge), L (en route), D (at hotel)

Overnight: Inkaterra Pueblo Hotel (6,693'/2,040m)

DAY 10 | THE CITADEL OF MACHU PICCHU

Your journey to Machu Picchu begins with an early morning rollicking uphill bus ride. As you enter the 'sanctuary' (as locals refer to it), prepare to be awed by the imposing, skillful architecture of the Watchtower, the Temple of the Sun, and the royal Inca residences, among others. After a two-hour guided tour, you will have free time to explore on your own, including a hike up Huayna Picchu*, the iconic mountain that looms over the citadel, for dramatic views that stretch from the Urubamba River Valley to the edge of the Amazon Jungle. At some point, be sure to take a moment and sit quietly—listen to the wind, meditate, and absorb the mystical energy that envelops you. After the visit you will have lunch in Aguas Calientes before a scenic Vistadome train ride to Ollantaytambo (approximately 1.5 hours) and vehicle transfer to your hotel in Cusco (approximately 1.5 hours). As night falls and you arrive amidst the hustle and bustle of the city, you will be touched by a feeling of peace and rejuvenation that will linger long after your journey home.

*Entrance time - Huayna Picchu: 10am

Note: Tickets for Huayna Picchu are subject to availability. Please consult with your MLP Travel Specialist when you confirm your reservation. In the event that Huayna Picchu permits are not available for your desired date, Mount Machu Picchu (the second peak within the sanctuary) permits will be secured instead.

Meals: B and L (at hotel)

END OF ITINERARY

ADDITIONAL NOTES | THE GRAND ANDEAN EXPERIENCE

- ✓ Lodging in Cusco before and after your MLP adventure is not included in the itinerary; however, we invite you to book accommodations at one of our Signature MLP Properties in Cusco, El Mercado (elmercadocusco.com), El Retablo (elretablo.com) and X.O Art House (xoarthousecusco.com). Please ask your MLP Travel Specialist for more details and help with securing reservations at your hotel of choice in Cusco.
- ✓ Extend Your Stay: Combine MLP Trip Extensions with your MLP Signature Adventure to create your own customized travel experience. Contact your MLP Travel Specialist for more details and help with securing reservations for your extended itinerary.