

Sacred Valley Ride, Peru

Itinerary

Day 1

Your hotel for the first night is in the centre of Cusco, close to the historic 'Plaza de Armas', known as the 'Square of the Warrior'.

Check-in time is from 11:00am. If you arrive early then you will be able to store your luggage with the concierge and set off to explore a little of Cusco, or make use of the hotel's main areas.



Today it is very important that you relax, rest and get acclimatized to the high altitude, before starting your exciting riding expedition high in the Andes.



Lunch and dinner are to your own account today.

Please note that the following itinerary is somewhat flexible. Changes may occur due to weather and other unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of your guide. Riding times and routes are approximate and are intended as a guideline only. Any changes are made with your best interests in mind.

Overnight in Cusco at the Costa del Sol Hotel or Hilton Garden Inn, (altitude c. 3,400 m).

Day 2

After breakfast you will be collected at 09:15 from outside your hotel in Cusco. It is a drive of approximately 1 hr 30 minutes to your accommodation in the Sacred Valley.

For the next four nights, you will stay in comfortable accommodation in the heart of the Sacred Valley, between Cusco and Machu Picchu and only a short drive from the stables.

Once you have settled in to your room you will be collected and transferred to Perol Chico. Today you have the opportunity to become familiar with the horses and the traditional Peruvian riding gear.



Have lunch at the ranch. The rest of the day is then set aside to familiarise yourself with Peruvian equitation before the start of the ride itself. There will be a riding demonstration and a theory session covering the principles of classical Peruvian horsemanship; the position, aids, paces and collection. There will also be an in-depth safety briefing which goes into detail about all the potential risks and hazards that could be encountered during the ride.

You will have an introductory Peruvian riding lesson during which your riding ability will be evaluated. The guide will then match you with a mount in accordance with your ability, preference, personality and weight. All horses are forward going, very well trained and a pleasure to ride.



Dinner will be at the ranch or at a local restaurant.

Overnight at Sonesta Posada del Inca Hotel in the Sacred Valley, (altitude c. 2,800 m).

Day 3

After breakfast at your hotel you will be taken to the ranch and the ride will set off.

Today's ride takes you along an old and forgotten path behind Perol Chico ranch that leads to a breath-taking place on top of the Cordillera Vilcanota. On this route you explore hidden trails, discover unspoilt landscapes and ride far off the beaten track.

During the first part of the ride there is a serious climb following narrow but beautiful mountain trails with lots of vegetation. Observe the rich flora of the Peruvian Andes, such as the Molle tree or "Pepper tree" whose resin the Incas once used to embalm mummies, the Sauco tree which produces small and very tasty purplish-black fruits and the twisted-trunk Qeuna tree whose reddish-coloured bark flakes and peels as paper. You may also come across other botanical specimens native to the Peruvian Andes such as the Tamarillo tree (tree tomato), Cantutas which is known as the flower of the Incas, the Aguaymanto which is also known as the Peruvian cherry or cape gooseberry and Muña, which is a mint-like Peruvian herb.



On reaching the top of the mountain, let the horses rest a while and enjoy the spectacular view. After a refreshing drink and snack, continue riding. The trail takes you downhill along lush trails, arriving around mid-afternoon in a beautiful valley. The back-up team will meet you here and you can enjoy a delicious lunch.

Arrive back at Perol Chico around 16:30.

Dinner will be at the ranch or at a local restaurant.

Overnight at Sonesta Posada del Inca Hotel in the Sacred Valley, (altitude c. 2,800 m).

Riding time: approximately 4-4.5 hours. Riding altitude: 2,800 - 3,600 m.

Day 4

Today you visit Machu Picchu by train.

Since its discovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911, Machu Picchu has captivated the hearts and minds of the modern world. The experience of visiting Machu Picchu is not limited to the ruins themselves; the train journey is one of the most spectacular in the world.



Before it was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1983, the Inca citadel was almost unknown to the world. Since then visits to Machu Picchu have increased so much that it is now one of the favourite destinations of travellers from all over the world.

Peru's Ministry of Culture has established some regulations which aim to preserve this wondrous place. These regulations have recently taken effect and are as follows:

- Entrance to Machu Picchu will be in various shifts, allowing a maximum stay of 4 hours.
- Visitor numbers is capped at 800 per shift.
- If visitors leave and then wish to re-enter the site, they will be required to purchase a new ticket.

- Visitors are not usually allowed to enter the citadel of Machu Picchu without a guide.

You will be collected from your hotel and transferred to Ollantaytambo train station in time for your train to Macchu Picchu station, (a journey of approximately 1.5 hours).



Your riding guide will not accompany you to Machu Picchu, but will explain the plan for the day in detail before you go. To enter Machu Picchu you need to employ the services of a guide, which can be done at the entrance to the ruins. The cost for your guide is payable locally (c. US \$50 depending on the group size).

Due to regulations enforced by the Ministry of Culture, when visiting Machu Picchu you must take your passport with you.



Later in the day, take the train back to Ollantaytambo. You will be collected upon arrival at Ollantaytambo and transferred back to the ranch for dinner. After dinner you will be taken back to your hotel.

Today, you will experience altitudes of between 2,800 and 2,100 m.

Overnight at Sonesta Posada del Inca Hotel in the Sacred Valley, (altitude c. 2,800 m).

Day 5

After breakfast at your hotel, be transferred to the ranch for today's ride.

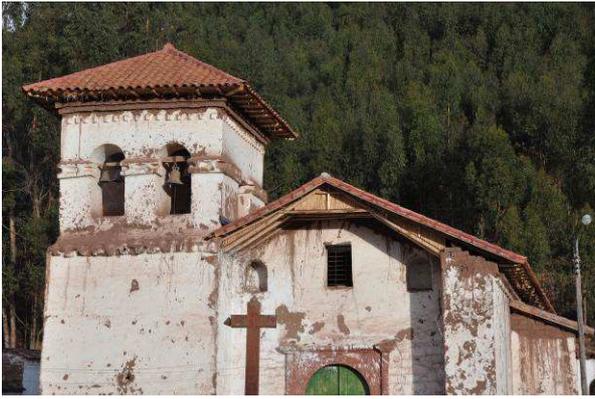
You cross the Urubamba River over a traditional bridge and pass by Pichingote, an old Andean village where the houses are partially built into the caves. Then onto Salinas where you see salt pans from Inca times which are still being used by the locals to extract salt from the mountain spring water. The salt pans consist of a series of platforms where the salty water is channelled through an impressive irrigation system and left to evaporate in the sun.



Today you climb almost 850m with the horses to reach the Andean altiplano. This climb takes about two hours and will be taken at an easy pace because the change of altitude affects not only the horses. Once at 3,550m you will be surrounded by stunning scenery and the snow-capped mountains of Chicon, Veronica and Pitusuray.

Continue your ride to Maras, a typical Andean village with a beautiful 400-year-old colonial church, where a picnic lunch will be waiting for you nearby. The church at Maras was built just after the Conquest and is one of the ten oldest churches in South America.

From Maras, visit the ruins of Cheqoq. Here the Incas constructed fascinating cold-storage areas (pre-Hispanic refrigerators) to conserve the agricultural produce of the region. Cooling of the products was achieved by using a system of wind tunnels to circulate the air and a network of water channels to circulate the cold water from a nearby mountain spring.



Continue riding to the beautiful churchyard of Tiobamba. The horses are left here with the grooms and you return to your hotel.

After some rest and a hot shower, have dinner at one of Urubamba's restaurants or at the ranch.

Overnight at Sonesta Posada del Inca Hotel in the Sacred Valley, (altitude c. 2,800 m).

Riding time: approximately 4-4.5 hours. Riding altitude: 2,800 - 3,550 m.

Day 6

After a hearty breakfast at your hotel you will be collected at 9:15 and transferred by vehicle to the village near Tiobamba where the horses are waiting.



Today you follow primitive trails across the altiplano. The scenery is spectacular with snow-capped mountains, wild flowers and beautiful mountain lakes. Meet smiling Quechua children with their herds of sheep or cattle and see campesinos ploughing their fields in the traditional way with oxen hitched to a wooden plough. You may even share a chicha (their traditional maize drink) with them.

Just outside Chinchero the backup team and a picnic lunch awaits you. On a clear day the views from Chinchero are tremendous; to the west and northwest stretches a vista of rolling altiplano, ringed by the

dramatic snow-capped peaks of the Cordilleras Vilcabamba and Urubamba.



After lunch the ride continues to Lake Piuray. From here, ride in the direction of Cusco and pass some small villages. At one of these villages the ride ends and you leave the horses with their grooms. If time allows there will be a visit to Chinchero where there may be the chance to visit a textiles workshop and see a demonstration of spinning, dyeing and weaving wool. The beautiful weavings are still made in the same way as they would have been made in Inca times. You may wish to have some money with you to purchase some souvenirs if you wish, (although there is no obligation). **NB.** If there is no time to visit Chinchero today then this visit will be made on the morning of Day 8.



Transfer to the historic city of Cusco, the oldest continuously inhabited city in South America and the former capital of the great Inca Empire. The Incas called their empire Tahuantinsuyu, "The Four Quarters of the Earth." Cusco, meaning "the Navel of the World," was the centre of Tahuantinsuyu; its main square, the Huacapata (today's Plaza de Armas), marked the heart of Cusco and of the Inca Empire.

For the next two nights, you stay at a very comfortable hotel located near the Plaza de Armas, the heart of Cusco's archaeological centre.

Dinner tonight is to your own account. Your guide will be happy to recommend a restaurant. If you still have the energy you can explore Cusco's nightlife.

Overnight in Cusco at either the Costa del Sol Hotel or Hilton Garden Inn, (altitude c. 3,400 m).

Riding time: approximately 4.5-5 hours. Riding altitude: 3,550 – 3,800 m.

Day 7

Relax; today is yours to spend as you wish. Visit the numerous ruins, churches, cathedrals and museums of Cusco, do some shopping, or just relax in one of the many coffee shops, restaurants, or bars.



According to Inca legend, Cusco was founded around 1200 AD by Manco Capac and Mama Occllo. Manco Capac selected the site when the golden staff given to him by his father, the Sun, sank into the earth and disappeared. Each Inca emperor built his own palace and compound during his reign. The Spanish initially tried to raise the Inca buildings to the ground, but soon realised that because of their quality construction, it was easier to reuse the Inca foundations for their own buildings. For this reason, you can still see many of the original Inca walls throughout Cusco.



Cusco is now a vibrant city of some three hundred thousand inhabitants, the vast majority of whom are native Quechua Indians. Despite being a major tourist destination, both for its own treasures and as a staging point for the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu, Cusco has managed to hold on to its own distinct flavour. It is a great place to spend the day.

Lunch and dinner is to your own account today.

Overnight in Cusco at either the Costa del Sol Hotel or Hilton Garden Inn, (altitude c. 3,400 m).

Day 8

You will be collected from your hotel at 09:15 and transferred to the horses.



Today is one of the most beautiful riding days; explore old Inca trails and open country with spectacular views. The scenery is absolutely breath-taking, with impressive views of the many snow-capped mountains and the altiplano. Herds of llamas and alpacas can often be seen grazing along the way.

At times you have to ride along difficult seldom-used mountain trails, so your guide will have to improvise to find the best way of getting from one side of the mountain to the other. The way the horses handle the climbs and tricky terrain are sure to impress you. At

one point during the route you reach a high pass at 4,350m and see the small shallow Lake Quellacocha, the highest point of the ride. Lunch will be at the lake.

After lunch, continue to Lake Qori'cocha and pass by large potato fields all ploughed by hand. Then begin to descend with the horses from the altiplano into the valley of Umaspampa, taking you on a zig-zag trail for approximately 2 hours.



During this descent you will need to lead your horse for around 15 minutes in order to cross some rocky terrain. Close to the village of Umaspampa leave the horses in the caring hands of their grooms and be transported to your hotel in the Sacred Valley.

Overnight at Sonesta Posada del Inca Hotel in the Sacred Valley, (altitude c. 2,800 m).

Riding time: approximately 5-6 hours. Riding altitude: 3,300 – 4,350 m.

Day 9

From the village of Umaspampa you ride to the villages of Cuper Alto and Cuper Bajo, arriving at a church near the village of Chinchero where you will have lunch. The scenery en route is absolutely spectacular and there will be plenty of breaks to soak up the atmosphere and take photos if you wish.



Much of the riding today is along trails that are part of the great Inca Empire's road system, the 'Capac Nan'. The Inca road network was one of the greatest engineering feats undertaken in the New World and rivalled the Roman roads of the Old World.

The 30,000 km road network linked Cusco, the Inca capital, to the empire's far flung domains. The road system comprised almost all the territory of the Andes, including Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Chile and was formed by four main roads and many secondary roads.

This afternoon is another beautiful ride with stunning scenery. Arrive at the village of Huaynacolca high atop the mountains that surround the Sacred Valley. Leave the horses with their grooms and transfer by vehicle to your hotel.

Dinner will be at your hotel. Your guide will not be with you for dinner this evening.

Overnight at Hotel Posada del Inca, Yucay, Sacred Valley (altitude c. 2,800 m).

Riding time: approximately 5-6 hours. Riding altitude: 3,800 – 3,550 m.



Day 10

Depart after breakfast for the last day with the horses. Before meeting the horses, stop en route at the pottery shop of renowned ceramicist and artist Pablo Seminario, a local legend amongst Cusqueños. Pablo invented a new form of ceramic artwork that integrates abstract modern styles with traditional Incan and pre-Incan ceramic techniques and designs.

After a short visit to the pottery shop, continue to Huaynacolca. From here, ride along old Inca roads high above the Sacred Valley.



Pass farmland and the small village of Santana. Continue until you arrive at a beautiful courtyard of an old house, where lunch will be served.

After lunch, your ride continues along a trail with great views of the Urquillos Valley towards Maras. From Maras, begin the descent into the Sacred Valley. Pass by the salt mines and arrive back at Perol Chico by around 16:00. Celebrate your return with a traditional Pisco Sour at the ranch.



Dinner will be at the ranch or a local restaurant.

Overnight at Hotel Posada del Inca, Yucay, Sacred Valley (altitude c. 2,800 m).

Riding time: approximately 4-4.5 hours. Riding altitude: 3,550-2,800 m.

Day 11

You will be transferred to Cusco airport in time for your flight (this is a journey of c. 1 hr 30 minutes).