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LATIN AMERICA



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ACTIVE PERU AND BOLIVIA: TREKKING ANDEAN PEAKS TO TROPICAL RAINFOREST

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WITH OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE, NO-ONE KNOWS LATIN AMERICA LIKE WE DO

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

- A passion for the region runs through all we do
- All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America
- Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

- Fully bonded and licensed
- ATOL-protected
- On your side when it matters
- Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

- Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks
- We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions
- Let us show you the Latin America we know and love

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

This trekking holiday combines two popular trails, the Salkantay, an Inca path fringed by huge snow-capped peaks in Peru which ends close to Machu Picchu, and the Bolivian Choro, from the chilly mountains at lofty La Paz down to semi-tropical pre-Amazon valleys.

DAY 1	**Arrive in Lima and transfer to hotel.**
DAY 2	**Tour of Lima by car, ending at the airport for flight to Cusco.**
DAY 3	**Walking tour of Cusco and nearby Inca ruins.**
DAY 4	**Guided exploration of the Sacred Valley of the Incas.**
DAY 5	**Hike the Salkantay Trail.**
DAY 6	**Second day of the Salkantay trek.**
DAY 7	**Descending to the valley.**
DAY 8	**Arrive Machu Picchu.**
DAY 9	**Guided tour of the ruins. Return to Cusco by rail and road.**
DAY 10	**Tourist coach to Puno and transfer to hotel.**
DAY 11	**By road to Copacabana, Bolivia. Guided lake excursion to Sun Island.**
DAY 12	**Continue to La Paz by road.**
DAY 13	**Tour of La Paz**
DAY 14	**First day of the Choro Trail to Chairo.**
DAY 15	**Second day of the trek.**
DAY 16	**Third day of the trek and return to la Paz**
DAY 17	**Transfer to La Paz international airport.**

ITINERARY

Andean Peru and Bolivia have some of the best hiking opportunities in Latin America, if not the world. This trekking holiday combines two popular and spectacular trails, one in each country, and although they reach high altitudes, they are not technically difficult and are within the abilities of most keen walkers.

The Salkantay trek, an Inca path which ends close to Machu Picchu, arguably ranks even higher than the better known Classic Inca Trail for its dramatic scenery, and has the added attractions of remote farmsteads, fields rich with tropical crops, and what is probably the best first-time view of Machu Picchu across ranges of rugged mountains.

The Choro Trail in Bolivia, leading from high altitude La Paz down into the semi-tropical pre-Amazon valleys, has the appeal of being mostly downhill. You can easily appreciate the influence of altitude on the landscape: from a skeletal rocky pass towered over by icy crags through cloud forest and down to the tropical plantations of the Yungas in the foothills separating the high Andes from the Amazon region.

In both cases you'll come across hardy people leading tough lives in small remote communities and farmsteads.

DAY 1

Arrive in Lima and transfer to hotel.

You will be met at the airport and escorted to your hotel in the cliff-side Pacific residential and commercial district of Miraflores. The drive to the hotel, through Lima's outskirts, encapsulates the invigorating buzz of a modern-day Latin American capital.



DAY 2

Tour of Lima by car, ending at the airport for flight to Cusco.



Lima is a vast, complex metropolis, with a history dating from the era of its wealth and importance to Imperial Spain to its current status as a dynamic, growing city of trade, industry and tourism.

Plaza San Martín, with its colonial churches, promenades and palaces marks the beginning of a guided tour that unearths much of the country's turbulent past. En route, visit several palaces including the Torre Eagle Palace (built for the treasurer of the Royal Spanish fleet and considered to be the most striking of Lima's 18th century mansions). Another building which borrows its architectural style from Baroque and Moorish Spain is the Monastery of San Francisco with its fascinating library and catacombs.

The final port of call is the private Larco Museum with its collection of beautifully modelled pottery, unique gold and silver work, mummies, and ceramics from pre-Inca civilisations. Afterwards, continue to the airport for a 1 hour flight to Cusco.

The name Cusco derives from the Quechua word for navel, indicating its location at the centre of the Inca Empire, which reached its zenith at the same time as England was fighting the War of the Roses. It is said that the city was originally built in the shape of a puma and its position atop the precipitous foothills of the Andes is without doubt a commanding one. Capital of the Inca Empire and latterly a strong hold to the Spanish conquistadors, Cusco is not so much a blend of architectures as a defiant mix.

Today its many impressive original Inca walls display extraordinary craftsmanship, while the bustling squares are dotted with ornate baroque colonial churches. It's a vivacious city, where shoeshine boys and postcard sellers jostle for your attention in cobbled streets lined with handicraft shops and cafés. In the evening, the town centre fills with people flocking to the many restaurants, bars and cafés.

DAY 3

Walking tour of Cusco and nearby Inca ruins.



Today you'll have a guided walking tour of the city, the centre of which is compact and easy to get around on foot. Beyond the squares, museums, churches and markets, you'll visit some impressive ruins on the outskirts: Tambomachay, Puca Pucara and the monumental Sacsayhuamán, with its foreboding cyclopean fortress.

While the edges of Cusco are dominated by Inca dwellings, temples and fortresses, the historic heart (with the Plaza de Armas flanked by the cathedral and the church of La Compañia) reveal the indelible mark of the Spanish conquistadors.

DAY 4

Guided exploration of the Sacred Valley of the Incas.



Drive through stunning countryside, against a backdrop of the snow-capped Andes to the high plains of Chinchero. On market days the neat colonial plaza of the eponymous village is awash with colour and noise, its inhabitants dressing in traditional costume. The nearby ruins of Tupa Inca are remarkably well preserved and overlook the Royal Inca Road which stretches as far as Chile in the south and Ecuador in the north.

Continue to the agricultural terraces of Moray, an Inca site used as an experimental agricultural centre to develop complex farming. It comprises numerous terraces carved into a large, natural amphitheatre, each one with a different microclimate.

Then head onwards to the Maras saltpans. These are a series of terraces where a natural source of saline water is evaporated by the strong Andean sun. In use since Inca times, the saltpans continue to be worked by the local community and present a unique sight, with their flat, white surfaces contrasting with the green, vertical scenery surrounding them. From here, there's a 3km walking trail which descends to the Urubamba where your vehicle awaits for the return journey to Cusco.

DAY 5

Hike the Salkantay Trail.



The Salkantay Trail clings to the skirts of the eponymous snow-mantled mountain peak (6,271m), crossing high-altitude, chilly pampa grasslands indented with icy lagoons before plunging through steamy cloud-forest and plantations heavy with tropical flowers and succulent fruit to the Santa Teresa river. From here it is a short hop by train to Peru's most mesmerising attraction, the Lost City of the Incas, Machu Picchu.

You'll savour panoramic mountain and valley views throughout which are truly out of this world. En route you will pass through small hamlets and farmsteads, where people continue to live a traditional lifestyle. Popular with walkers and horse-riders, the trek offers an excellent alternative to the classic Inca Trail for those happy to reach the citadel from a different, but still staggeringly beautiful, trekking route.

Set off by road to the start of the Salkantay Trek at Sayllapata where you meet your guides and the mules which carry the majority of the camping gear.

DAY 6

Second day of the Salkantay trek.



Climb to the highest pass of the trek (4,800m), including a steep zig-zag stretch of narrow path where any pain of exertion is mitigated by tremendous views of the Andes including the monumental snow-capped peaks of Salkantay. Pass through surreal landscapes, towered over by huge rock formations. Mists may swirl languidly above you until a break in the clouds reveals majestic ice-jacketed peaks. You may even find yourself crunching through snow, while a bright sun sears through the sky above.

Continue through the valley, passing small villages along the way. You'll see a variety of wildlife, particularly birds. Arrive at your lunch site, Wayraq, and afterwards it is a scenic descent towards your second campsite, Chaullay.

DAY 7

Descending to the valley.



After an early start descend towards Collpapamba (2,600m), and hike along an easy trail through the high jungle terrain with coffee, cocoa and fruit plantations. You may even see Peru's national bird if you're lucky – gallito de la rocas – before arriving in the village of Playa to overnight.

The terrain changes rapidly as you descend through Santa Teresa valley, leaving the chilly moors of the sparse rocky landscape behind while dense foliage replaces the scrub. Climb into the cloud forest through narrow jungle tracks framed by spider bamboo, its spindly fronds dangling above you. All around is greenery, making it easy to spot the colourful exotic plants poking through, such as the 'dancing lady' orchid and bushes tinted with tiny wild raspberries. Fresh mint lining the path was much used by the Incas. The weather is warming up: it may be hot and humid now.

DAY 8

Arrive Machu Picchu.



Begin the day with the ascent to Lucmabamba pass (2,400m) followed by a beautiful trail through the cloud forest to Patallaqta (also known as Llactapata) ruins. From here you get your first sight of Machu Picchu, shyly straddling a steep mountain saddle in the middle distance, and a vast tableau unfurls in front of you.

It is true that the first glimpse of the ruins on the traditional Inca Trail is spectacular but it is compromised by the sight of the motor road taking buses up to the ruins. The views here display a natural theatre seemingly untouched by human enterprise. After lunch descend to the bridge over the Aobamba river and arrive at the Hidroeléctrica railway halt in time to catch the afternoon train to Machu Picchu village (30mins). Overnight in a hotel in the village.

DAY 9

Guided tour of the ruins. Return to Cusco by rail and road.



The majestic ruined city, reclaimed from tropical cloud forest, was discovered by the American explorer Hiram Bingham in 1911, by which time it was completely buried beneath jungle vegetation. It soon became clear to excavators that the conquistadors had never found the city. It is perhaps the ruins' location, on a ridge spur amid forested peaks and above a roaring river canyon, that most ignites the imagination. You will have an early morning guided tour of the ruins along one of the pre-defined circuits.

Return by train as far as Ollantaytambo or Poroy, before continuing the journey to Cusco, and your hotel, by road. The train service offers you the chance to appreciate the scale of the ever-changing scenery, with portrait windows alongside your seat. There are windows in the roof, so you can gaze up to the rim of the canyon. Your comfort is enhanced with air-conditioning and heating, and Andean music is played as a backdrop to the passing scenery.

DAY 10

Tourist coach to Puno and transfer to hotel.



Transfer to the bus station for the tourist coach service to Puno on Lake Titicaca.

The lonely road follows the fertile Urubamba valley, through fields of crops and livestock and adobe villages, up to a windswept grassy plain framed by jagged mountains.

During the journey there are short stops at: Andahuaylillas, where the town's ornate, baroque 17th-century church has beautiful frescoes and an impressive gilded altar; Huaro; Raqchi, for the Temple to Viracocha, the largest roofed building ever built by the Incas and one of Peru's most stunning Inca sites; and Pucará, famous for its pre-Inca ruins and local pottery, where you can visit the little museum. There is an English-speaking guide, complimentary soft drinks and a toilet on board.

Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel in Puno, a lively university town and port on Lake Titicaca. It's an important centre for Peruvian folklore, enjoying a rich tradition of music and dance. It is also a great place for buying local handicrafts.

DAY 11

By road to Copacabana, Bolivia. Guided lake excursion to Sun Island.



Early in the morning leave your hotel in Puno for a delightful, scenic 2.5hr drive to the Peru-Bolivia border town of Kasani. Continue on into Bolivia, where brightly coloured flowers often line the route. Arrive at Copacabana, a small town doubling as a religious sanctuary overlooked by a steep hill accommodating the 12 stations of the cross. It sits by a sandy beach on a beautiful bay, and attracts many pilgrims who make the trip, often from great distances, on foot.

Board a motor-powered sailing boat or hydrofoil and head towards Sun Island (Isla del Sol), the legendary birth place of the Inca Empire – on the island you'll take a 25-minute scenic walk along Inca trails to your hotel in time for lunch. Afternoon at leisure to explore the island trails, dotted with ancient ruins and tiny villages, and not a car or road in sight.

DAY 12

Continue to La Paz by road.



In the morning, visit the Inca Stairs and Sacred Water Spring, supposed to be a source of eternal youth, followed by lunch at the Uma Kollu restaurant, which has panoramic lake views from its balcony and Inca walls. Afterwards, return to Copacabana by hydrofoil, visit the Shrine of the Dark Virgin and town. Then, board the bus to Huatajata (1½ hrs) and visit the Andean Eco-Village at Hotel Inca Utama. The project encompasses all aspects of local culture and nature, and includes reed boat and altiplano museums, a handicrafts workshop, mortuary towers and botanical garden. Continue overland to La Paz (1 hrs). (Although travelling on shared transport services you will be accompanied by your own guide, who will lead you around the visitor sites on a private basis.)

DAY 13

Tour of La Paz

Visit the historical centre of La Paz, seeing sites including the Government Palace, National Congress building and the impressive cathedral, that all surround Plaza Murillo. Continue to the Gold Museum, the 16th century San Francisco Church and pass by the Tiwanaku culture open-air museum. Explore one of the city's more unusual markets, the Mecardo de las Brujas (witches' market) where you can find cures for everything from heartaches to headaches. Pass through the affluent neighbourhoods of Obrajes, Calacoto and San Miguel before taking a short drive, following the river road to Moon Valley – not a valley at all, but a fantastic landscape of gullies and spires formed from an ancient bed of eroded rock. Return to La Paz.



DAY 14

First day of the Choro Trail to Chairo.



Begin the Choro trek. This is Bolivia's top trek, and for good reason. You need to be pretty fit, but the route is not technically difficult. Mostly downhill, it drops from the altiplano at 3,700m to a balmy valley at 1,300m in less than three days, passing through a kaleidoscope of different landscapes, vegetation, climate and human cultures. Part of the trail is Inca (and even pre-Inca)-paved, and the route is clear, offering great views across near-vertical cliffs towards misty hillsides, negotiating rickety bridges over deep gorges and tumbling streams, and passing tiny, isolated villages. One of the pleasures of this trek is meeting a few of the small number of inhabitants; these mountain people are a hardy breed whose harsh way of life in inhospitable terrain has changed little over the centuries: it can be a humbling experience.

Depart around 7am for La Cumbre, first driving across the city and then continuing up through the suburbs, already lively with people heading off to work and school. Eventually the buildings thin out and you are climbing up through a broad valley of exposed rock framed by craggy pewter grey peaks until reaching a broad plain with a lagoon. Ahead of you is a small hill topped with a statue; to the right is the old road to Coroico, known as the Death Road, now used principally by cyclists. From there the road descends to the village of Chucura – around 40km from La Paz – where you begin walking at an altitude of around 3,700m.

From Chucura, the walk sets off down a pre-Inca trail which is well paved, although the stones are slippery. If it's clear (it's often misty) you will observe rapidly changing vegetation, as a warmer climate supports ferns, evergreen bushes, and even some flowers. Continue walking for around 7 hours or so to the campsite at Buena Vista (2,276m) where you'll set up for the night and enjoy dinner.

DAY 15

Second day of the trek.



Chances are you'll be setting off from Buena Vista wearing lighter clothes than first thing yesterday. The path – a mix of up and down – remains quite well preserved showing the creativity and skill of the pre-Inca Tiwanaku culture. These trails were used for trade between highland and subtropical zones. The rivers of clear water, which you'll cross over on bridges, are tributaries of the Amazon system. In the afternoon the vegetation becomes denser as you enter the cloud forest, and along the way you will see plenty of wildflowers – and weather permitting be treated to some great views. After 6-7 hours, arrive at camp in the village of Sandillani (1,971m).

DAY 16

Third day of the trek and return to la Paz



Today the terrain is moister and vegetation even more lush and abundant – and you'll certainly feel the humidity. The path seems to defy geography with its multiple twists and turns – a series of hairpin bends, descending via cascades used by locals for consumption and agriculture. Along the way are banana and coffee plantations, butterflies and tropical birds. After around 3 hours' walking, arrive at the small village of Chairo (1,264m), where a vehicle awaits for the ride back to the high altitude chill and city of La Paz.

Enjoy your last night in La Paz, where there are a number of excellent restaurants to choose from to celebrate your achievements on this exhilarating holiday.

DAY 17

Transfer to La Paz international airport.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Panoramic tour round Lima's important sites en route to the airport
- Walking tour of the city of Cusco and nearby ruins
- Guided discovery of the Sacred Valley of the Incas on foot
- Guided Salkantay trek
- Guided tour of Machu Picchu
- Cultural highlights en route to Lake Titicaca
- Sun Island, Lake Titicaca
- Tour of La Paz
- Guided Choro trek

ESSENTIALS

1 flight (approx 1hr); 2 scenic road journeys (9hrs each approx); 1 rail journey (3.5-4hrs).

On this tour we use good value hotels; they are small, friendly establishments, colonial or modern in style with well-equipped rooms, private bathroom and heating. You spend 5 nights under canvas.

Breakfast daily, lunch days 4, 10 and 12; full board days 5-7, 14-16.

We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 25 years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by the latter on their return.

17 days, 16 nights: Lima 1; Cusco 3; Salkantay Trail camping 3; Cusco 1; Puno 1; Copacabana 1; La Paz 2; Choro Trail 2; La Paz 1.

The unit of currency in Peru is the sol, in Bolivia it is the Bolivian peso.

Cash machines are available in all major cities and towns, and so taking a debit or credit card with a PIN number is the most convenient way of withdrawing money while on your trip, and in most shops and restaurants you can also pay by card. However, since cards can get lost, damaged, withheld or blocked, you should not rely exclusively on a card to access funds.

We recommend that additionally you take a reasonable quantity of US dollars cash (no more than is covered by your insurance), which you can exchange into local currency, and possibly some travellers' cheques, though these are gradually falling out of use (American Express are the most widely accepted). Dollar bills should be in good condition, soiled or torn bills may be refused. You can take sterling, but the exchange rate is not always competitive or even available, restricting the number of places where you can change money.

It is very difficult to give a guideline for essential expenses but a budget of around US$35 per day should cover the cost of meals not included in the holiday itinerary, drinks and the odd souvenir. Eat at the best restaurants and you will pay considerably more.

Tips are expected and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income.
Most service industry workers will expect a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 – 12% in restaurants.

Tipping guidelines can be found in our Briefing Dossier.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance is essential. Details of our recommended policy can be found on our Travel Insurance page.

AIRPORT TAXES

If you have purchased your flights through Journey Latin America, the international departure tax and taxes on internal flights are usually included in the ticket.

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This holiday is suitable for all able-bodied, fit visitors, including families with reasonably strong older children. Experience of outdoor activities including hiking or hill walking is an advantage.

The Salkantay and Choro Trails are moderately challenging, including steep climbs at high altitude, reaching over 4,200m. You should be able to walk over undulating rocky terrain foe several hours.

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports must be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Anyone with a different nationality should enquire with us or check with the relevant consulate.

If flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your online ESTA application.

Lima is covered in a dull grey mist for much of the year. It almost never rains in Lima, and temperatures are moderate.

In the highlands (Cusco, Puno, La Paz), June to August is the dry season: it can be very cold at night, but days are usually extremely clear with sun. November to March are the wettest months of the year – note that rains tend to be in short, heavy bursts, rather than continual showers, with rains clearing towards the end of April. May, September and October are less predictable, with both rainy and sunny spells.

Nights are cold throughout the year at altitude.

Your stay in Cusco, Puno and La Paz is at high altitude (3,500-4,000m). A small minority of visitors may suffer temporarily from altitude sickness. Symptoms vary; most common are mild headaches, slight nausea and breathlessness. If you don't recover in a day or two speak to our representatives; in very rare instances it is necessary to descend to lower altitudes. Most people are unaffected and if you drink plenty of water and allow your body to acclimatise (don't exert yourself or drink alcohol) in the first couple of days after arrival, you will
minimise your chances of suffering any symptoms.

Please refer to our Briefing Dossier for further information.

For day-to-day wear you should go prepared to encounter all seasons. Both warm clothing and a sun hat are essential at altitude; a light fleece jacket and a Gore-Tex outer shell makes a good combination. Trousers, skirt or shorts made from light, quick-drying synthetic materials work well. If you plan to eat in smart restaurants, although clothing is not formal (no need for jacket and tie), something quite smart would be appropriate. Strong, comfortable footwear is essential.

For the camping on the Salkantay trek sleeping bags are provided. However for the camping on the Choro trek you will need to bring your own (minimum 3 season) or rent a sleeping bag locally, our team on the ground will help with this. You may wish to bring your own sleeping bag liner.

For the treks you should bring a back pack to carry your personal items. Spare clothing and your sleeping bag will be carried by mules and porters. There are luggage restrictions in place for the train back from Machu Picchu, so you should ensure that your trekking kit does not exceed 10kg.
Bring comfortable and adequate clothing to protect you from cold (and possibly wet) weather.

We recommend you layer with synthetic clothing as synthetic fabrics are the most effective barriers against the cold. We discourage the use of cotton garments in cold or wet mountain conditions. The innermost layer should be long underwear. The middle layer can be a synthetic turtleneck or woollen shirt, and shorts or trousers. The outermost layer should be a synthetic or down jacket, and/or a good quality Gore-Tex wind/rain parka and over-trousers.
You will also need a bag in which to store the gear you aren't taking on the trek. You might want to consider bringing trekking poles.

For further details about what to bring on treks see our Briefing Dossier.

Camping equipment is provided, including sleeping mats and 2-man tents.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts. Good equipment is very important and hard to come by in South America.

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following: typhoid; polio; tetanus; hepatitis A. You should consult your GP for specific requirements.

You can also find helpful information on the Masta Travel Health website.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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