

**DENPLAN CHALLENGE 4 DENTAID 2008
TREK THE INCA TRAIL, PERU
24 MAY 2008 – 2 June 2008**

Peru: "land of the Incas", named after the Peruvian civilisation, which formed the greatest empire on the continent. Their legacy is a wealth of mysterious cities and magnificent ruins.

The Inca Trail to Machu Picchu (transl. Mother Earth) is rated amongst the ten best trekking trails in the world due to its striking beauty, ancient Inca ruins and diverse ecological zones. This route includes very different terrain from high desert plateau to tropical Andean rainforest.

Our ultimate destination is Machu Picchu - the "Lost City" of the Incas - one of the world's most fascinating and important archaeological finds. As we stroll through the many temples, altars, terraces, fountains and chambers all displaying intricate stonework, we will get a clear picture of what the Inca world must have been like.

Day 1

London - Lima

Morning flight from London to Lima via Madrid. Evening arrival and transfer to overnight hotel. Dinner on arrival.

Day 2

Lima - Cusco

Early rise to catch a domestic flight over the Andes to the historical city of Cusco (3400m above sea level). Transfer to our overnight hotel where we'll spend the next 2 nights. This afternoon is free to explore independently or take part in an optional walking tour of Cusco. Tonight we eat together and hear more about the week ahead.

Day 3

Around Cusco

Free day in the area around Cusco to acclimatise to the altitude including a visit to the Sacred Valley, the Inca site and market town of Pisac with a warm up hike over part of the Inca Trail. Lunch is not included today. Dinner and overnight in hotel accommodation.

Day 4

Cusco – Ollantaytambo - Huayllabamba

A very early start by coach to the market town of Ollantaytambo. This is the last place we visit before reaching the trail so it's a good idea to stock up on "magic sticks" (walking sticks), chocolate, coca leaves and resin etc. From there it's a further 1 hour by coach to kilometre 82, which is where we start trekking at an altitude of 2500m. Before setting off we have to register for the Inca Trail and this can take some time. We trek for 2 hours until lunch. During the break there will be a cultural talk as we overlook the first of the Inca Ruins we see on this trail - Llaqtapata. From there it's another 2- 3 hours to the overnight camp at Huayllabamba (3000m). Tonight we will probably have the luxury of our own campsite (as opposed to the next 2 nights where we camp at communal sites within our own area) but maybe with more limited facilities.

Day 5

Huayllabamba - Warmiwanuska (Dead Woman's Pass) - River Paqaymayo

From Huayllabamba the trail climbs steeply along the banks of the River Lullucha. After about 2 hours we take a break beside the river. We continue for a further 2 hours through beautiful cloud forest to our lunch stop at Lulluchapampa at 3850m. After lunch we set off slowly for the last 2 hours, which takes us

over Warmiwanuska (Dead Woman's Pass) at 4200m. This is the highest point of the trek and the altitude makes it a slow ascent with the air becoming increasingly thinner. From the top there is a steep and tiring descent to our camp in picturesque surroundings near the River Paqaymayo (3600m).

Day 6

River Paqaymayo – Runkuracay – Phuyupatamarca - Winay Wayna

We start off with a 45-minute steep ascent to Runkuracay (3800m), a small archaeological site where we'll be given a cultural explanation. This should take 1 hour approx followed by another 45 minutes up to the Runkuracay Pass at 4000m. Along the way we trek close to a lake. From the Pass it's a 45 minutes – 1 hour descent, starting with a short tunnel and then down steps followed by a gradual downhill stretch to the well preserved Inca ruins at Sayaqmarca (3600m). Along the way we pass another lake. We stop for a short cultural explanation at Sayaqmarca then continue into lush forest valley to the lunch spot at Chaquiqocha (dry lake). Straight after lunch it's a steepish ascent then more gradual uphill with some level terrain. We encounter another short tunnel on the way. At Phuyu Pata Marca (Town above the Clouds) we stop to enjoy the views and another cultural explanation. Afterwards it's a 1 – 1½ hour downhill section through beautiful cloud forest to a well-known electricity pylon landmark. From there a downhill track leads to the campsite. Today is a long and difficult day, particularly at the beginning as it is still at a high altitude. The campsite tonight is likely to be quite crowded as it's the last place where camping is permitted before Machu Picchu. There is a good bar with music where people tend to congregate.

Day 7

Winay Wayna – Intipunku – Machu Picchu – Aguas Calientes

An early start today (we wake around 4am) in order to reach Intipunku (Gates of the Sun) for sunrise. The trail is undulating with a series of very steep steps up to Intipunku. From here it is possible to catch our first glimpses of the awe inspiring Lost City of the Incas, Machu Picchu. It takes about 45 minutes or so to reach the site. After a group photo we will have a guided visit for 2 – 3 hours. The afternoon is free time with a choice of activities:

- Further exploration of Machu Picchu site.
- Climb Huayna Picchu mountain, which is quite difficult – about 1 hour up, and 40 minutes down.
- Take the bus straight to Aguas Calientes, a good town for shopping.
- Visit the hot baths / thermal springs which give the town its name for those who want to ease aching limbs (small extra charge). We re-group this evening for a celebratory meal and overnight in Aguas Calientes.

Day 8

Aguas Calientes – Ollantaytambo - Cusco

We carry our luggage for the 5-minute walk to the station in order to catch an early morning train to Ollantaytambo (1½ hours) with great mountain scenery en-route. This is followed by a bus transfer (1½ hours) to Cusco for lunch. (Dinner not included today), sightseeing and shopping. Overnight Cusco.

Day 9

Cusco – Lima - London

Lunchtime flight from Cusco to Lima. Transfer to the city centre for some free time for lunch and last minute shopping before boarding our bus back to the airport to catch the evening flight to London via Madrid. (Lunch and dinner not included today).

Day 10

London

Arrive UK.

This is a complex itinerary and is subject to change

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