

Luxury Lodge to Lodge Trek to Machu Picchu

Challenging trekking with a lot of luxury! Lotus Expeditions is proud to introduce the first trans-Andean lodge to lodge trek. Mountain Lodges of Peru recently completed construction of four mountain lodges in the Cordillera Vilcabamba, a spectacular Andean mountain range which cradles the famed Sanctuary of Machu Picchu.

Nestled deep in the Andes Mountains, and hidden to the outside world for centuries, Machu Picchu is an archaeological masterpiece. Inexplicably abandoned by the Incas and never revealed to the Spanish conquistadors, it is known as “the lost city of the Incas.” Accidentally discovered by archaeologist Hiram Bingham in 1911, it has been carefully reconstructed over the last century to closely resemble its former splendor.

Our journey to Machu Picchu begins in the quaint colonial town of Cuzco, once the capital of the vast Inca Empire. The Spanish conquistadors destroyed much of the original Inca architecture, leaving cobblestone streets, elaborate cathedrals, and colonial mansions built upon the stones of Inca foundations.

Surrounding Cuzco is a patchwork of traditional Andean villages and ancient Inca ruins. You will have an opportunity to explore the beautiful Urubamba Valley, also called Valle Sagrado (Sacred Valley). Here you can visit ruins, stroll through Indian handicraft markets, or simply enjoy the rural countryside.

Our trekking journey begins in the enchanting valley of Soraypampa, the starting point of the “other” four-day trek to Machu Picchu--- one that is much less traveled but, by many accounts, more scenic than the “Inca Trail” itself.

We will spend each day trekking to a different, stunningly situated lodge where eiderdown bedding, private full bathrooms, a shared Jacuzzi, fireplace and gourmet cuisine are our reward for a challenging day.

Trip Summary

- Visit Cuzco, the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu
- Stunning mountain scenery, waterfalls, alpine lakes
- Experience traditional Quechua culture
- 04 nights luxury hotels; 05 nights luxury lodges; 4-5 days hiking

Itinerary

**Key: B, L, D—breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner included; O/N—overnight in hotel or camping*

Day One—Depart Home Country

Travel from your home country to Lima, Perú. Most flights from the US travel overnight.

Day Two—Lima to Cuzco

Arrive in Lima and transfer to the Domestic Terminal for your flight to Cuzco (10,976 feet/3,326 meters). A Lotus representative will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel for a group orientation. We will spend the next two nights at the luxurious Novotel, a renovated 500-year-old colonial with a lovely central courtyard located near the main square in the historical part of Cuzco. In the afternoon we will explore the city with a local guide; Visit colonial churches and museums featuring archaeology, history, art, or religion. The evening is free. *B; O/N, Novotel*

Day Three—Sacred Valley Tour

Early morning pick up at the hotel. From Cuzco, we travel by private vehicle over the mountains and drop 1,500 feet/455 meters into the Urubamba or Sacred Valley. Our first stop is the village of Pisac where we will visit an Indian handicraft market. From lower Pisac, we drive to the extensive ruins of Pisac with tremendous views over the valley. After lunch in Urubamba, we continue to the village of Ollantaytambo, built on traditional Inca foundations and the best surviving example of Inca city planning. We then return to Cuzco for the night and a group briefing on the Inca Trail. *B, L; O/N, Novotel*

Day Four—Transfer to Salkantay Lodge at Soraypampa

After breakfast we begin our drive to the Salkantay Lodge (3,600 m/11,800 ft). En route we will visit the impressive Inca ruins of Tarawasi near the town of Limatambo. After leaving Limatambo, we pass through the mountain village of Mollepata where we will have lunch before ascending a winding mountain track to the spectacularly situated valley of Soraypampa.

The Salkantay Lodge is named after the majestic peak at the head of the valley, the most sacred peak in Inca mythology and, at 20,500 feet (6,240 meters), the highest in the region.

After a warm welcome by our friendly staff, we will be shown to our rooms. The first afternoon is spent at leisure to adjust to the altitude; you may choose to

participate in any of the optional activities offered at the lodge such as hiking or trout fishing or simply rest and take in the spectacular surroundings. An evening briefing by the fire is followed by aperitifs and dinner. *Driving time, 3–4 hours; B, L, D; O/N, Salkantay Lodge*

Day Five—Rest Day at Soraypampa

Today is spent at leisure for rest or activities, depending upon your level of acclimatization. You may go on local hikes, fish a high glacial lake for rainbow trout with a fishing guide, or do a scramble to a viewpoint to take in the panorama. In the evening, our local guide will brief us on the itinerary for the next four days. *B, L, D; O/N, Salkantay Lodge*

Day Six—Trek to Wayra Lodge at Huayracmachay

Today we begin our four-day trek to Machu Picchu. After an early start we will hike up the Rio Blanco valley, circling Humantay Peak across from Salkantay. The highest point on the trek is a pass at 15,000 feet/4,600 meters. At the pass we stop to take in views of the snow-capped peaks of the Vilcabamba Range in every direction, the south face of Salkantay towering above us. We will keep our eyes out for Andean condors, often visible in this area. From the pass we continue our descent toward the Wayra Lodge--- the place where the wind lives--our destination for the evening at 12,000 feet/3,650 meters. *Hiking time 4-6 hours; B, L, D; O/N, Wayra Lodge*

Day Seven—Trek to Colpa Lodge at Colpa Pampa (3,150m/10,300 ft).

Following the long first day we enjoy a leisurely breakfast at Huayracmachay. The early morning is free for exploration. We take an early lunch at the lodge and then hike downhill above the Salkantay River, through increasingly verdant scenery. The Colpa Lodge is located in an open promontory at the confluence of three rivers. We arrive in time for an optional excursion to a nearby hot spring. *Hiking time 3-4 hours; B, L, D; O/N, Colpa Lodge (10,300 feet/3,150 meters)*

Day Eight—Trek to Lucma Lodge at Lucmabamba

After an early breakfast we head down the Santa Teresa River Valley, through more populated rural areas with coffee plantations and orchards. We stop along the river for lunch. From the river it is a short climb to Lucma Lodge, set in an avocado orchard. We arrive in time to allow for exploration of the village and meeting with members of the local community. *Hiking time 4-5 hours; B, L, D; O/N, Lucma Lodge (6,600 feet/2,000 meters)*

Day Nine—Trek to Vilcanota River; Train to Aguas Caliente

After an early start and a hearty breakfast, we tackle the last day of our trek. We head uphill for two hours towards Llactapata pass (8,500 feet/2,600 meters), where we will have lunch. Shortly beyond the pass, we come upon a distant but quite special view of Machu Picchu from the southwest, a view few tourists ever glimpse; an added value are the Llactapata Ruins, which have recently been restored. We then begin our final descent to the Vilcanota River through lush bamboo forests and more orchards and coffee plantations (2-3 hours descent). A short, scenic train ride brings us to Aguas Caliente where we can soak in natural hot springs or relax in the luxury of our hotel. *Hiking time 4-6 hours; B, L, D; O/N, Hotel in Aguas Caliente (6,600 feet/2,000 meters)*

Day Ten—Explore Machu Picchu; Return train to Cuzco

We will rise before the sun for the first bus to the ruins at 0530. We will arrive in time to see the first rays of light as they illuminate the stunning terraced hillsides, stone staircases, and temples of Machu Picchu. Alternatively you can climb a steep staircase up to the ruins (1-2 hours 2,310 feet/700 meters). After a guided morning tour, there will be ample time for the 90-minute climb of Huayna Picchu, a small peak with an Inca tunnel above Machu Picchu. From Huayna Picchu, the views of the ruins below, the Urubamba Valley, and the Cordillera Vilcabamba mountain range are unparalleled. In the afternoon we will return to Aguas Caliente for a late lunch before we board the Vistadome train for our return journey to Cuzco and a final celebration dinner. *B, L, D; O/N, Novotel*

Day Eleven—Fly to Lima; Return to Your Home Country

Return flight to Lima and connections with international departures. *B*

Day Twelve—Arrive Home