

The Luxury Inca Trail Trek to Machu Picchu

Renshaw Travel presents a special itinerary to trek the alternative Inca Trail in style, staying in mountain lodges, and led by their well-known high altitude mountain guide Michele Cohen*. This is a once in a lifetime journey taking you through magnificent scenery on a spectacular physical, cultural and spiritual journey.



Peru is frequently referred to as the 'Land of the Incas', and the Peruvian Andes are arguably the most beautiful on the continent and the mountains are home to millions of highland Indians who still speak the ancient tongue of Quechua and maintain a traditional way of life.

This trip offers a unique opportunity to hike the Salkantay Inca Trail in comfort, staying in enchanting mountain lodges where you can indulge in comfort – soaking in natural hot springs and eating fine food. We trek a rarely used ancient trail in the Cordillera Vilcabamba, taking us through some of the most stunning scenery in the world, ending at the fabled lost city of Machu Picchu, Peru's most famous Inca ruin, where we will have two nights to enjoy the wonderful surroundings. We also spend time in Cuzco, former capital of the Inca Empire; the Sacred Valley, and have a chance to explore Lima, City of Kings.

Maximum group size: 12

Departure date: 25th August – 8th Sept 2012

ITINERARY FOR 2012 DEPARTURE

Day	Date	Activity	Accommodation
1	Sat 25 th Aug	Depart from Vancouver in the morning , arriving late evening	Miraflores Park Hotel, Lima
2	Sun 26 th Aug	Guided city tour and visit to the Larco Museum	Miraflores Park Hotel, Lima
3	Mon 27 th Aug	Morning flight to Cuzco and transfer to the Sacred Valley, tour of Moras and Moray	Sol y Luna , Sacred Valley (2900m)
4	Tues 28 th Aug	Tour of the Ollantaytambo and Pisac; Hacienda lunch, continue to Cuzco	Casa Cartagena Boutique, Cuzco (3400m)
5	Wed 29 th Aug	Free morning, afternoon tour around Cuzco and the nearby sites	Casa Cartagena Boutique, Cuzco
6	Thur 30 th Aug	Transfer to start of trek, afternoon hike to reach the mountain lodge (optional)	Salkantay Lodge, Soraypampa (3850m)
7	Fri 31 st Aug	Acclimatization hike to a glacial lake at 4150m	Salkantay Lodge, Soraypampa
8	Sat 1 st Sept	Longest day, reach highest point on trek, 4600m	Warya Lodge, Huarraccmachay (3900m)
9	Sun 2 nd Sept	More leisurely day of descent	Colpa Lodge, Collpapampa (2850m)
10	Mon 3 rd Sept	Lower altitude day, trails pass small villages	Lucma Lodge, Lucmabamba (2100m)
11	Tues 4 th Sept	First sighting of Machu Picchu, end trek and short train ride to Aguas Calientes. Celebration dinner!	Inkaterra Mapi Pueblo, Aguas Calientes (1900m)
12	Wed 5 th Sept	Guided tour of Machu Picchu, enjoy a full day in the region	Inkaterra Mapi Pueblo, Aguas Calientes
13	Thur 6 th Sept	Morning train and bus to Cuzco, afternoon free	Casa Cartagena Boutique, Cuzco
14	Fri 7 th Sept	Afternoon flight to Lima and some time in town before returning to the airport for the overnight flight	Overnight flight home
15	Sat 8 th Sept	Arrive in Vancouver in the afternoon	



DAY BY DAY DETAILS

DAY 1- Saturday 25th August 2012

The departure from Vancouver is usually on Alaska and LAN airlines, departing in the morning via LA, and arriving in Lima late night. Upon arrival we transfer to our beautiful hotel in the suburb of Miraflores on the coast.

Overnight: Miraflores Park Hotel

DAY 2- Sunday 26th August 2012

We spend a half day exploring the capital city, founded in 1535, and formerly known as the City of Kings. We make a tour through the old city visiting the Main Square where we can see the Government Palace, Cathedral, Archbishop's Palace and the City Hall. We visit the XVII century church and cloister of San Francisco, a world cultural heritage, with fascinating catacombs. We drive on to the Larco Herrera Museum, to see the incredible collection of Peruvian pre-Columbian art that comprises approximately 45,000 pieces of gold, silver, ceramics, textiles, stone, and wood, with unique pieces in each material and collected by the Peruvian archaeologist Rafael Larco Herrera. This is the world's largest private collection of such art and puts much of what we will see into an historical context. The museum is famed for its erotic pottery collection. **(B)**

Overnight: Miraflores Park Hotel

DAY 3- Monday 27th August 2012

After breakfast we transfer to the airport for the spectacular flight to Cuzco (flight not included). In just over an hour we land in the old Inca capital, situated in the heart of the Andes at 3400m. We head straight out to the Sacred Valley, about a 1.5 hr drive from Cuzco, descending to an altitude of 2900m, which will aid acclimatization. The Sacred Valley was a key area of settlement to the Incas and was greatly treasured because of its climate, fertile land and the presence of the Urubamba (Sacred) River. It was also the route to the jungle and therefore an area with access to the fruits and plants of the tropical lowlands. Today we still see evidence of the Incas' engineering skills in the ruins of ancient aqueducts, irrigation canals, dams on the Urubamba River, imposing sets of terraces and centers of worship dedicated to Pachamama (Mother Earth). We will visit some Inca sites in the region, and the rest of the afternoon will be free to relax in the stunning surroundings and to adjust to the altitude. **(B)**

Overnight: Sol y Luna

DAY 4- Tuesday 28th August 2012

We have a full day to explore the beautiful Sacred Valley. We start by visiting Ollantaytambo. This attractive village is located at the Western end of the Sacred Valley at the foot of some spectacular Inca ruins which protected the lower Urubamba Valley. The temple area is at the top of steep terracing which helped to provide defences. Stone used for these buildings was brought from a quarry high up on the opposite side of the Urubamba River - an incredible feat involving the efforts of thousands of workers. The complex was still under construction at the time of the conquest and never completed.

We stop for lunch at Hacienda Huayocari, a colonial house in a stunning location above Urubamba.

We continue through the Urubamba Valley to reach Pisac where we will visit the ruins and the famous market. The spectacular ruins of Pisac's Inca citadel are perched high above the valley floor. Terraces, water ducts and steps were cut out of solid rock and the Sun Temple is in the upper sector of the ruins. We can hike for two hours from the ruins to descend to the colorful market in Pisac, with the opportunity to interact with the local craftsmen, and barter on some of their products.

Finally we continue to Cuzco where we will stay for the next two nights. **(B, L)**

Overnight: Casa Cartagena Boutique Hotel

DAY 5- Wednesday 29th August

We make a half day tour of the Imperial City and the nearby archaeological sites. Cuzco is nowadays a mixture of Andean and Spanish cultures. We will see the Santo Domingo Convent, built over the Koricancha, the main worship centre of the Sun God. We will see many examples of the famous Inca stone masonry: enormous granite blocks that were carved to fit together perfectly. We will also visit the Plaza de Armas, dominated by the Cathedral and the beautiful Church of La Compañía. We will also visit the Sacsayhuaman Fortress above the city, an imposing sample of military Inca architecture, and the site of Qenko. **(B)**

Overnight: Casa Cartagena Boutique Hotel

DAY 6- Thursday 30th August

An early departure to begin our expedition into the mountains. En route we visit the Inca ruins at Tarawasi, and also stop in a small Andean village called Mollepata to see some small social projects. By late morning we arrive in Marcoccasa from where we begin our trek. This first day is a great introduction along the ancient Camino Real (Royal Path), and we take a gentle pace to reach our destination, the Salkantay Lodge in Soraypampa. En route we have a picnic lunch. If you do not wish to trek, there is an option to be transported to the lodge by vehicle. There is also an option to make a shorter trek to reach the lodge. This will be our base for the next two nights. **(B, L, D)**

Overnight: Salkantay Lodge and Adventure Centre

Note: The hiking distance is up to 12km with an ascent of 650m: we start at 3200m and end at 3850m. Total trekking time is 5hrs

DAY 7- Friday 31st August 2012

Today we make a half-day acclimatization hike to a glacial lake, with a possibility to take a very short swim. Some may prefer to trade the glacial swim for a relaxing soak in the outdoor heated hot tub. All meals are taken at the Lodge. **(B, L, D)**

Overnight: Salkantay Lodge and Adventure Centre

Note: The hiking distance to the lake is 3km each way with an ascent of 500m: we start at 3850m and reach an altitude of 4350m. Total trekking time is 3-4hrs



DAY 8- Saturday 1st September 2012

We start the official 4 day trek. This is the biggest day as we climb up to the highest point on the route. After an early start we will hike up the Rio Blanco valley, circling Humantay Peak across from Salkantay, the highest peak in the region at 6270m, and a sacred peak in Inca mythology. We reach the high pass at 4600m from where we take in incredible views of the snow-capped Vilcabamba Range, the south face of Salkantay towering above us. If we are lucky we will see Andean condors. From the pass we descend towards the Wayra Lodge, meaning 'the place where the wind lives'. We eat a hot lunch en route. **(B, L, D)**

Overnight: Warya Lodge

Note: The hiking distance is 11km with an ascent of 750m to the high pass: we start at 3850m and end at 3900m. Total trekking time is 7hrs.

DAY 9-Sunday 2nd September 2012

This is a more leisurely day. We trek above the Salkantay River, descending through increasingly verdant scenery to reach the Colpa Lodge, located in an open promontory at the confluence of three rivers. We can soak away the aches and pains in the outdoor hot tub with views of lush green mountains and a far-away village. Our lunch will be a Pachamanca, which is a traditional method of underground stone cooking (subject to availability). **(B, L, D)**

Overnight: Colpa Lodge

Note: The hiking distance is 6km with a descent of 1100m: we start at 3900m and end at 2800m. Total trekking time is 4hrs.

DAY 10 - Monday 3rd September 2012

It can be hot as we descend down the Santa Teresa River Valley, through more populated rural areas with orchards, bananas, granadillas, and coffee plantations, claimed to be one of the best organic coffees in the world. We stop along the river for a hot lunch. After another hour of trekking a private vehicle will drive us 30mins to the beginning of the Llactapata Inca Trail. From the head of the trail it is a short climb to final overnight stop, Lucma Lodge, set in an avocado orchard. We arrive in time to allow for exploration of the small village of Lucmabamba and possible meeting with members of the local community. **(B, L, D)**

Overnight: Lucma Lodge

Note: The hiking distance is 9km with a descent of 800m followed by a final short climb to the lodge: We start at 2800m and end at 2100m. Total trekking time is 6hrs.

DAY 11- Tuesday 4th September 2012

The final day of our trek begins with a 3hr climb to the Llactapata pass at 2700m, from where we have a distant but quite special first sighting of Machu Picchu from the southwest: a view few tourists ever glimpse. We also visit the recently restored Llactapata Ruins. We eat lunch at the observatory in view of Machu Picchu, before beginning our final descent to the Aobamba River through lush bamboo forests and more orchards and coffee plantations for 2-3hrs. We take a scenic 45min train ride to reach our final destination Aguas Calientes, the small village at the foot of Machu Picchu. We spend two nights here in a beautiful hotel located in cloud forest where there are 372 species of orchids in the grounds, the world's largest diversity of natural species set in their natural environment. We can enjoy a hard-earned celebratory dinner tonight. **(B, L, D)**

Overnight: Inkaterra Machu Picchu

Note: The hiking distance is 8km with a climb of 600m followed by a descent of 800m: we start at 2100m and end at 1900m. Total trekking time is 6hrs.

DAY 12- Wednesday 5th September 2012

We will take an early bus ride up to Machu Picchu, a journey time of about 30mins, and the ruins can be enjoyed in tranquility before most tour groups arrive late morning. We will make a complete guided tour of the site, and there will be plenty of free time to explore the site on your own. You may wish to climb gently up to the Sun Gate for 45mins along the Royal Inca Trail. You could also climb up one of the two peaks towering above the ruins. We will have lunch at the Sanctuary Hotel next to the ruins, and take the bus back down to Aguas Calientes to spend more time exploring the lush surroundings and shopping in this charming outback village. We have a second night here to enjoy this special place. **(B, L, D)**

Overnight: Inkaterra Machu Picchu

DAY 13-Thursday 6th September 2012

We return to Cuzco today. The train journey to Ollantaytambo takes just over 1.5 hrs, and then we take a private bus transfer to Cusco for 1.5hrs, arriving in the afternoon. The rest of the day will be free to explore more of the town and, of course, to go shopping. **(B)**

Overnight: Casa Cartagena Boutique Hotel

DAY 14 – Friday 7th September 2012

The morning will be free in Cuzco, and in the afternoon we transfer to the airport for the short flight back to Lima (flight not included). There is time to enjoy a final dinner in a beautiful location before returning to the airport later in the evening for the overnight flight home. **(B)**

Day 15 – Saturday 8th September 2012

Arrive home in Vancouver, usually in the afternoon

Occasionally it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons – climatic, political, physical or other. Abnormal conditions or other events beyond our control can prevail at any time, particularly in remote destinations, and holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.



Included services:

- Tour leader throughout, subject to a minimum of 4 bookings.
- Specialist guides on the trek, and on the tours.
- All transportation as mentioned on trains and private bus; flights are extra
- Transportation of personal belongings (on trek you carry small day pack only)
- Hotels as mentioned, or similar hotels if changes are forced
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- All entry fees for included excursions

Services not included:

- Flights (we usually book the international and domestic flights for the group)
- Meals not mentioned on the itinerary
- Insurance (we can provide this and medical coverage is mandatory)
- Beverages, laundry, items of a personal nature
- Tips



Group Size

This trip will operate with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 passengers. If minimum numbers are not met, we can arrange a private departure.

Contact

Michele Cohen

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**Note: Michele Cohen will travel as tour leader subject to a minimum group size of 8. For smaller groups there will be a qualified Peruvian leader who speaks fluent English.*

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Further information

Accommodation

All hotel accommodations are 4 or 5 star rated, or unique boutique-style.

They are chosen for style, character, surroundings and convenience.

The beautifully located mountain lodges are the most comfortable Andean lodges, owned and operated by Mountain Lodges of Peru.

The first lodge has 12 private twin or double bedrooms with private bathrooms and hot showers; the other lodges along the hike have 6 twin bedrooms with private facilities.

The fine dining can be described as 'Andean Energetic Cuisine', and amenities in each lodge include outdoor hot tub, cozy reading room, bar, internet and satellite phone.

Soap, shampoo and conditioner are provided in the bathrooms of each lodge.

Fitness level required

You should be in good physical condition and prepared to exercise regularly in order to get the most out of this trip. You should have prior experience of hiking on mixed terrain and doing some sustained ascents and descents

This is an active holiday and involves 6 days of trekking, two of which are optional. Days are moderate to strenuous at high levels of altitude between 2000m–4600m, along steep and rocky trails and a section of stone-paved Inca paths.

This itinerary is specially designed to enable you to adjust gradually to the altitude; however there is a risk that you may be affected by Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). If you have not been to high levels of altitude before there is no hard and fast rule of how you will acclimatize. Not everyone is affected in the same way and fitness, age, size and sex has little to do with how you may react.

Michele Cohen is one of the most experienced high altitude leaders, and has been taking groups safely to heights of up to 7000m for 10 years. You will be fully briefed so that you know exactly what to expect and how to respond to any symptoms.

All the guides know how to gauge when someone has had enough, when they just need a bit of extra motivation, or when they need more urgent attention. You will be given the best treatment at all times.

If you are worried about any pre-existing condition (e.g. heart problems), or unsure of your physical ability, we recommend that you seek medical advice prior to booking.

Weather

The period from mid April to October is the dry season, with hot, dry days and cold, dry nights, often hovering just above freezing, particularly in June and July.

We plan this trip in the dry season. However, as in all mountain regions, the weather can be unpredictable and it is possible to experience 4 seasons in one day.

This trekking route traverses 15 eco-zones so you should expect changing weather conditions throughout, with day-time temperatures in the mountains frequently reaching 20-25 C, and night temperatures possibly falling below 0 C.

CUZCO	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. High (°F)	66	66	67	68	68	67	67	68	68	70	69	68
Av High (°C)	19	19	19	20	20	19	19	20	20	21	20	20
Av. Low (°F)	44	44	44	41	37	34	34	34	39	42	43	43
Av. Low (°C)	7	7	7	5	3	1	1	1	4	6	6	6
Wet days	16	12	10	7	4	3	2	2	6	8	10	14

Packing checklist

Please pack your gear in a soft duffle bag or backpack

There is a main baggage limit of 10kg per person for the trek, plus your personal daypack that you will carry. Excess baggage and clothing can be left in storage at the hotel in Cuzco, and all amenities are available in the lodges, thus you do not require items such as hairdryers, bedding, etc. You are not allowed to transport more than your daypack on the final train journey into Machu Picchu, and the rest of your belongings will be transported safely back to Cuzco at this time and stored in the hotel.

Equipment

- 25-35 litre day pack
- Hiking boots – either leather, or waterproof fabric, ankle high (must be worn in)
- Sun glasses with UV protection
- Flash-light/ head-lamp (just in case)
- Water bottles (minimum of 2 litres): Camel back packs (with dust cap), aluminium bottles or polycarbonate bottles.
- Trekking poles – optional but highly recommended
- Camera/film/batteries/ recharger
- Binoculars (optional)

Clothing

- T-shirts (non-cotton for the trek)
- 3 pairs of specialist trekking socks and inner socks if you use them
- Normal underwear
- Thermal top /underwear (they are lightweight , dry quickly, and keep you extremely warm)
- Warm hat and scarf
- Wide brimmed sun hat or cap and scarf to cover your neck
- Waterproof jacket and trousers e.g. Gore-Tex
- Fleece/ warm jacket for the evenings
- Lightweight down/duvet jacket (optional, but you won't regret taking one!)
- Knee length shorts and lightweight trekking trousers
- Trainers / sandals
- Casual clothes
- Swim-wear

Health and hygiene

- High-factor sun cream (30SPF) and lip salve (mountain sun is very strong)

- Antibacterial hand gel
- Personal toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, and bath gel is provided throughout)
- Small personal medical kit – antiseptic cream, band-aids, lint wound dressing, knee support, crepe bandage, safety pins, pain killers, tweezers, scissors, deep heat ointment, sting relief, immodium, rehydration salts, blister plasters, sterilised syringes.
- Insect repellent (such as Deet or Bug-Off)
- Toilet paper

Misc

- Photocopy of insurance / passport
- Energy bars/chocolate/nuts or energy tablets
- Plastic bags (to protect clothes and gear from rain, for dirty washing etc)
- Swiss army knife (optional)
- Credit card
- Money belt
- If you wear contact lenses it is advisable to also bring your glasses

Other Expenditure

Credit cards are widely accepted in Peru and there are ATM machines in Lima, Cuzco and Aguas Calientes.

There are internet facilities, and at the lodges it is supplied via satellite and is free of charge . There is a bar and there are souvenirs for sale. It is possible to pay by credit card or by USD cash – the only bills accepted are \$5, \$10, \$20, and \$50 – or you can pay in Peruvian Soles.

Please allow \$200- \$300 for the meals not included, depending on what you eat and drink.

There are many handicrafts and souvenirs for sale in Peru and people usually like to go shopping at the markets. Most sales will be settled in cash, either Peruvian Soles or USD.

Tipping is by no means mandatory, but it is a recognized practice to show an extra appreciation of excellent service. Please allow a total of \$150 or so to thank the staff in the lodges and all the guides on the trip. This is a voluntary gesture and it is only a guideline.

Optional Add-Ons

Peru is a wonderfully varied country and there is so much to see. If you should wish to extend your trip we can arrange this. You may wish to venture into the Amazon; visit the highest navigable lake in the world, Titicaca; or fly over the Nazca Lines and relax in Paracas.

Many people choose to combine a holiday in Peru with a trip to the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador.

There now exists the possibility to fly directly from Lima to the Easter Islands which would make an exciting addition to any trip!

There are just a few ideas, and any of these tours can be arranged pre or post the main trip.

We can also arrange alternative departure dates and itineraries.

Photos from the 2010 Luxury Inca Trail

You are invited to take a look at the photos taken on the tour in Sept 2010:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/cohenmichele67/LuxuryPeruTripSep2010#>