**THE SALKANTAY TREK**

**TO MACHU PICCHU**

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1 CUSCO TO SORAYPAMPA**

After an early breakfast, your Mountain Lodges of Peru (MLP) tour guide and driver will pick you up at your hotel in Cusco. The first stop will be a visit to the Quillarumiyoc archaeological site. Next you will stop in the mountain village of Mollepata. There you will visit El Pedregal, a beautiful farmhouse where you can learn about local agriculture and livestock. Then, the transfer will take you through a winding mountain road to a site called Challacancha. Here you will begin your hike to Soraypampa along a picturesque path called the “Camino Real” (Royal Path), which is also a good opportunity to acclimate to the higher altitude. As you round final turn to the Camino Real, the Salkantay Lodge will come into view.

**Trekking Time:** Approximately 3 hours (including picnic lunch en route)

**Hiking Level:** Easy to Moderate

**Meals:** L (en route) and D

**Overnight:** Salkantay Lodge

**Optional:** Guests who do not wish to walk may be taken to the lodge by vehicle.

***Note****: You will officially meet your guide at a briefing the night before day one of the trek. At this meeting you are encouraged to ask any questions you may have as well as make additional requests.*

**DAY 2 HIKE TO HUMANTAY LAKE**

Day two presents another opportunity to gauge your altitude-acclimatization with a half-day hike to Lake Humantay. After breakfast, you begin an ascent up the slopes that border the platau behind the Salkantay Lodge. An hour and a half later, after making you way over the final hill, you will be stunned to see the turquoise water of the lake, made even more spectacular by the sight of the Humantay glacier looming behind it. Here you will have a chance to relax, enjoy a snack, meditate in the tranquility of this magical spot and be part of a traditional offering to “Pachamama” (Mother Earth). After your descent back to the lodge, the staff will be waiting with a hot lunch. The second half of your day is spent at leisure. You may opt to soak in our Jacuzzi, indulge in a relaxing massage or even take a long nap.

**Trekking Time:** Approximately 4 hours

**Hiking Level:** Moderate

**Meals:** B, L and D

**Overnight:** Salkantay Lodge

**Optional activities:** (At an additional cost)

* **Chakana Excursion:** 5–6 h. horseback/trekking combo to a nearby high view point, where a huge Inca cross (chakana) has been placed (1-2 h. riding on a steep hillside). This excursion will replace the hike to glacial lake.
* **Short Excursion:** 2 hours ride around Soraypampa in the afternoon (after hike to glacial lake).

***Note:*** *While the morning hike to Lake Humantay is optional, we strongly recommend your participation in preparation for the strenuous hike on day three.*

**DAY 3 CROSSING THE SALKANTAY PASS**

After an early start, you hike up the Rio Blanco valley, circling Humantay Peak. As you gradually make your way up these mountain trails, you will encounter expansive plateaus dotted with boulders of varying sizes, the remnants of a valley that was once bisected by a fast-flowing river. The final and most challenging part of your ascent is conquering the mountain switchbacks that take you to the Salkantay Pass, the highest point on the trek (4,636 m/15,213 ft). What follows is a dramatic descent through fields of giant boulders, often shrouded in fog. After a very welcome hot picnic lunch, you will continue down through bucolic rolling hills and marsh-like plateaus as you take your final steps to the Wayra Lodge at Wayraccmachay.

**Trekking Time:** 6–8 hours (including lunch)

**Hiking Level:** Challenging, crossing a 4,638m (15,213ft) mountain pass

**Meals:** B, L (en route) and D

**Overnight:** Wayra Lodge

**Optional:** Horseback Riding. You may choose to trade day 3´s hike up to Salkantay pass for a horseback ride (entirely or partly at additional cost).

**DAY 4 DESCENDING INTO THE CLOUD FOREST**

After a leisurely breakfast at the Wayra Lodge, you continue the descent along the banks of the Salkantay River through increasingly verdant scenery. The warm air begins to rise from the edge of the jungle, accompanied by colorful butterflies and striking orchids. Today you will see more of the local people as the trail takes you past their simple homes and makeshift fences. At lunchtime you will arrive at Colpa Lodge, located on a high promontory at the confluence of three rivers. You are greeted by the staff with a Pachamanca lunch, a traditional Peruvian meal cooked in the earth by hot stones that create a natural underground oven. After lunch, spend the afternoon lounging in the sun or relaxing in the outdoor jacuzzi while you take in the panoramic views of the lush green mountains that surround you.

**Trekking Time**: 3–4 hours.

**Hiking Level:** Easy to moderate.

**Meals:** B, L, and D

**Optional Activity:** Afternoon bike from Manchayhuaycco to Collpapampa. You will descend through a beautiful valley in which you will admire the diverse cloud forest vegetation through the slopes of the valley. Duration: 3hrs approximately / Level: Easy. This activity has an additional cost.

**Overnight**: Colpa Lodge at 2,870 m/9,414 ft.

**DAY 5 FOLLOWING THE SANTA TERESA RIVER VALLEY**

Today you will hike in the Santa Teresa River valley where you will hop over small streams fed by waterfalls descending from the glaciers and cross through fruit orchards. After breaking for a hot picnic lunch by the river, you will walk for one hour before we meet an MLP vehicle for a short drive to the beginning of the “Llactapata Inca Trail” that leads us to Lucma Lodge. On the way you will visit an organic coffee plantation, one of many in that area that produces some of the best organic coffee in the world. You will also begin to notice another shift in the climate. Here in Lucmabamba, the hot air and increased humidity signal that you are even closer to the edge of the Amazon Jungle.

**Trekking Time:** 5–6 hours (including lunch)

**Hiking Level:** Moderate to Challenging (because of distance, not terrain)

**Meals:** B, L and D

**Optional Activities: Zip Line:** Located in Santa Teresa. This is a full day activity which replaces the trek. It has an additional cost. / Biking: Option a) Yanama pass – Hornopampa – Lluskamayo. You will head downhill almost 8,000 ft. through a dirt road admiring breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains. Duration: 5 hrs. Level: Easy to moderate. Option b) Descent from Hornopampa to Lluskamayo. Duration: 3.5 hrs. Level: Easy

**Overnight:** Lucma Lodge at 2,135 m/7,003 ft.

**DAY 6 LUCMABAMBA | EXPLORING LLACTAPATA PASS**

During a 2-3 hour climb up a path mostly comprised of original Inca steps, you will get a sense of what hiking through the rainforest would be like. A lush treeline creates green canopies overhead and the constant sound of rushing water suggests that the river is still nearby. Your first milestone today will be the top of the peak, the last one before you reach the Aobamaba River valley that connects you to Machu Picchu. When you arrive at the ruins of Llactapata at the Llactapata Pass (2,736 m/8,974 ft), you will be delighted to see a southeast view of the “back” of the Machu Picchu ruins, a sight few travelers ever get a chance to admire. At this point you will also take a short break to explore Llactapata, and then have lunch a bit farther down the trail in a meadow with panoramic views. The final descent toward the roaring Aobamba River takes you through lush bamboo forests, as well as more fruit orchards and coffee plantations, until you end the day’s hike at the Hidroelectrica train station. A one-hour scenic train ride delivers you to your final stop, the town of Aguas Calientes at the base of Machu Picchu.

**Trekking Time:** 4–6 hours

**Hiking Level:** Moderate to Challenging

**Train from Hidroelectrica to Aguas Calientes:** 1 hour

**Meals:** B, L (en route) and D

**Overnight:** Inkaterra Pueblo Hotel

**DAY 7 MACHU PICCHU | THE SANCTUARY**

At dawn, you begin your journey to Machu Picchu with a short and rollicking uphill bus ride. As you enter the “Sanctuary” (as locals refer to it), the morning sun rises over the iconic Sun Gate and washes the structures and terraces with resplendent light. Prepare to be awed by the imposing and skillful architecture of the Watchtower, the Temple of the Sun, and the royal Inca residences, among many others. Take a moment to quietly sit and listen to the wind or to meditate and absorb the mystical energy that envelops you. Your imagination will soar as you contemplate the history of Machu Picchu and its mysterious origins. Some may even choose a hike to Huayna Picchu, the iconic towering mountain often seen in photographs, for dramatic views that stretch from the Urubamba River valley to the edge of the Amazon Jungle. After the visit you will have lunch in Aguas Calientes before your train/transfer back to Cusco. As night falls and you arrive at your hotel amidst and hustle and bustle of Cusco, you will be touched by a feeling of peace and rejuvenation which will linger even as you journey back home.

**Huayna Picchu hike:** 10am (subject to availability)

**Afternoon train from Aguas Calientes to Ollantaytambo and transfer to Cusco Hotel:** 3 – 4 hours approx

**Meals:** B and L

***Note***: Huayna Picchu Mountain tickets are subject to availability.