

# INCA TRAIL TO MACHU PICCHU

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How fit do I need to be?

Trekking the Inca Trail is all about **endurance** rather than speed. You will be waking up early in the mornings and trekking for long distances each day so ensuring that you have a good level of fitness before you depart is key. On most days, you will be up at 5am - even earlier on your final day's trek to Machu Picchu – so you tend to go to bed earlier than normal. Sticking to our training plan will really pay off. The best form of preparation is to walk for good lengths of time on undulating terrain, and where possible to follow this up with a similar length trek the next day. It is important that you train with the walking boots that you will be using on the trek itself and with your day pack on your back. This trek requires a good level of fitness, however it is achievable for most people provided they **train well in advance on different types of terrain**.

### What will the trekking be like?

We trek through valleys, cloudforest and over high mountain passes; paths are generally good but vary from wide tracks to grassy meadows, narrow paths that can be slippery, and uneven rock-paved trail. There are lots of sections of steps, of varying condition; these can feel relentless. There are many steep sections both up and down. There are a few steep drops, though on fairly wide paths. We can have changeable weather, and if the altitude affects you greatly, that adds to the challenge as well.

Keep in mind that this is a **tough trek** and everyone will find elements of the challenge difficult at some point, whether it is the physical trekking, homestays, changing weather, effects of altitude or something else. It is great if you can work as a team and help each other out during any difficulties. While there are many challenges, **the enjoyment and rewards that come from trekking this iconic trail to historic Machu Picchu is unforgettable.**

### How will the altitude affect me?

Trekking at altitude can make even the simplest tasks feel like hard work, and along with feeling cold and fatigued, there will be tough times for everyone. Symptoms of being at altitude include **tiredness, shortness of breath, headaches and nausea**. Altitude affects people differently and being super-fit is no guarantee of being less likely to feel the effects. Where a participant is suffering from the effects of altitude, it may be necessary to walk them back down the mountain. There is no way of predicting how you will feel at altitude, even if you have been at altitude before.

Our recommendations are to have **trained properly, to not drink alcohol** in the days leading up to the trip and to **listen to your leaders/guides** if they try to slow down the trekking pace. The slower you trek the more it helps fending off feeling poorly. A local guide will walk at the front of the group to set the pace. It is not a race - go at your own pace, enjoy the scenery and the amazing experience!

### Who accompanies us on the trek from Discover Adventure?

Your trip will be led by an experienced Discover Adventure leader. Sometimes they accompany you from the UK, but they may meet you in-country. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first-aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader.

### Will there be a doctor with us as well?

An expedition doctor or medic usually accompanies the group as well, dependent on **group size**. Our medics are there to provide first aid and promote day-to-day welfare on the trip; they carry a robust medical kit, but cannot possibly be equipped with everything needed to counter any given situation. They also provide crucial support to our leaders and, as they are usually found at the back of our groups, are also experts at encouraging you when things get tough.



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## Who else will accompany the group on this challenge?

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, drivers, cooks and porters. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

## What is the accommodation like?

We stay in a good tourist-style hotel in Cuzco which is clean and comfortable. The rooms are twin-share. If you are travelling alone, you will be paired up with someone of the same sex and similar age. You can always let us know nearer the time if you wish to share with a particular person, if you have not already done so. Whilst on the trail you will be camping in two-man tents, which our local crew will put up and take down for you every day. Camps have big dining tents and portaloos, and the local crew looks after us very well!

## Can I request single accommodation?

There may be a limited number of single rooms available in the hotel accommodation at the start and the end of your trip, subject to request and at an additional cost (on a first-come, first-served basis). It is not possible to have your own tent on the trek itself, due to the limited kit allowance permitted on the trail. Sharing accommodation is a really good ice-breaker if you don't know anyone else on the trip, so don't worry too much about it!

## How many trekkers will be in my group?

The size of the group can really vary, and you will be updated nearer to departure as to how many to expect. As fundraising is at the very core of Discover Adventure, we don't have an arbitrary maximum group size – we try not to turn away trekkers when charities will benefit. Group size is usually limited by the permits available, however, so it is unusual for groups to be very large.

## What are the transport arrangements for the group and our kit?

Vehicles take the group, all luggage and supplies to the start of the trek, pick us up at the end, and collect us for any transfers. We also take a scenic train ride through the mountains on the way back to Cuzco. On the trail, your main luggage, food, water and overnight equipment is carried by porters. You cannot access your main packs during the day so need to carry a day-pack with your fleece, waterproof, sun-cream, hat, camera, water etc.

## What will the weather be like?

At 3400m, Cuzco is affected more by altitude than latitude, and is hot and sunny during the day (about 30°C) but chilly at night – a few degrees above freezing. In the mountains it is unusual not to have some rain, and it can also be windy. Never underestimate the power of the sun's rays, even when it feels cold, there is cloud cover, or the wind is blowing. Please bring SPF30 as a minimum, preferably higher, along with lip salve with a high SPF too. The higher you trek, the more intense the sun will get and burning time is increased. A sun hat and quality sunglasses are a must.

## Do we have as long as we want at Machu Picchu?

The Inca Trail authorities have introduced morning and afternoon time slots to manage the high visitor numbers at this special site. We will be booked into the morning time slot (at time of writing this ends at midday). We always start early to maximise our time, so you can enjoy the last section of the trail, which is beautiful, and there will be plenty of time to enjoy those first magical views of Machu Picchu from the Sun Gate. We advise you don't get too distracted by photo opportunities on the walk down from the Sun Gate, however, so that you can enjoy the guided tour and some time to explore without feeling rushed. The leaders will let you know what time to meet for the train.

## What will I be eating?

The food is of excellent quality, freshly cooked and will give you plenty of **energy** for the long days of trekking. Meals are generally Peruvian style, not western, and there is typically less meat than you may be used to eating at home. You will be eating breakfast and dinner in long mess tents in camp, and your lunch while trekking. For breakfast you will typically have porridge, bread, eggs and jam, tea and coffee. Lunch is often soup and bread, salads and sandwich fillings, fruit and hot drinks. Dinner will be predominantly carbohydrate-based meals of pasta and rice, with soup, bread, fruits and desserts.



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## I have a specific dietary need; will there be enough for me to eat?

Being vegetarian, gluten free, dairy free or having other dietary requirements is usually not a problem provided you **let us know well in advance**. Please do not expect the variety you would have at home – we will be among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. In some regions certain foods are hard to access. If you feel you aren't getting enough energy because of your dietary requirements please talk to your trip leader – they can't help unless they know there's a problem. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat, you may wish to bring extra snacks from home to top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

We request special meals with airlines providing you notify us at least 8 weeks in advance. Although airlines acknowledge these requests, they cannot always guarantee them as they are reliant on airport caterers.

## Do I need to bring snacks?

Bring enough snacks to keep you going each day - around **3 - 4 tasty treats a day will suffice**. We recommend a combination of slow and fast release snacks such as cereal bars (e.g. Tracker), flapjacks, salted nuts, chocolate biscuits, and a packet of sweets. Bringing a combination of treats will keep you interested in snacking as consistent energy levels are very important.

## How much do I need to drink?

You will find that you need to drink significantly more whilst trekking at altitude and need to do so in order to keep the effects of altitude at bay. You will be provided with sterilised water at breakfast, lunch and in the evening so keep topping up your water systems. It is a good idea to take plenty of rehydration sachets with you too for use on arrival in camp and for the start of each day. Sterilised water is very safe and a method we use on the majority of our overseas treks. We have put water purification tablets on the trip kit list (e.g. chlorine/iodine tablets). While the leaders will be able to sterilise water for you, a small pack of your own tablets is recommended for back-up. Water is also available in bottles at your own cost (which can be expensive and the price increases the higher you trek), but we would generally discourage this as it has a higher environmental impact.

## What is the celebration meal?

At the end of your challenge, there will be a special meal to celebrate your achievements. Please check your trip itinerary to confirm whether you will need to set aside funds to pay for this on the night.

## What about toilets?

Toilet facilities won't be like home. There are no toilet facilities except for portaloos in camp and at lunch so there may be occasions when you need to go whilst trekking. You will need to take baby wipes, nappy sacks and paper in order to make sure you **leave no trace** whilst out on your trek. These can then be discarded in the nearest bin at your next stop. The toilet facilities in your hotel accommodation may not be up to the standard that you are used to in the UK.

## What if I have any issues during the trip?

Our leaders are very experienced and work very hard to ensure your trip runs as smoothly and enjoyably as possible, and we're sure that you'll have a wonderful time. If you do have any concerns or problems during the trip **please talk to the crew and give them the opportunity to explain or rectify things while they are able**. They are all very approachable!

## What are the contingencies in case of an emergency on this challenge?

The crew will have radios and emergency satellite phones, extensive medical kit and other safety apparatus where necessary. If you are feeling unwell, tell your leaders and listen to their advice, as your health and safety is our top priority. In some cases, you may need to come down from the mountain and the crew will support this quickly and efficiently in the best way possible.



## What can I do to prevent illness?

On the trip itself, food is cooked and prepared to very high standards and you can eat with confidence – though illness can spread through the group very quickly when you are living closely together, so it's important to bring **antiseptic hand sanitiser** for use after the toilet and before eating to minimise the spread of germs. Also, avoid sharing water bottles and sharing each other's food or sweets as this spreads germs very easily, even if you are being careful.

Away from the trek itself, we'd advise against drinking tap water (or cleaning teeth in it), and avoid ice cubes in drinks unless you are sure they are made with bottled/treated water. For the same reason avoid salads, raw vegetables and fruit that you cannot peel yourself, as well as unpasteurised dairy products.

With the country being so close to the equator, the blazing hot sun is directly overhead; use a high factor sun cream, wear hat and sunglasses, and ensure you drink plenty of water or energy drinks to replenish your fluid levels. Bear in mind the sun is very strong at altitude even if you feel cooler.



## Any safety tips for non-trekking time?

One of the benefits of group travel is safety – you all look out for each other, and there's no reason to be alone. Sometimes, however, it's easy to lose concentration in a group. Stay focussed in busy, touristy areas, and take responsibility for yourself and your belongings. Leave valuables behind; you don't need your best jewellery and gadgets on this trip. Store your main cash separately and keep a few notes in your pocket while sight-seeing, so you don't have to display your wallet when you just want to buy something small, especially on buses or in tourist areas. That also means that if you are unfortunate enough to be mugged, you have something handy to pass over quickly. Wear a concealed money belt with your flight ticket and some of your cash inside. Be careful at night and avoid walking or getting into taxis alone. Busy touristy areas attract pick-pockets and bag-slashers, so be vigilant for both yourself and your companions. Don't leave drinks unattended in bars. This might all sound a bit intimidating, but it's no different to most major cities or tourist areas in the world, and it's very rare for a problem to occur on one of our trips.

## What currency should I take?

Peru's currency is the Nuevo Sol, often referred to as the sol. It is divided into 100 centimos. Taking US dollar cash is best – easier to change than sterling or euros, you will also get a better rate of exchange. Although US dollars are accepted by most tourist places, Soles are needed for local transport, meals etc. There are plenty of money-changers in Cuzco.

Damaged or torn notes are hard to get rid of so try not to accept them. Carry low denomination notes as you will have difficulty obtaining change from a \$100 bill – a lot of money in Peru! If you run out of cash, ATMs in larger towns and cities accept most cards. Paying by credit card incurs a surcharge, so it is better to withdraw the cash.

## How much money will I need to bring with me?

We usually suggest that you take approximately £200 but of course it depends on how much you want to buy when in Peru. You will need to set aside some funds for any meals which are not included in your itinerary, drinks, and local crew tips.

If you struggle to acclimatise to the altitude and need to descend to lower elevations for your own safety, you must ensure you have enough funds to cover any resultant costs – for example, extra hotel accommodation or meals. The same applies if you have to depart from group arrangements for any other reason, such as fitness, illness or any unforeseen circumstances. Some of these may be recoverable through your travel insurance, depending on your cover, but you will need the funds to pay them upfront.

## What do you recommend for crew tips?

The local crew and porters work incredibly hard for the duration of the trip and it is great if we can show our appreciation in the form of a tip. The guide is around **\$80-100** per participant which is split out between the local crew but this is of course at your discretion. Please do not give out individual tips to any local crew who you feel have helped you personally. They work well as a team and those 'out of sight' will be working just as hard as those with you on the trek. Feel free to give away any used or unwanted kit as the porters are always grateful for extra gear.



## Are there many shopping opportunities?

Yes! You will have plenty of time in Cuzco, and there are lots of markets and shops selling souvenirs and crafts. Many market sellers will expect you to haggle over price. Haggling is great fun, and a good way of interacting with local people. A good rule of thumb is to offer a third of the asking price and meet somewhere in the middle. However, while the intention is to knock the price down, be aware that if the sellers are desperate for immediate cash they will sell at a loss. So do not drive too hard a bargain; remember that a dollar means a lot more to the seller than it will to you once you get home.

## What do I need to bring?

Refer to your **Kit List** to ensure that you have all the essentials for a comfortable trip. Quality, lightweight gear is a must – see the weight limit information below. Make sure your walking boots are waterproof and well-worn in. Boots with a mid or high ankle support are very important as the going underfoot can be rough at times. Trekking tops of a wicking nature will be more comfortable to walk in than cotton. A **25–30ltr** rucksack will give you enough room to fit everything in during the day whilst trekking (waterproofs, fleece, personal med kit, sunscreen, camera and any snacks). We do recommend that you use a platypus style drinking system rather than bottles as it is easier to have regular small drinks. You will have opportunities to fill up your water in camp and at lunchtimes. Trekking poles are very handy for support but do make sure you train using them.

## What is the luggage allowance?

Although your main luggage limit on the plane is 20kg with a 5kg allowance for hand luggage, there is a strict weight allowance on the trek itself.

When in Cuzco, you will be given a smaller duffle bag in which you will put your trekking kit and overnight items needed on the trail. This duffle bag will be transported to your camp sites each night by porters and **there is a weight restriction of 5kg per bag**, one bag per person. This weight limit has been set for the protection of the porters and to manage the weight of equipment taken on the trail. This does mean you'll have to be minimalistic and economical – practise packing in advance at home.

Your main luggage bag will stay at the hotel; Discover Adventure Kitbags are specially designed for the rigours of our challenges and are very affordable, please ask for details.



## How do I ensure I'm sensitive to the local culture?

At Discover Adventure we expect our groups to be sensitive to other cultures – be especially respectful in public areas and near places of worship, but also remember that even in the most remote locations, we have local crew with us and they deserve your respect. Remember that what you would wear on a hot day in the UK is not necessarily acceptable in other countries, even in areas used to tourism. While much of your trekking time you'll be dressed for cooler temperatures, on hotter days please dress appropriately. Women are advised to avoid tight or strappy tops in favour of regular T-shirts; men should wear a top at all times. Avoid short shorts; trousers are preferable in rural areas. By dressing thoughtfully, you not only experience minimum hassle but do not offend the local people; many of our trips rely on these small communities.

Try to research a little about the culture before you go, or learn a few basic phrases; it all goes a long way to ensuring you connect with local people in a positive way. Thanks in advance for helping to maintain the good reputation of Discover Adventure groups.

## Will there be Wi-Fi, phone reception and charging points?

The Wi-Fi in the hotel may not be as fast as you're used to at home and there won't be any internet access when on the trek itself. The phone reception will be limited and, unsurprisingly, there are no charging points on the trail. You may wish to bring your own solar charging device. Treat this challenge like a 'Digital Detox' and tell your relatives that no news is good news, as the leader will have a satellite phone for emergencies only.

For voltage and plug information in hotel accommodation, see <https://www.iec.ch/world-plugs>

## Do I need travel insurance?

As part of your booking conditions, it is compulsory that you ensure you have adequate travel insurance cover to cover you for trekking. See the [insurance page on our website](#) for further information.



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## What if this trip does not meet minimum numbers?

Every group needs a minimum number of bookings for it to be feasible to run. Cancelling a trip is rare, and we do our utmost to avoid it. You will be contacted in plenty of time if we are concerned about the group size, and we will discuss options with you.

## When will we know the flight details and meeting point?

Discover Adventure will usually confirm the main group flight details 5 months prior to the trip departure so you will know which airport you are travelling from and can arrange suitable transport. You will be sent your **Final Joining Instructions** in the month prior to the trip departure date, within which specific details of **where and when to meet your trip leader** and fellow trekking participants will be confirmed.



## Will I need my flight ticket before the trip departure date?

Unless specified otherwise, you do not need to have your flight ticket prior to the trip departure date as this will be given to you by the trip leader or a Discover Adventure representative at the airport.

## Can I make my own flight arrangements or alter my flight from the main group?

Flights are included on this trip and you will automatically be booked on to the main group flights, unless you let us know otherwise in good time (no later than three months prior to the trip departure). It is possible to make your own flight arrangements; a land-only discount will be applied. See the **Flight Arrangements Form** in your Passenger Portal.

It is also possible to extend your stay and deviate from the main group flight booking (fee applies); again see the form. Note that you will remain on the same flight path, returning from the same airport. There is sometimes a supplement to pay if the flights are more expensive on your requested day; early requests have the best chance of avoiding this. We will always contact you if this is the case, to check whether you are happy to proceed. If you are keen to upgrade your flight, this may be possible at a supplement and you can contact us for an approximate price, but please note that this is often very expensive and we will require full payment upfront.

## What are the passport and visa requirements?

A valid 10-year passport is essential; with at least six months remaining before expiry. **British passport-holders do not require a visa for stays of up to 6 months, when the purpose of the visit is tourism.** For UK nationals, please refer to the foreign travel advice [given here](#) for more information. All other nationalities are responsible for checking with their embassies or consulates for the latest information. Please do check if you require a visa if you are not a British national. Remember to check any regulations for countries you may transit during your flight too.

There may also be health declarations to make. Do check the [FCO Entry Requirements](#) information carefully, as regulations can and do change without warning.

## How can I find out more about the requirement for vaccinations?

You will need to ensure that you have the vaccinations required for this trip prior to travel. We recommend you ensure your routine UK schedule of vaccinations is up-to-date (especially Tetanus) and check Fit For Travel [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) for guidance and information. Always consult your local GP or travel clinic for the latest health advice, as they are aware of any updates in World Health Travel requirements.

Malaria is not a risk on the Inca Trail in Cuzco, or any locations at elevations above 2000m. If you are travelling at lower elevations in Peru, ensure you check current advice. For trekkers extending their stay to the Peruvian Amazon, see our separate information.

## Passenger Portal

We have a passenger portal which will enable you to see any outstanding information we need, the countdown to your challenge departure, see your outstanding balance, make payments and update your contact details. You can access this via the following link - [Passenger Portal Log in](#).



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