Machu Picchu, Inca Trails & Lake Titicaca (SCZ)

La Paz to Cusco 12 days, departing 31 May 2014

Comfort Zone: Basic Luxury
Physical Challenge: Easy Hard
Trip Style: Overlanding
Route: La Paz to Cusco
Length: 12 days
Transport: Overland vehicle, boat
Accommodation: All hotels, beside the 3 nights camping during the Inca Trail.

Ratings for this trip

Comfort Zone: Moderate

Moderate Comfort Level. These trips allow you to get off the beaten track with a few of your home comforts. On OVERLAND TRIPS expect there may be some wild camps, but with a predominance of campsites with good facilities (often with upgrades to rooms available) or staying in small hotels. Hotels will range from basic up to reasonably comfortable. Sharing will be on a 2, 3 or 4 person basis. On ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS we will have standard style accommodation, usually budget or tourist-class (2-3 star) accommodation with private facilities. Some accommodation may be on a multi-share basis. Transport will be a mixture of local and privately hired.

Physical Challenge: Strenuous in parts

STRENUOUS IN PARTS: These are physical tours; we may well be travelling at high altitudes, across deserts or through hot and steamy tropical countries. Physically it can be quite tough, but not necessarily all the time and there will be plenty of rest days and time to relax as well. The fitter you are the more you will enjoy the trip.

Countries Visited

Bolivia

Bolivia's major attraction is its wild natural beauty, with much of the country being off the beaten track. The country is divided into two distinct regions, the Amazonas and the Altiplano. Between the two lie the Yungas or cloud forest. Bolivia is a country for the outdoor enthusiast, with horseriding, trekking, mountain biking and jeep trips available in many of the areas we travel through. It is a country that most visitors to the Andes miss as they seldom leave Peru and yet it has as much to offer the visitor as it's more popular neighbour. Its salt pans, high lakes and mountains and its beautiful jungle make it a great destination for any traveller.

The dizzying heights of the capital, La Paz are enough to take your breath away. With buildings that hug the side of the canyon, and the spectacular views of Mount Illimani, the city is over 3,650 metres (11,975 feet) above sea level and is one of the fastest growing in Latin America.

There are many area of natural beauty in Bolivia, and many that benfit from a low number of visitors such as the stunning lakes of the high altiplano. More famous are the perspective bending salt flats of Salar de Uyuni.

In the north in Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable lake and home to the floating islets home to the Uros people.

Predominantly a Roman Catholic nation, the statue of Cristo de la Concordia in Cochabamba is a symbol of the influence of the religion in Bolivia. With nearly 60% of the population following this religion, it is a national landmark which provides inspiration to millions.

Agriculture is important in Bolivia, with soybeans being the main product sold into the Andean Community market. Many foods such as potatoes, rice and fruit and vegetables are harvested across Bolivia. National diet ranges from spicy lunches in the higher parts of Bolivia, to the less spicy dishes and mainly plantain or boiled maize in the lower parts. Made from fermented maize, the drink Chica is not an oppurtunity to pass upon. Although normally non alcoholic, it can be served as a brewed beer, and is one of Bolivias fine gastronomies. A taste of Bolivia could be the start of a wonderful adventure.

Peru

Peru is home to some of South Americas most glorious landmarks, and the opportunity to partake in an activity seem endless.

The capital is Lima and it is known of the City of the Kings, it was founded by the Conquistador Pizarro in 1535. The elegant architecture runs through the capital and the cultural effects of the museums are all tucked away in this classic city.

Any introduction to Peru wouldn't be complete without the Inca civilisation. Cusco is the ancient capital of the Inca empire. Even today, many of its buildings have original Inca stonework as part of their structure. The Incas had a highly organised and labour intensive society. They managed to conquer vast tracts of land and, through strong central and regional government, retained control over an empire that spanned South America, from mid Colombia in the north, to the middle of Argentina in the south and lasted for over four centuries.

The most famous Inca legacy is undoubtedly the Inca Trail the ancient set of pathway in the Andes that include the route up to the fantastic site of Machu Picchu. You can trek through the countryside making your way through the unspoilt land and view the breathtaking scenery that carries on to the horizon and beyond. When you reach Machu Picchu you will realise what a beautiful place it is, no photograph can really do the site justice. The long forgotten site was rediscovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911 and is simply awe inspiring and is a must visit place in South America.

Peru is flowing with fabulous landscapes and this continues at Lake Titicaca. On the border of Peru and Bolivia it is the highest navigable lake in the world. In the culture of Lake Titicaca, comes the sound of panpipes. An Andean music form, this woodwind instrument plays tranquil sounds and is a nice form of relaxation. The Charango is the national instrument of Peru. This stringed instrument was from a Spanish influence and has a distinctive sound. The taste is as distinctive as the sound and the national dish of Ceviche. This is a fish based dish where the fish is 'cooked' in lemon or lime juice.

The history and sites of Peru are outstanding, but also the friendly welcome visitors receive make Peru one of the most enjoyable countries in the world to visit.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: La Paz

Sat 31 May 2014

Border information: If you are starting in La Paz, enter Bolivia at La Paz Airport.

Free time to explore La Paz with a group meeting at 18:00 hrs. We stay in a good quality colonial hotel in the centre.

Hotel for the night: Estrella Andina
Estrella Andina
Av Illampu 716
Zona El Rosario
La Paz
+591 2 2456421

Activity	Approximate Cost
Free time to explore the vibrant city of La Paz	Included in tour
Downhill "gravity assisted" mountain biking from La Paz to Coroico	USD 105
Guided tour to explore Tiahuanaco Inca Ruins	USD 20

La Paz

Bolivia's largest city, La Paz lies huddled in a canyon basin, hiding from the harsh conditions of the surrounding altiplano. It is a fascinating city; the old town and more expensive neighbourhoods at the bottom of the canyon in the centre, surrounded by sprawling shantytowns which extend up the slopes of the bowl, merging into "El Alto" back on the plains, a suburb of La Paz that has grown to be a city in it's own right.

The city skyline is dominated by the snow-capped peaks of Mount Illimani, a staggeringly beautiful back-drop that leaves many visitors stunned when then catch their first glimpse of the city as they descend into the canyon. The old town is full of markets and winding cobbled streets full of people selling anything and everything you could ever think of. Different areas of the city have established markets selling things you'd expect like food and flower, and also things you've probably never seen before - check out the dried llama foetuses on sale in the witches market (Bolivian's believe that burying one of these in the foundations of your home will ensure prosperity and good fortune)

There are plenty of other activities to do in La Paz, from playing a round at the highest golf course in the Americas, skiing at an absurdly high height, or trekking and gravity assisted bike rides through the Yungas. You can also arrange excursuibs ti Mount Chacaltaya and Moon Valley where you can take in the superlative mountain views. Another option is to visit the Tihuanacu Ruins which are a short journey away close to the Peruvian border. The city is also full of impressive churches and museums, including one dedicated to the history of the Coca plant.

Please be aware that you may not be able to do all these activities during the time you will have in La Paz at the start or finish of your trip with Dragoman, so you may want to consider allowing some extra time here.

Day 2: Copacabana

Sun 01 Jun 2014

In the morning there is a chance to explore La Paz before a 200kms drive brings us to the town of Copacabana on the shores of Lake Titicaca. We overnight in a hotel near the lake

Activity	Approximate Cost
Stay in the pretty lakeside colonial town of Copacabana	Included in tour

Copacabana

Copacabana, Bolivia, has little in common with the famous Brazilian beach, but it's a picturesque small town on the shores of Lake Titicaca nevertheless. The town centres around it's small whitewashed square which is home to an amazing Moorish style Cathedral. At sunset there is no better place to be than sat at one of the many simple local fish restaurants on the shoreline, watching the sun slip down behind the horizon, before heading into town for a game of table football with the locals, or a visit to one of the many bars that feature live music here - many of whom are often from Argentina.

If you have time, this is a good place to take a boat trip out onto Lake Titicaca. By taking a local boat to Isla del Sol you can spend a day exploring this historic island, famous for being the birthplace of the whole Inca civilisation. The modern day Aymara and Quechua peoples of Bolivia and Peru still accept the legend of the sun being born on this island as their creation story even today. There are a host of ancient ruins to discover, tiny traditional villages and beautiful walking routes. You can wander through the stone ruins, exploring the islands dry slopes covered with sweet smelling incense brush, or hike over the ancient pampas which are still cultivated by the island families.

Day 3: Copacabana

Mon 02 Jun 2014

Today is a non-driving day with an all day visit to Isla del Sol in Lake Titicaca. We return in the evening to Copacabana to overnight in the same hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Take a boat to Lake Titicaca's Isla del Sol	Included in tour

Day 4: Puno

Tue 03 Jun 2014

Border information: Exit Bolivia at Copacabana, enter Peru at Desguadero.

A 200kms drive takes us across the Peruvian border to the lakeside town of Puno. In the afternoon we enjoy a boat trip out to the floating reed islands of Uros on Lake Titicaca. We spend the night in a hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Boat trip to the floating islands on Lake Titicaca	Included in tour

Puno

Located on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the south eastern part of Peru is the small town of Puno. The town is a melting pot of Aymara and Quechuan Indian culture and traditional andean customs are still strongly represented here.

Puno is known as the folkloric capital of Peru as result of the wealth of artistic and cultural expressions, particularly dance, that originate here. Many festivals are celebrated here, so if you're lucky your visit might coincide with one of the colourful evening parades, when the streets fill with costumed dancers and musicians.

The main attraction here though is the lake. Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable lake in the world, a mythical expanse of deep blue waters, dotted with islands, some of which are still home to communities who have been living in the same way for hundreds of years. Perhaps the most famous islands are the Uros, often referred to as the "floating reed islands". Known as the “willow people”, the Uros have lived on these small man made islands built from compacted Totora reeds for many years. Nowadays the young people leave the islands to live in Puno and the remaining population uses tourism as a way of providing extra income. A visit to the islands is no longer perhaps the authentic experience it once was, but the islands are still unique and make for an interesting short visit. You may also have time to visit the Yavari steam ship moored nearby, this was built in England then shipped out to Peru, traveling by train and animal to Puno before being rebuilt and launched on the lake.

Day 5: Sillustani Ruins, Cusco

Wed 04 Jun 2014

In the morning we will visit the Sillustani ruins and museum before driving 440kms to Cusco. We stay in a lovely colonial hotel in Cusco

Sillustani Ruins

The small villages around Puno are mostly small subsistence farming communities, relying heavily on the wool from their herds of llamas and alpacas and agriculture for income. The farmers here use the same tools today as they have since time immemorial - wooden hoes, ploughs and sickles. Crops are sown and reaped by hand and maize, beans, potatoes, onions and rice predominate.

Tucked away in between the many small villages are the ruins of Sillustani. These ruined towers are set on a beautiful peninsula near Lake Umayo, built by a pre-Inca civilisation hundreds of years ago. The Sillustani Indians built several "Chullpas", funeral towers whose construction is far more complex than anything the Inca ever built. Each tower would have contained the remains of noble men, buried together with offerings to secure their comfortable passage into the next life.

Cusco

Cusco is the ancient capital of the Inca empire and any adventure tour to Peru is centred around this stunning city. Even today, many of its buildings still retain some of the original Inca stonework as part of their structure. It is interesting to know that despite their advanced civilisation, the Incas did not know how to write and had not invented the wheel, yet they were skillful irrigation engineers, inventing the suspension bridge and hammock. They must have had theories on constructing buildings to avoid damage by earthquake, which may account for the way they fitted huge carved blocks of granite together in an incredibly precise jigsaw when creating new structures. Examples of their amazing building techniques can still be seen in and around Cusco, including the infamous "twelve sided stone", now famous as part of the logo of Cusco's native "Cusquena" beer.

The town is a fantastic place to spend a fews days. A good place to start your explorations is the majestic main plaza, heading out into the cobbled streets lined with attractive colonial buildings. Head up the hill into the neighbourhood of San Blas and you will discover another hidden square with a quiet laid back feel. All the streets are lined with shops, bars and restaurants, from small local cafes to five star dining experiences. If you're interested in learning more about the history and culture of Peru, there are also some fantastic museums here and the many churches are well worth a look as well. So take to the streets and wander around, haggle with the street vendors, kick-back and enjoy a coffee in one of the many cafes with balconies overlooking the square and just enjoy Cusco and it's beautiful surroundings.

Cusco is also the gateway to Machu Picchu with most people trekking one of the many Inca Trails to reach this ancient Inca city. Most of our overland expeditions include trekking to Machu Picchu - for longer overland expeditions please see below. For shorter alternatives take a look at:

Lima to La Paz

Lima to Cusco

Cusco to La Paz

Day 6: Cusco

Thu 05 Jun 2014

Today is a non-driving day with a trekking briefing at 10am and then free time to explore the wonderful city of Cusco, the capital of the Inca kingdom. Overnight in the same colonial hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Tour of the Sacred Valley, Sacsayhuaman and Ollantaytambo	Included in tour

Day 7 to 10: Inca Trail , Sacred Valley, Cusco

Fri 06 Jun to Mon 09 Jun 2014

Trekking in the Andes. We will have a tour of the sacred valley and either begin the community trek or the classic trek to the world heritage site of Machu Picchu. The nights are spent camping.

Activity	Approximate Cost
EITHER Hike unspoilt Inca Trails and visit Quechua communities in remote stunning Andes scenery away from tourist treks on our exclusive Inca Trails Community Trek OR Trek the Classic Inca Trail up the Royal Inca Road **IF YOU WISH TO BOOK THE CLASSIC INCA TRAIL THIS MUST BE ADVISED AT TIME OF BOOKING OTHERWISE YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE PUT ON OUR COMMUNITY TREK.**	Included in tour
Tour of the Sacred Valley, Sacsayhuaman and Ollantaytambo	Included in tour

Inca Trail

When people talk about "The Inca Trail", they are usually refering to a particular trekking route that follows a ancient pathway that leads to Machu Picchu. What many people don't realise is that there are a actually a huge number of Inca Trails that criss cross the Urubamba Valley and surrounding mountain ranges, many of which are genuinely remote, rarely used by western tourists, offering a chance to experience the real unspoilt Andes. On all Dragoman overland tours that travel via Cusco we offer you the choice to trek either the "Classic" Inca Trail or our unique alternative, the Community Inca Trek, which is exclusive to Dragoman (and by the way, it's not the Lares trail that many other operators use!)

The Classic Inca Trail

The "Classic" Inca Trail route usually starts at Kilometre 82 of the Cusco -Machu Picchu railtrack, taking in Abra Warmihuañusca (Dead Woman's Pass, 4200m) and the ruins of Phuyupatamarca and Wiñay Wayna en route, eventually arriving at the Sun Gate above Machu Picchu early in the morning after 3 days of trekking. This route is still extremely popular as it is seen by many as the "original" Inca Trail, it's also probably the best trek to choose if you're really interested in history and archaeology, because of all the other Inca sites it passes along the way.

Unfortuantely, in recent years the classic trail has almost become a bit of a victim of it's own popularity. It is important to realise that the trail is now very busy, with 500 people starting the trek every day. There are only a certain number of places where it is feasible to camp, so your group will be camped alongside others, and you will meet a lot of other trekkers along the way. Nevertheless, it is still an awesome trek, passing through some stunning scenery from snow-capped peaks to abundant cloud forest, and the sense of achievement you'll have when you catch your first sight of the Lost City of the Incas is something you'll never forget.

The Community Inca Trek

Dragoman's Community Inca Trek is a unique trekking route where you'll hike through pristine unspoilt andean scenery, walking ancient Inca Trails and staying as guests of the local communities as part of our pioneering community-based tourism project, Tarpuy Yachay. This trek is all about getting away from the overcrowded thoroughfares of the Classic Inca Trail and getting out into the real Andes - not to mention being part of a project with provides a genuine, direct benefit to the host communities we travel through, by supporting education, income generation and environmental sustainability projects. The trek itself is about the same as the Classic Inca Trail in terms of length and difficulty, taking three to three and a half days and ascending to about 4800m when you cross the highest pass. The scenery out here is truly magnificent, spectacular mountain peaks, verdant hillsides dotted by isolated villages and the odd llama and alapaca, you are unlikely to see another tourist here. If you were to ask Dragoman which one we prefer, there is no contest, Community Inca Trek and Tarpuy Yachay Project is a much better and far more worthwhile experience.

Why we think the Community Inca Trek is better than the Classic Inca Trail:

- You will trek through genuinely unspoilt, spectacular mountain scenery without seeing any other western tourists
- We camp as guests of the villages we pass through, meeting the local families and getting involved with the local communities, for e.g. helping with school refurbishment projects or harvesting crops
- Llamas, mules and horses are used instead of porters to carry equipment. These animals are sourced from the communities we travel through, providing a direct source of income for local families
- You'll be helping to give something back to the local community. On this trek the staff and pack animals are all from the local villages, so they directly benefit from your trekking

- We also make a financial donation from the group kitty, matched by Dragoman, for every person who does this trek. These donations help support a variety of projects, for e.g. paying for full-time teachers in each community's school
- By having the horses and mules along with us, you also have a much needed safety net if you suffer from altitude or exhaustion....because you can always swallow your pride and hitch a ride

And a few things to consider when choosing the Community Inca Trek:

- It's important to realise that whilst both treks finish at Machu Picchu on their final day, on the Community Trek you will not trek right through to the Sun Gate as you do on the Classic Inca Trail. However, you will still arrive before the crowds and it is possible to walk up from Machu Picchu itself to the Sun Gate to take in the famous view
- The Inca tails that form part of the Classic Inca Trail route are what would have been the King's roads - and therefore they are better preserved than the trails we use on the Community Inca Trek
- The ruins you will see on the Classic Inca Trail are more numerous than those on the Community Trek, however you will still see the main sites of Machu Picchu, Sacsayhuaman, Ollantaytambo, Pisac, plus a few others along the way

For longer overland expeditions please see the trips listed below. For shorter alternatives take a look at:

Cusco to La Paz

Lima to Cusco

Lima to La Paz

Sacred Valley

The valley of the Urabamba river is more often referred to as "El Valle Sagrado de los Incas", or the Sacred Valley. Close to Cusco in Peru, the valley extends from the small market town of Pisac to Ollyantytambo, nestling at the foot of the Andean mountain ranges that are home to the magical lost Inca city of Machu Picchu.

Together with Machu Picchu itself, the Sacred Valley was a cradle of the Inca empire. The area is littered with archaelogical sites which include the magnificent ruins of Pisac, Sacsayhuaman and Ollyantytambo, as well as the Lost City itself. Together with the temperate climate, lively markets, sleepy andean villages and stunning surrounding landsccape, the rich history of the area makes it a truly bewitching place.

If you travel with Dragoman, whether you choose to take the Community Inca Trek, the Classic Inca Trail, or not to trek at all, everyone in the group will be able to take part in a tour of the Sacred Valley. We will typically leave Cusco first thing in the morning and drive to Sacsayhuaman ruins which are just 15 mins from our hotel. These ruins are best known for the gigantic blocks that make up the zig zag frontal of this fort like construction. There are many theories as to why Sacsayhuaman was originally built and what it was used for but the most likely is that it was a temple complex where offerings were made to appease the gods.

Sachsayhuaman is an amazing place and the early morning light makes the great view of the Cusco rooftops that we get here even more beautiful. We then head further on into the Sacred Valley proper, stoping high on the mountainside to explore the ruins of Pisac. We will walk downhill along small pathways, through ancient arches, storage buildings and houses, learning about the history of the site from our local guide. When we have finished exploring we head down to Pisac town where we have time for lunch and can do a bit of shopping in the extensive handicrafts market that the town is famous for.

Here our groups split, and those doing the Community Inca Trek drive up into the highlands of the Cordillera Urubamba. The drive itself is amazing with stunning views as we wind up towards the trailhead. On this trek you return to the Sacred Valley, arriving in Ollantaytambo at the end of your trek, where you are joined by any of your group who prefer not to trek at all for a guided tour of this Inca site, before leaving next morning on the early train for Machu Picchu. Those who choose to trek the Classic Inca Trail will head straight to Ollantaytambo from Pisac, exploring the ruins here that afternoon and camping overnight, heading to the Classic Inca Trail start point early the next morning.

Day 11: Machu Picchu

Tue 10 Jun 2014

Visit to Machu Picchu one of the world's most iconic sights. We'll have a guided tour with a local expert and plenty of time on site before catching the train back to Cusco.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided tour of Machu Picchu	Included in tour
Train back from Machu Picchu to Cusco	Included in tour

Machu Picchu

Machu Picchu is usually the highlight of any adventure tour to Peru. It is one of those genuinely magical places, and catching your first glimpse of the lost city of the Incas through the early morning mist is definitely a moment you'll never forget.

The most popular way to approach the ruined city is via one of the many Inca trails that wind their way through the Andes Mountains. The Classic Inca Trail is a much-used route taking four days and culminating with an arrival at the 'Sun Gate' at sunrise on the final morning from where you descend into Machu Picchu itself. However the sheer number of trekkers following this route has resulted in erosion, deforestation, litter and overcrowding at campsites. To address this issue Dragoman has been running a 'Community Inca Trail' for the past seven years. This unspoilt route is totally unique to Dragoman clients so you will be able to enjoy the trek in peace and away from the crowds on the main trail. It visits local communities allowing you to learn about the Quechua way of life and travels through stunning mountain scenery enabling you to fully appreciate the majesty of the Andes.

Machu Picchu itself is stunningly located, perching high in the Andes surrounded by verdant cloud forest, with the River Urambamba running through the gorge far below. It's thought that the city was the location of a royal palace and estate, home to the Inca emperors, or possibly a sacred religious and ceremonial sight.

Discovered in 1911 by the explorer Hiram Bingham, although the ruins were heavily covered by dense jungle foliage, many of the buildings were well preserved and in excellent condition. The city consists of more than 200 buildings, from houses to temples, storage buildings and public spaces. It's fascinating to be able to gaze down on the city from above and imagine how it would have looked during the height of the Inca empire.

Most of our adventure tours to Peru include trekking to Machu Picchu - for our longer overland expeditions see the trips listed below. For shorter alternatives take a look at:

Lima to La Paz

Lima to Cusco

Cusco to La Paz

Day 12: Cusco

Wed 11 Jun 2014

Free time to explore the city or do activities such as white water rafting.

Border information: If you are leaving in Cusco, exit Peru at Cusco Airport.

Activity	Approximate Cost
White-water rafting and mountain biking in the Cusco region	USD 40

Visa Information:

Important Notes

The routes, activities and places visited described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.

We intend following the planned route but exact night stops cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our basic planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. By their very nature overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, often in areas without western infrastructure. You should expect that some these areas do not adhere to western safety standards.

The Classic and Community Inca Trails — more information

Trail Permits

2013 - 2014 Departures - Which Inca Trail When you book this trip, you will have a choice of either the Community Inca Trail or the Classic Inca Trail. The costs for each are included in the kitty, but you must tell us when you book, if you want to book the Classic Inca Trail. If you do not tell us this you will automatically be booked onto the Community Inca Trail. In order to secure Inca Trail permits, it is vital that you provide the correct and most up to date passport information at the time of booking (DOB, passport number, expiry date and name spelling exactly as it appears in the passport that you will be travel with) Any inconsistency between the information provided and the passport you travel with may result in you not being granted access to the Inca Trail.

There is also a non trekking option. If you do not want to trek at all but want to take part in the Sacred Valley Tour and guided tour of Machu Picchu, this can be organised. You will receive a refund from kitty for the unused part of the excursion. However if this is your preferred option, in order to obtain a refund you MUST inform the Dragoman Overland office at the time of booking.

The Inca Trail usually refers to the ancient pathway used by the Incas leading to Machu Picchu, but in fact there are a number of Inca Trails running through the Urubamba Valley. On all Dragoman trips that travel via Cusco we include the

choice to either trek the Classic Inca Trail or to trek our Community Inca Trek, which is exclusive to Dragoman (and by the way, it's unique to Dragoman and not the Lares trail that other operators use!)

The trek is included in your trip kitty price, so if you prefer not to trek at all you must advise Dragoman at time of booking so that we can arrange a non-trekking package for you. Full details of all three options are below.

Option 1: The Community Inca Trek

This unique and pioneering trekking route is automatically included in all of our trips that visit this area of Peru. The trek travels through spectacular scenery, passing through Inca ruins and staying in remote villages. You'll be hiking unspoiled trails used only by local villagers and Dragoman passengers, avoiding the crowds of the Classic route. You will be camping as guests of the local communities we pass through and may have the opportunity to help out with some hands-on projects, for example at the local schools. This is the real Andes, trekking pristine trails with spectacular mountain scenery at every turn. After a comfortable overnight stay in Ollantaytambo we head to the ancient citadel Machu Picchu. Although we do not enter the site through the Sun Gate as on the Classic Inca Trail there is plenty of time to hike to either the Sun Gate or even Huayna Picchu, which towers above Machu Picchu.

This Option is **automatically** included as part of your trip unless you advise us otherwise. So if you want to take the Community Inca Trek no further action is required. If you would prefer to trek the classic Inca Trail, or choose not to trek at all, you must contact us.

Option 2: Classic Inca Trail

If you want to do this option, you MUST

1. Inform Dragoman at the time of booking your trip

Dragoman will then apply for your permit but please note that these can never be guaranteed and if unavailable we will automatically book you onto the Community Inca Trail.

If you do inform us of any other request you WILL AUTOMATICALLY be booked onto the Community Inca Trail.

This original Kings route still remains popular and it is a 4 day trek, which passes through cloud forest and dramatic mountain scenery. It ends at sunrise on the last day as you trek to the Sun Gate for your first views of magnificent Machu Picchu. If you would prefer to trek the Classic Inca Trail then you must advise Dragoman at the time of booking.

Option 3: Non Trekking Package

This package has been designed for people who do not want to trek the Inca Trail. It combines the 2 most popular tours in and around Cusco, the tour of the fortress city of Ollantaytambo and the magnificent ruins at Machu Picchu.

Please note; You will leave Cusco with your fellow passengers and your tour leader who will be trekking the Community or Classic Inca Trail. You will visit the fortress of Sacsayhuaman, followed by a beautiful scenic drive over mountains and through valleys, via the ancient city of Pisac and on to the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Continuing along the valley, you will pass through the village of Urubamba where you will have lunch with your fellow passengers before heading back to Cusco. In Cusco you will stay at our nice, centrally located hotel for a further 3 nights and this will be booked for you by your tour leader. There are no activities booked or organised for you during this time. You will re join some of your fellow travellers and your tour leader on Day 4 in Ollantaytambo. Please also note that there is a possibility that you may be the only person booked on to the non trekking package, however this package will offer you plenty of time in Cusco to explore the town and surrounding sites (in total 4 or 5 nights depending on your trip).

DAY 1

You will have 3 nights in Cusco. This first day you will be joining your fellow passengers and your Tour Leader on their way to the start point of their treks. . You will visit the fortress of Sacsayhuaman, followed by a beautiful scenic drive over mountains and through valleys, via the ancient city of Pisac and on to the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Continuing along the valley, you will pass through the village of Urubamba where you will have lunch with your fellow passengers before heading back to Cusco

DAY 2 and 3:

The hotel for this 2 nights is the same and you will have free time with no activities organised.

You can go out and enjoy the many beautiful restaurants and shops that this wonderful city has to offer or just relax in our nice centrally located hotel. Your tour leader will book the hotel for you.

DAY 4:

After being picked up from your hotel at around 09:30 am you will be driven to the fortress city of Ollantaytambo. In the afternoon, you will be able to relax at your Hotel, the Tunupa Lodge. It is here that you will rejoin the Community Inca Trekkers and your tour leader.

DAY 5:

After an early breakfast, a 10 minute walk to the train station, your stunning 2 hour train ride to Aguas Calientes begins. The journey takes you through several different micro-climates, past Inca terraces, lookout posts, ancient river bank reinforcements and small towns. You will get a glimpse of different temples and the beautiful Mount Veronica (18,800 ft. / 5750 m). Passing through 8 tunnels, the train journey finally comes to an end in the busy pueblo, Aguas Calientes. From here you take a local bus.

The bus winds up the mountainside for about 30 minutes until you arrive at the entrance to Machu Picchu (7,800 ft / 2400 m), the awe inspiring 'Lost City of the Incas'. The guide will take you around the immense, mystical ruins for about 2 to 2 ½ hours, explaining the rich history of the ancient site. Afterwards, you will have time to explore on your own before returning down the mountain to Aguas Calientes.

In the afternoon you will catch a train from Aguas Calientes to Poroy. Once in Poroy a private transfer takes you back to your hotel in Cusco.

You will spend the night in our comfortable hotel in the heart of the city.

Non Trekking Package Includes:

Transport to Ollantaytambo via the Sacred Valley.

Return train tickets on the Backpacker train from Ollantaytambo-Aguas Calientes-Poroy

3 Night stay at our hotel in Cusco (Nights 1, 2, & 3)

1 Night stay at a hostel in Ollantaytambo (Night 4)

Round trip bus tickets from Aguas Calientes-Machu Picchu-Aguas Calientes

Guided tour of Sacsayhuaman, Ollantaytambo & Machu Picchu with a professional, bilingual tour guide

Entrance fee to Machu Picchu

Transfer Poroy train station – Hotel.

If you prefer not to trek at all you must advise Dragoman at time of booking so that we can arrange the non-trekking package for you.

Huayna Picchu

Huayna Picchu is the name of the mountain that towers over Machu Picchu. The climb is steep and quite tough for many but offers great views of the citadel.

The cost to climb Huayna Picchu was free until recently however the Peruvian autorities have now begun to charge to trek the mountain and also limited the number of climbers daily to 400.

Unfortunately due to Dragomans internal health and safety policy we are unable to to offer climbing Huyana Picchu as an optional activity. Our leaders are specifically prohibited from recommending or assissting with the booking of this activity.

Still Unsure of Which Trail?

Community Inca Trek or the Classic Inca Trail?

Dragoman's Community Inca Trek is a unique trekking route that not only involves trekking through pristine unspoiled mountains along ancient Inca Trails, but also allows the trekkers to stay within local communities and get involved with our pioneering community-based tourism project, Tarpuy Yachay. This trek is all about getting away from the overcrowded thoroughfares of the Classic Inca Trail, instead getting out into the real Andes. Not to mention being part of a project with provides a genuine, direct benefit to the host communities we travel through, by supporting education, income generation and environmental sustainability projects.

The "classic" Inca Trail is the now infamous trek which you will see in every tour operators brochure and website that features Peru as a destination. It is the most common trekking route taken to get to Machu Picchu.

Benefits of The Inca Trail & Quechua Community Project over the Classic Trail

- **Unspoiled** and absolutely spectacular mountain scenery

- **Hands on** involvement with local communities, including a variety of projects to provide infrastructure for the community.
- **A proportion of the costs** are going back into the local community and the guides, pack animals and trekking staff are all from the local community. The community really benefits from your trekking. We will stay for 2 nights in local communities.
- **Virtually deserted routes**, used only by locals and Dragoman Overland, most groups see no other westerners while trekking.
- **Llamas, mules and horses** are used instead of porters to carry equipment. The local communities we stay in provide these. This is Responsible Tourism in action.
- **Horses and mules** provide a much needed safety valve if people suffer from altitude or exhaustion... you can always swallow your pride and hitch a ride
- **Altitude Sickness**, although we will trek higher than the Classic Inca Trail (4800m), we can always get you down to a lower altitude and into a local community if necessary. This is not possible on the Classic Trail.

Points against The Inca Trail & Quechua Community Project

- **The Sungate & Machu Picchu**, yes, we certainly will visit Machu Picchu after the trek, but we will not trek through to the Sun Gate as you will on the Classic Inca Trail. However, many group members in the past six months have trekked back up fromMachu Picchu to the Sun Gate to see the famous view. This is always possible and we do allow time during your visit to Machu Picchu to this. Alternatively why not trek up Huayna Picchu, the huge peak towering above Machu Picchu....why not.... because its hard!
- **The Inca Roads** that the Classic Trail takes are the King's roads and therefore are better preserved that the Inca trails across the valley.
- **The ruins along the way** on the Classic Inca Trail are more numerous, however you will see Machu Picchu, Sacsayhuaman, Ollantaytambo, Pisac and other remote Inca sites on the Community Trail.

The Classic Inca Trail

- **This "original" route** is still the most popular route because of its history.
- **The Classic Trail is not quite as challenging** as the Inca Community Trail and and the passes are not quite as high. That said, it is still a pretty tough and you will need to be reasonably fit.
- **The Classic Inca Trail** finishes at the "Sungate" to Machu Picchu on the final morning of the trek, and you arrive at Machu Picchu by foot. On the Community Trek you will finish your trek the day before visiting Machu Picchu - and whilst we still arrive very early in the morning before the crowds, this is not a trekking day.
- **The crowds,** unfortunately often as many as 500 people a day start the Classic Trail and it has become very overcrowded, especially during the peak months. Rubbish, dirt, sanitation and over crowding are a real issue now. The hordes of people trekking this route is unsustainable and the Peruvian Government are being forced to limit numbers. This has now meant that at certain times of the year, not only is the trail overcrowded but also it is hard to even get permits to trek.
- **The Classic Trail** gives you no community involvement and you will be a trekking tourist in a national park.

However this is still the "Classic Inca Trail" and for some no other route will do. Hence we offer it as an alternative. The Community Trek is included in our trips, but if you would prefer to take the Classic then you will need to let our sale team know at time of booking.

And Finally Our Opinion

If you were to ask Dragoman which one we prefer, there is no contest, our unique Inca Trail & Quechua Community Project is a much better experience.

Full daily itinerary for the Community Inca Trail

Day 1

Cusco – Cancha Cancha

Leave Cusco early in the morning by bus and travel through the Sacred Valley to our trail head Huarán. On our way to Huarán we will visit Sacsayhuamán. These ruins are best remembered for the gigantic blocks that make up the zig zag frontal of this fort like construction. There are many theories as to why Sacsayhuaman was originally built and what it was used for but the most likely is as a temple complex for offerings to appease the gods. It is an amazing place and the early morning light makes the view of Cusco rooftops even more beautiful and helps to define the stonework detail of these great blocks. From here we head on for about an hour over the dividing ridge and into the Sacred or Urubamba Valley. Pisac ruins are our destination and we stop high on the mountainside to begin our exploration of these ruins. We walk down hill along small pathways, through ancient arches, storage buildings and houses. When we are ready we head down to Pisac where we have lunch in this lovely market town and maybe some time to shop in the extensive handicrafts market that the town is famous for. We then drive up into the highlands of the Cordillera Urubamba. The

drive itself is amazing with stunning views as we wind up to the trailhead. This first day is for discovering more about the architecture of the Incas and their thinking behind building in this way. Many of the design features that we have been introduced to today we will see repeated in the ancient citadel of Machu Picchu on our last day. At the trail head we meet our team, we get all the equipment sorted out and head off on foot. Our hike begins here in a fertile valley and follows a small river up through the mountain corridor. After walking roughly 4 ½ hours, we begin to see the glacial peaks of Canch Cancha Casa (4984m.) and Chicón (5530m.). We know we have reached camp when we see the thatched-roof stone houses of Cancha-Cancha village (3900m.).

Meals provided: Lunch, Dinner, Snacks, Tea Time

Approximate walking time: 4 hrs

Distance: 9km / 5.4 miles

Day 2

Cancha Cancha – Quishuarani

Shortly after beginning our trek in the morning, we reach two brilliant glacial lakes, Suirococha and Yuraccocha. Here we can see several bird species, including Andean Ibis and Andean geese. From the lakes, the trail climbs steeply for about 2 ½ hours to the first pass, named Pachacutec (4700m.). Nearing the top, we enjoy a spectacular view of the snow-covered peaks of Pitusiray (5750m.) and Chicón (5530m.). An original Inca stone path will lead us along the ridge down into the opposite corridor. We follow a series of cascading waterfalls to the village of Quishuarani, where we camp for the night. We have dinner here within the local community and there may be the chance for a local game of football if you can muster the energy.

Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Snacks, Tea Time

Approximate walking time: 8 hours

Distance: 13.5km / 8 miles

Day 3

Quishuarani – Lares

After a hearty breakfast, interaction with the community and a visit to the local school, we begin our hike upwards through the high puna to the Huillquicasa pass (4400m.). From this high mountain perch, one can behold the extensive Vilcanota range and the pastoral farmland and lagoons below. The well-marked trail forms a zick zags down to these greener pastures, where llamas, alpacas and sheeps graze alongside flocks of Andean water birds. The rare Peruvian Viscacha, a medium-sized rodent related to the Chinchilla, can be seen bounding in and out of the rocky mountain crags. Continuing down even further, we reach the picturesque village of Cuncani (3700m.). If the sky is clear you can appreciate the mammoth white face of Mount Colque Cruz (5818m.). The trail follows the spouting river down through the valley for approximately 3 hours as the vegetation becomes greener and thicker and large rock formations divert the winding path. Entering a more subtropical climate, small farms and adobe houses signal our arrival to the village of Trapiche and finally the hot medicinal baths of Lares (3100m.).

Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Snacks, Tea Time

Approximately walking time: 5 hours

Distance: 10km / 6 miles

Day 4

Lares - Ollantaytambo

After enjoying breakfast in Lares, we will take our private bus up to the Lares pass at 4, 600m (2 hours). We then walk for 2 ½ hours on an Inca trail to the town of Tortora, were we will have lunch. After lunch we continue on by private bus for a further 2 hours to the town of Ollantaytambo where we have a guided tour of the amazing ruins of Ollantaytambo. With its incredible temple areas and finely crafted water channels and fountains, Ollantaytambo really does deserve this extra time for exploration. The evening allows us time to celebrate our trek as we stay overnight in a comfortable hostel in the lovely town of Ollantaytambo.

In the evening meal will be in your own time so you can take in the atmosphere of this remarkable town.

Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch

Approximate walking time: 2 ½ hours

Day 5

Ollantaytambo/Machu Picchu/Cusco - After a great nights sleep in our beds we have another early start but this time to catch the train to Aguas Calientes, the early train allows us to get to Machu Picchu before the trains from Cusco arrive. The train passes through the Sacred Valley with stunning views of the high mountains, river valley, Inca ruins and local villages. At Aguas Calientes we jump straight on the bus and up to the citadel itself.....nothing can quite prepare you for the first glimpses of Machu Picchu, as you see the first terraces peeking out behind the trees. This is what we have been waiting for, the culmination of our journey. Our guide will show us the most important constructions as well as explain the history and the mythology of this magnificent place. The sacred city is intact apart from the straw roofs which have rotted away, it is a maze of plazas and palaces, long staircases carved out of the solid rock and terraces that go right to the edge of the sheer cliffs. All the knowledge that we have gathered over the past few days comes together as we see how the Inca architects used their knowledge of the rock and environment to sculpt this amazing place high up on the mountainside protected by the river valley. There is some free time to explore the ruins further at your own pace or maybe if you haven't experienced enough steps and trekking, why not climb Huayna Picchu Mountain or visit the Inca Bridge. Or you can just chill out and watch the hummingbirds or vizcachua. Late afternoon we head back down to Aguas Calientes and take the train back to Ollantaytambo and return to Cusco for a well-deserved rest.Meals provided: Breakfast.

Community Trail Inclusions

Guide for Sacred Valley tour

All transport to and from Cusco including trains and transfers in Cusco

Lunch in Pisac

Overnight in Ollantaytambo hostel

Entrance fees including Machu Picchu

High quality double-occupancy tents and camping equipment

Sleeping mattress

Hot water in the morning for washing

Drinking water throughout the trek

Dining tent, kitchen tent, and latrine tent

Oxygen bottle and first aid kit

Professional, English-speaking guide and camp staff

Llamas and mules to carry camping equipment and passenger bags

Emergency mule/ mules in case of illness

All camping meals. Plentiful food (Vegetarian option available) 4B, 4L, 3D

Bus ticket from Machu Picchu to Aguas Calientes

Communities Supported On The Trail

The communities that we visit are remote Andean farming communities with traditions dating back to the Incas. They are primarily Quechua speaking, with some Spanish, and little contact with the general population. Their daily lives consist of potato cultivation, weaving, and the herding of llamas, alpacas, and sheep. Considered by the Peruvian government to be living in extreme poverty, they often face malnutrition, severely cold weather, poor hygienic conditions, and little medical or health assistance. These communities typically have small schools that often need support with construction, furniture, materials and teachers. Villagers live in thatched-roof stone huts and cook with firewood. Because of the disproportionate supply and demand of native trees and brush, there is a great need for an effective reforestation project in the area and thanks to the support from Dragoman, our passengers and Ecoam (who helps us with our reforestation project) the area of Quishuarani, Cuncani and part of the mountain range of Lares we visit has been declared a Private Landscape Reserve.

The fairly recent introduction of tourism to the region has brought some needed assistance and economic development to the communities, but there is still much more to do. Our local trekking operator working within the guidelines of

sustainable tourism has met with the communities and discussed the pros and cons of tourism in the area. Together they have established still un-official guidelines for trekking and tourism through the Cordillera such as: established campsites to avoid contamination of community areas, use of community animals and personnel on treks, training of community members through workshops on camp maintenance, hygiene, client service to enhance their economic viability, maintenance of camp trails, camp sites, and environmental conservation. Many agencies respect these guidelines, but because making things official often brings on unwanted government intervention, they are now a pact between the communities, agencies, and tourists.

Full daily itinerary for the Classic Inca Trail

The ever popular King's Route is the classic Inca Trail that has is trekked by 1000s of tourists each year.

Day 1

We join the community trekkers for a tour of the sacred valley and enjoy lunch at Pisac. We then head to Ollantaytambo to view more Inca ruins and we stay in a nice hotel for the night the night. Meals provided:Lunch, Dinner, Snacks

Day 2

The following morning after breakfast, we catch a bus to the 82 km marker and are joined by a crew of local porters, cook, etc. As we hike from high plateau to dense forest, you will see some remains of ancient villages and temples, the first of which is Llactapata. The starting point of the trek (the 82 km marker) is located at 2,850m above sea level. The trek includes some uphill trekking to the campsite (over 3,000m above sea level). Take advantage during the 4 days of the trek to get to know your porters. You will realize they work the hardest on the team and are gentle people willing to share with you their culture, language and trek experiences. Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Snacks.

Day 3

This is the most challenging of the trek as we ascend a long steep path (Approx 4 hrs) to reach the highest point of our trek, Warmiwañusca, or Dead Woman's Pass, at a height of 4,200 m (13,779 ft), before descending to the Pacaymayo Valley (3650m above sea level. This is 2 hrs downhill). Depending upon on local conditions, you might camp here today, or may need to continue further up and down. We might cross the first and second passes on this day. From the second pass, Runkuracay (3,980m above sea level - 90min uphill) we can enjoy views of the snow-capped Cordillera Vilcabamba before descending to the ruins of Sayacmarca (2 hours downhill). From here it is only a few more minutes to the Chaquicocha campsite (3,620m above sea level). Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Snacks.

Day 4

On day 3 of the trek, we continue over the third pass and soon reach the beautiful ruins of Phuyupatamarca, the 'Town above the Clouds' (3,850m above sea level/90min uphill). Start descending real Inca Steps (2 hrs) to reach our final night's camp by the Wiñay Wayna, or 'Forever Young' ruins (2,750m above sea level), with panoramic views of the valley below. Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Snacks.

Day 5

Machu Picchu – Cusco. Today is only a short final hike (90 min) to Machu Picchu and we climb the steps to the Sun Gate to watch the ruins emerge from the mist below. As with the community trek our guide will show us the most important constructions as well as explain the history and the mythology of this magnificent place. There is some free time to explore the ruins further at your own pace or maybe if you haven't experienced enough steps and trekking, why not climb Huayna Picchu Mountain or visit the Inca Bridge. Or you can just chill out and watch the hummingbirds or vizcachua. Late afternoon we head back down to Aguas Calientes and take the train back to Ollantaytambo and return to Cusco for a well-deserved rest. Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks.

Trail fitness for either trek

Trekking should not be undertaken lightly. You need to be in good health with good physical fitness to enjoy both these trek. It is not about speed, trekking slowly is far better at altitude but you do need to have the stamina to keep going. The Community Inca Trail does go slightly higher and reaches 4,800m in altitude when we cross one of the passes. The trail can be steep and rocky but has few steps. The highest pass on the Classic Inca Trail is Dead Women's Pass at 4200m. If you are in any doubt about your suitability to trek please consult your local doctor.

Trekking - what to bring

On the community trek your personal gear will be carried by pack animals in duffle packs which will be provided.

On the classic trek your personal gear will be carried by porters in duffle packs which will be provided.

Daypack for personal gear: sleeping bag, 1 set of walking clothes, 1 warm set for night (include hat/gloves), raincoat/ waterproofs, swimming gear, sunhat, comfortable hiking boots, sandals, 4 pairs hiking socks, toiletries, torch with spare batteries, puritabs, 2 litre water bottle, sun cream, mosquito repellent, sunglasses, lip balm, camera, $100 in local currency (for shopping, souvenirs, snacks, drinks etc), $30 tip money for trekking staff per trekker.

On both the community and the classic treks you will be provided with rollmats

We recommend a tip of US$10 for your guide and perhaps US$20 for all the rest of the staff. On the Community Inca Trail, you may wish to bring financial or actual donations for the schools/ communities. Photos of your home area and family are great things to share with the children and families we meet in the communities.

Responsible Trekking

Frostbite, altitude sickness and even death can be the cost for the guides and trekking staff. Tourism Concern has a campaign aimed to put a stop to the abuse of trekking staff's human rights. Equally pack animals suffer abuse and mistreatment. Mountain trekking is exhilarating and challenging, but how could many of us do it without the assistance of trekking staff. Once they have started a trek, trekkers are often horrified by the reality of the working conditions for the staff. The prices that tour operators charge for trekking does vary enormously, mainly due to the rates of pay and conditions that the trekking crew receive. It is easy to book a trip based purely on price, but in the case of trips involving Inca trails, this will probably be because the tour operator is using local suppliers without regard to the treatment of porters and guides. In keeping with our Responsible Tourism Policies, Dragoman has a strict Suppliers Policy, which also covers our trekking partners. We follow Tourism Concern's policies on trekking companies and the way that guides, porters or animals are looked after. We therefore use a local Cusco based trekking company called Andina Travel to run all our Inca trails trekking trips. They have an excellent trekking record and good, knowledgeable guides. They have been at the cutting edge of developing codes of responsible tourism practice and involving the local Quechuan communities in the development of their various treks. They supply us with evidence of their code of practice concerning their guides, staff and pack animals. Please bear this in mind when deciding which travel company you will travel with. Remember many of the trekking organisations, as well as many overseas tour operators who use these suppliers, are happy to promote low cost trips, even if it is at the expense of the welfare of the guides and porters that they use.

Specific notes

Because of its nature, this itinerary may vary: occasionally road conditions are too adverse during the rainy season (Jan & Feb) to make the crossing from Uyuni to Argentina and we may have to change the route. During the winter months in Argentina and Bolivia we will spend a higher proportion of nights in hotels and less time camping. Kitty may be higher than expected and you should allow extra funds for this and personal funds for more meals out. There may well be snow and you should be aware that it can get very cold at night. Please ensure that you bring a decent sleeping bag and adequate clothes, including thermals.

Departures leading in or out of Rio Carnival

If the truck you are on has come in or out of Rio Carnival then there is likely to be more than just one truck on your specific departure date due to the popularity of trips at this time of year. Because of this the trucks are likely to operate on slightly differing itineraries however still visiting all the highlights listed. The presence of extra trucks makes for a great atmosphere leading to or from the greatest party on earth!

Physical Preparation

Physical preparation for South America Itineraries

South America is diverse continent from high altitude, to the steamy Amazon, to baking deserts. You should therefore be prepared for the full gambit of climates. There will be time for hikking and other activities such as horse riding and you will need to be reasonably fit. Overland travel can be demanding - long, rough travel days, dusty conditions can be challenging to some. You will need to be fit enough to help every day with the camp chores (cooking, washing up, general camp set up) as well as putting up and taking down your own tent. There are some long driving days and some early morning starts. The step up into the overland vehicle, while not overly high can become tiring and you need to judge yourself to be physically fit enough to haul yourself up and down the step at least 8-10 times a day. By and large the South America trips have a good range of hotel accommodation mixed up with camping so that life is not too rough.

Altitude

Please note that this trip spends time above 2800 metres/9200 feet where it is possible for travellers to experience some adverse effects on your health due to the altitude, potentially including Acute

Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).

Because of this it is very important that you make yourself aware of the cause and effects of travelling at altitude and monitor your health during this trip.

For further information please click here to download our AMS information sheet or check out the following website www.high-altitude-medicine.com

Your leader will also hand you a copy of the AMS information sheet during your trip as well as holding a short meeting prior to travelling to altitudes above 2800m/9200ft for the first time.

If you are starting your trip in a destination above 2800m/9200ft we strongly advise reading this information prior to arrival.

Visa Information

Most countries we visit on our travels will require visas. Some are best obtained before you leave home and others can be obtained en-route. Whilst the ultimate responsibility for obtaining visas is yours, we will endeavour to assist you wherever possible.

The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. The information provided is given in good faith and we do try to keep the visa information as up to date as possible. Please be aware though that rules do change, often without prior warning, which is why it is important that you check for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance you can choose to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy /consulate. However our recommendation is that you use a visa agent to assist you with your applications. While this does increase the cost it will make the process much easier for you. Dragoman have teamed up with 'The Visa Machine' to create a safe, secure, hassle-free way of obtaining visas and visa advice. Our unique link within their website is designed to make the visa process as straightforward as possible. Simply go to https://dragoman.thevisamachine.com and click on your region of travel followed by your trip route and 'The Visa Machine' will advise you about not only the required visas but also the dates by which you should apply. 'The Visa Machine' can then assist you in the actual visa application thus taking all the worry and hassle out of the process. This should apply for ALL nationalities and countries of residence.

As you will need to submit your passport together with your applications, we recommend that you avoid making any travel plans in the weeks leading up to your departure. However if you do need to travel in this period please let us know as soon as possible so that we can help you work out the options for your visa application process.

Bolivia

Nationals of most countries including Australia, the EU, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK do not need a visa for tourist visits of limited duration to Bolivia. South Africans however DO require a visa which is advisable to obtain before departure.

USA citizens also DO require a visa to enter Bolivia. Please note: to support your visa application you will need a copy of the Dragoman voucher that you receive after purchasing your trip, as well as a copy of the itinerary, which you can obtain from the Trip Notes for your specific trip on our website.

Peru

Nationals of most countries including Australia, the EU, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK do not need a visa for tourist visits of limited duration to Peru

Flying to Central or South America via the USA

If your flight to central or South America is via the USA then you MUST obtain an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) before travel.

An ESTA can be obtained online via the following link and paying the appropriatefee - https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/

Personal Spending

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on trips in South America, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US$15 and a maximum of US$30 per day. This amount is usually lower in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru but slightly higher elsewhere.
This will covers expenses such as your drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permits.

What else you need to know

Currencies & Cash

It is not really worth trying to buy local currencies before you travel. Bear in mind that many countries have strict regulations about the amount of their own local currency you are allowed to import - if you are found with amounts in excess of the allowed amounts, it may well be confiscated!

For obvious security reasons we hesitate to recommend you bring lots of cash with you, a sensible mix of cash and ATM cards is best. Most of our past passengers have said they wished they had been told to bring more cash. Apart from the convenience of being able to change money in many more places, you will sometimes get a much better exchange rate for cash.

More and more people are choosing to travel with cash passports such as TravelEx cards (you can visit www.cashpassport.com for further information on these). This is a very secure way of carrying your money whilst travelling. You treat them exactly like an ATM card and draw out local currency from an ATM within each country.

Travellers cheques have become increasingly difficult to change in South America with passengers and our leaders experiencing huge frustration and numerous hours spent trying to find a bank which will change travellers cheques. For this reason we no longer accept them on our trips.

You should take a mixture of denomination notes. However due to a recent counterfeit scam central banks in several South American countries (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile) have temporarily banned the circulation of $100 notes bearing a series 2001 production date and a serial number starting with the letters CB or CF and ending in B2. The serial number is printed in green on the emblem. Banks and moneychangers in most countries will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are dated from 2003 or later. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Cash machines are readily available in most areas but are not always reliable therefore we recommend that you do not rely on them as your only source of cash. Credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard and American Express are the most commonly accepted, but be prepared for very high commission charges. Please do not rely on cards for daily use, as they are not always accepted outside of larger towns and cities. If you are taking traveller's cheques, we recommend that you should only take those issued by American Express. Please note that Thomas Cook traveller's cheques may be used in some places, but are becoming more difficult to change. Brazil can be difficult for changing forex, it's handy to have a cash card as backup. Please bring a mixture of small and large denominations as in more remote areas it can be hard to change amounts over $50. Kitty contributions should be at least half in cash and be in the same denominations and currencies as suggested above. Any proportion of kitty contributions paid in travellers cheques should be increased to cover the commission charge incurred in exchanging them.

Pre and post trip accommodation and connecting flights

At Dragoman we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of your joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay. Dragoman can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on.

While Dragoman is happy to assist with booking your pre and post trip accommodation, it is important that you understand you may be able to book your own room at a cheaper rate directly through the hotel or on the internet. Our additional accommodation prices are based on the hotel's rate plus an administration fee. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival, however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer as not all hotels offer this service.

Accommodation on tour

Dragoman overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying in hotels and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip, in accommodation ranging from twin to multi-share. The type and variety of accommodation is determined by conditions on each of our routes. The campsites will range from rather basic to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars. In some cases it may also be possible to upgrade locally to bungalows, lodges

or even tree-houses. One of the highlights of overlanding is that in more remote areas we will wild camp. This allows us to get far away from the tourist crowds to some beautiful, secluded spots. We will also arrange as many village or local homestays as possible, allowing us to get close to indigenous populations and ensures our money stays within local communities.

Group size?

The maximum group size we take on our overland journeys ranges from 19 to 22 depending on the geographical location, however the average number of passengers is more likely to be around 16.

Please note that there is an overlap of 2 trips in Zanzibar. This means a group starting a trip in Nairobi for example will visit Zanzibar at the same time as groups starting their trips in Dar es Salaam. In practical terms this means there could be up to 44 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

Who travels with Dragoman?

Our passengers come from around the world and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that overlanding should be open to as many people as possible and so although we have a minimum age limit of 18, as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the beauties of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

Our Community

At any time before or after you book you can join our community - Dragoland. This is a great place to ask questions before you travel and catch up with your fellow travellers once your trip has finished. You can share photos, videos and stories You can also download a selection of free travel apps. See the home page to sign in, it's free and easy.

We also have a Facebook page where travellers regularly swap info with each other - you can join here

Our crew and guides

Our crew are passionate about travel and always up for adventure. It takes someone special to become a Dragoman leader. Our crew undergo the most intensive training program of all overland companies, spending 10 weeks learning the ropes at our base in Suffolk, UK and then up to six months on the road as a trainee. On all Dragoman overlanding trips two western crew who are responsible for the group and the overall organisation will accompany you. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad knowledge of the places visited and to offer suggestions of things to do and see. In East and Southern Africa we will also have an African camp master/cook who is in charge of running the camp and organising all of the meals. Their knowledge of the local produce makes shopping at the markets great fun and you will learn how to prepare and cook some unusual dishes. In the rest of Africa, South America and the majority of Central Asia and China we use local guides who may stay with us for just a few hours or will actually travel with us for some or all of the journey. In these cases they become a third crew member and are able to offer their local knowledge as well as a real insight into the lives of the local people.

(If travelling in East & Southern Africa, also please see the note about our code-share crew)

Your tour leader has a duty of care to all of their passengers and therefore they have the authority to ask passengers to leave the trip if they require medical assistance, are behaving in an anti-social manner or refuse to comply with local laws and customs. In all matters relating to the trip, the leader's decision will be final and we appreciate your respect of this.

Medical conditions

We ask all of our passengers to declare any pre-existing medical conditions and in some cases you will be asked to complete one of our medical questionnaires. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude we also require all passengers to complete an altitude questionnaire. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and in some cases passengers should be prepared for some long driving days and possible limited facilities. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns.

Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to region and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in. It is essential that you check with either your doctor or a travel clinic in good time before you travel.

In the UK we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive, up to date vaccination and health information. Dragoman customers will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

A good source of up to date information is the World Health Organisation - http://www.who.int/en/

Malaria

Get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your vaccination centre for the most up-to-date requirements

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wear long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, tent doors or, if sleeping out, use a mosquito net. Wear repellent applied directly to the skin or soaked into clothing.

Treating clothes and mosquito nets with a Permetherin solution provides significant protection. It should be available at most travel stores. Mosquito coils are useful on still nights, in hotel rooms but cannot be used inside the tents.

Meals and group participation

On an overland journey you are more than just a passenger, you're part of the crew, pitching in to set up camp, shop for food, cook and generally help out. We operate a rota system, dividing the group into smaller units of 5 or 6 people, so that these duties are shared equally amongst the group. These jobs will include things like collecting water and firewood, loading the back locker, supervising the kitty and food stores etc. While camping on overland journeys, all meals will be included in the kitty and this means that you will be working as a group to prepare meals and cook for your group. (On trips south of Nairobi we have a cook on board the truck, however you will still be required to help prepare meals). If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your crew at your welcome meeting. A typical camp breakfast might be toast with spreads, cereal and something hot such as eggs or pancakes as well as tea and coffee. Lunch is almost always a sandwich heaped high with healthy salad and assorted fillings, with fruit to follow. Dinner might be a BBQ, risotto, pasta dish and there is always the chance to try some local cooking. Generally our passengers find the more they put into a trip, the more they benefit from it.

Responsible tourism & code of conduct

Dragoman is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We are dedicated to making sure that we adopt a responsible attitude to the areas through which we travel and believe that our trips should benefit the local people and their environment. Dragoman recognises that we are guests of local communities and strive to make these communities our partners, so that they benefit directly from our visit.

You can find full details of Dragoman's responsible tourism policy linked from the home page. All passengers are required to obey all laws of the countries through which we pass. This particularly applies to the smuggling of contraband and possession of narcotic drugs, firearms, antiquities and ivory. Any passenger found contravening such laws or customs may be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Overland travel and security

One of the real advantages of overland travel is that the vehicle provides a very real level of security when travelling. There is no doubt that a properly equipped overland vehicle, with safes, fully lockable doors and windows is an obvious advantage when travelling in much of the world. We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt whilst travelling for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items (although most of these can be locked in the safe whilst you are on the trip) and advise passengers to leave any valuable jewellery, watches etc at home. Generally speaking, you will not be travelling on local public transport and will have the added security of travelling in a group with experienced crew on hand to offer advice.

Please note: Any personal effects that are left on the truck, even if they are stored in the safe, are left at your own risk and Dragoman cannot be held responsible for any damage or theft that may occur.

The safety of our passengers, leaders and operators is a major priority of Dragoman. With this in mind we monitor world events very closely. By the very nature of the adventure travel that we take, there are risks and hazards that are inherent in our itineraries. Dragoman makes operational decisions based on informed advice from a number of sources:

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice

Reports from other travel companies and local suppliers

Leaders reports from off the road

Local contacts we have built up over 29 years of experience

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. You should always make yourself aware of the travel advice before you book and again before you travel. Below are links to some of the websites

Britain. http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country

Australia. http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/

New Zealand. http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/

United States. http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html

Canada. http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

Dragoman has comprehensive passenger liability protection and tour operator insurance. These policies have total indemnities of £3,000,000 and £10,000,000 respectively. This is in addition to local vehicle insurance and your personal travel insurance.

Emergency contact

We have a dedicated 24 hour telephone number which should only be used once you have left the UK and in the event of a real emergency. Should you need to call the number, we will do what we can to help but please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours.

If your flight is delayed or cancelled, please let us know and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in theses trip notes. If you cannot get through leave a message and a contact number as these will be regularly checked and the crew informed if necessary.

Emergency Number: +44 (0) 7985106564.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip.

Whatever policy you choose, you must ensure that it is designed for adventure/overland travel. As such it must cover you for adventure activities such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding and that the 24 Hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries – for example they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes. Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not able to cope with adventure travel to remote areas. We recommend that any policy has the following minimum levels of cover: Medical (incl. repatriation) £5,000,000 Personal Liability £5,000,000 Cancellation and Curtailment £5,000 Loss of Baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice.

Issues on the trip

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on customer_relations@dragoman.co.uk. You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or "visitor's" passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for you trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

Luggage & Kit List

Although you will not have to carry your main bag long distances you will need to help load and unload them onto the truck. For this reason we recommend that you use a backpack or soft bag rather than a heavy suitcase. During your trip

your main luggage will be kept in the back locker so you will also need a small daypack. This can be used to carry your camera, water bottle and other personal effects for daily use.

The size of baggage that can be brought on this tour is limited by the locker space on the truck. Different trucks have different-sized lockers however to be safe we recommend that your bag be no larger than 66cm deep, 30cm wide, and 30cm high. The weight limit for luggage on all trucks is maximum 20kg. Backpacks should not have an external frame unless it can be easily removed and stored separately to avoid damaging other people's luggage.

Your clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in. On overland trips Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats (except on routes between Nairobi and Cape Town where ground mats are provided).

The clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in, which will vary depending on which part of the world you're heading to. On overland trips Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats*, so you'll need to bring those with you. Think about the climate and altitude of the areas you'll be travelling to, there's nothing worse than being cold at night so it's worth investing in a decent sleeping bag if it's likely to get cold. And remember even when it's warm during the day, it can often get cold at night, particularly in desert regions.

**Ground mats are provided on our non "in-depth" overland trips that run in South and East Africa, between Nairobi and Cape Town.*

For a general idea of what you need this list provides a guide:

- Sleeping bag - Check the expected climate en route. Nights in desert and mountain regions can be very cold in winter months
- Mattress or compressed foam
- A day pack is useful for short hikes in the countryside, wandering around cities, etc and also for keeping inside the vehicle for items used during the day
- 2 sets of comfortable travelling clothes (light, easily washable cotton clothes are best)
- 1 set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out. Women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf for visiting places of worship
- 2 pairs of shorts
- Sun hat or warm hat if trekking
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- Warm sweater/fleeces
- 1 waterproof jacket with hood
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes/boots (or ankle height canvas jungle boots)
- 1 pair of sandals or flip-flops
- Underwear and socks (thermals are also a good idea if you are travelling to altitude or to the desert as it can get very cold at night)
- Swimwear
- 2 small towels
- Washing kit, including a small mirror
- Clothes washing detergent, small scrubbing brush & washing line (just a length of cord)
- Head torch/flashlight with spare batteries & bulbs (only the 3 standard sizes of round 1.5v batteries are widely available en route)
- Passport photos (average of 2 per country for which visas will be applied for en route)
- Good water bottle at least 1 litre
- A pouch or money belt worn inside your clothing, or unobtrusive pocket sewn into the inside of a pair of loose fitting trousers, is a must.
- Alarm clock
- Pocket calculator (useful when exchanging money)
- Writing materials & notebook/diary
- Multi purpose knife
- Cotton sheet sleeping bag (or sheet folded and sewn up on 2 sides). It will help keep your sleeping bag clean, and can be used on its own on warm nights.
- Mosquito net - The tents supplied by us have mosquito netting and you will only need a net if you think you will sleep out under the stars a lot of the time.
- "Wet Ones" (moistened tissues) and hand gel
- Toilet paper – this can be purchased almost everywhere en-route but one roll is worth packing
- Assorted sized plastic bags - protects clothing and equipment from dust and damp

For a comprehensive kit lists take a look at the Dragoman kit list that Nomad Travel have created. Dragoman customers will receive a 10% discount on all equipment purchased either online or in store. Click to see the kit lists www.nomadtravel.co.uk/kitlist/overlanders-kit-list

Water

The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in bottles, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 liters of water and 200ml of oil. A large proportion end up in limited landfill or discarded in waterways and natural environments.

Please avoid the purchase of bottled water by using the chemically sterilized water stored in the purpose built storage tank or in water jerry cans in your Overland vehicle. You are free to refill your bottle as many times a day as you like. You are helping the environment and your hip pocket!

Personal medical kit

All of our trucks have a fully stocked medical kit onboard for use in emergency situations only. Therefore in addition to this we recommend that you purchase your own personal medical kit. In the UK we have teamed up with Nomad Travel Stores and Clinics to produce the Dragoman Travel Medical Kit. It has been designed in conjunction with the truck kits and contains everything you would need for any minor accidents. For more details please visit their website:

nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit

Electrical equipment

Your vehicle will be equipped with a 12 volt socket so to charge your iPod, MP3 player, camera, laptop and mobile phone you will need a DC 12 volt adapter - the type that can be used from a cigarette lighter in your car. Please be aware that only one piece of equipment can be charged at a time and it will not be allowed if there is a risk of running the vehicle's batteries low. Batteries may also be recharged from hotel room wall sockets and the majority of the campsites we stay at have electricity points so please bring along your normal charging adapters as well. You will need to ensure that you have the correct country adaptor for your specific charger.

The kitty

The Kitty is a group fund paid separately from the trip price at the start of your trip which covers all things that the whole group does, such as:

- Hotel accommodation and campsite fees
- Meals whilst camping (not in hotels)
- Activities listed as included (e.g. National Park entrances, excursions and local guides).

It is an amount that each passenger puts into a central fund and is monitored by the Dragoman crew. It's payable in full at the start of your trip, and in instalments at the start of each individual trip on combination trips

The kitty system is very unique to over landing as it allows us to have flexibility on the road. You can see exactly how your money is being spent and ensure that you are getting the best value by buying locally.

The kitty advertised in the brochure is an estimate at the time of printing. Local inflation and costs vary throughout the year and so we review kitties on a monthly basis. Once you book your trip it is very important that you check our website on a regular basis and just before departure for any changes to the kitty amount.

Your kitty can be paid in a mixture of US Dollar cash and local currency and most of our travellers choose to bring a cash passport with them for withdrawing local currency (you can visit www.cashpassport.com for further information on these). This is a very secure way of carrying your money whilst travelling. You treat them exactly like an ATM card and draw out local currency from an ATM to give to your leader within each country.

Travellers cheques have become increasingly difficult to change around the world with passengers and our leaders experiencing huge frustration and numerous hours spent trying to find a bank which will change travellers cheques. For this reason we no longer accept them on our trips.

Continuing your trip

Having an amazing trip and met a great group of people? Having too much fun to go home yet? If on your trip you decide you would like to continue, then why not speak to your trip leader who can advise you of the cost and availability of continuing your journey.

Contingency emergency fund

Sometimes, civil or political unrest, or reasons beyond Dragoman's control (e.g. a natural disaster), can mean that an itinerary is disrupted and we have to make a contingency plan. This may involve hiring alternate transport or even the whole group flying over an area. Although Dragoman will help organise travel arrangements, in circumstances outside Dragoman's control you should be prepared to contribute towards the costs and therefore we ask you to bring along a 'Contingency Fund' of USD400. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you take along an internationally recognised credit or charge card with a decent limit in case of

emergencies, such as medical treatment en route, or even the need to be repatriated; though these occurrences are rare. Remember that travel insurance policies usually only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.

Tipping

Tipping is entirely voluntary. The Dragoman crew may be travelling with you for many weeks and usually they become good friends with most members of the group. It is sometimes easy to forget that they do work hard to ensure that you do have a great trip. If you feel you would like to tip them, they certainly would appreciate it. On a number of our trips, we also use a local guide as well as our own Dragoman crew. These guides live and travel with you through their home country and it is usual to tip them when they leave. We recommend USD10 to USD15 per person.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey, once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, information and kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these Trip Notes

These trip notes were printed on 22/05/2013