



AntiguaBuenos Aires (CGB)

Antigua to Buenos Aires 1 days, departing 23 May 2013

Comfort Zone: Basic Luxury

Physical Challenge: Easy Hard

Trip Style: Overlanding

Route: Antigua to Buenos Aires

Length: 1 days

Transport: Dragoman overland vehicle, boats, local bus, plane

Accommodation: A mix of small hotels, hostels, homestays, campsites and wildcamps.



Ratings for this trip

Comfort Zone: Basic / Adventurous

Basic comfort levels. Expect to rough it every now and again. On OVERLAND TRIPS be prepared to have some nights wild camping, campsites with basic facilities as well as some basic hotels, often on a multi-share basis. Some of the roads we travel along may be poor. On our ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS you will stay in simple, budget (1-2 star) accommodation with some shared facilities. Some accommodation may be on a multi-share basis and transport will be mainly local.

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

Argentina

Argentina is a vast country which has a staggering diversity of climates and landscapes. With vibrant cities, the pampas, jungles and wind swept Patagonia it is a country with a very special character all of its own. Its initial appearance is fairly western but this disguises a long history of its own cultural heritage.

Buenos Aires is the capital of Argentina, lying at the mouth of the River Plate, it is a real vibrant city. Full of life, from great local restaurants to local street markets and dances, showing the amazing local tango dance, Buenos Aires is the heart and soul of Argentina. Also home to some exquisite wine bars and an amazing nightlife, Buenos Aires is a must see city if you visit Argentina.



On the pampas the Gaucho people of Argentina spend their days working, riding their horses and protecting their cattle. This has resulted in worldwide export for beef, sunflower oil and wheat, making the Argentina Pampas famous for agriculture.

Deep in the south of the country is Patagonia. This beautiful area is known for its breathtaking landscapes, magnificent lakes and beautiful glacial scenery. It is a great place for outdoor activities, such as, trekking, horse riding, kayaking and mountain biking.

Patagonia is also full of culture, with the Welsh language kept alive for generations, and although it is starting to die out, there are many Welsh communities in Patagonia, especially around the Chebut river.

Heading further south is Tierra del Fuego. Lying across from the Magellan Straights, "The Land of Fire" is mainly in Chile, but 30% of it, including Ushuaia, the most southerly city in the world, belongs to Argentina.

Argentina is also the home to some beautiful wildlife. The Valdez Peninsular, in the Atlantic ocean, is a protected area which is the habitat for whales, penguins and seals. At certain times of the year, there is a chance to see the killer whale. This is also the home for land animals such as the Patagonian fox, guanacos and hairy armadillos.

To the north of Argentina is the Esteros del Ibera reserve in an area of swampland. Near to the borders of Paraguay and Brazil, this is one of South America's most important wilderness areas and is also the place to spot the rare marsh deer, maned wolf, howler monkeys, capybara and over 350 different species of birds.

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 benefit 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 Chicha is not an opportunity to pass upon. Although normally non alcoholic, it can be served as a brewed beer, and is one of Bolivia's fine gastronomies. A taste of Bolivia could be the start of a wonderful adventure.

Chile

With some of the most diverse landscapes in the world, Chile has the beauty of it all. From the driest deserts in the world, to the breathtaking sites of huge glaciers, this country is made for the outdoor enthusiast. Chile is a country full of volcanoes, lakes, rivers and beaches, and there is always an exciting adventure waiting to be found. If you venture off the beaten track, be prepared to make friends for life out of the welcoming locals.

A visit to Chile has to include a trip to the amazing capital of Santiago. This city stands at an amazing 1700 feet above sea level, and it is another place full of amazing landscapes and a gorgeous Mediterranean climate.



With so many locations to visit, the culture of Chile can be exposed through the sound of the music. Ranging from traditional folk music, to popular and classic sounds, the tradition of Chile is seeped into every area of the country.

Seafood is Chile's main cuisine and with so many dishes to try, it is an opportunity not to be passed upon. With 2700 miles of astounding coastline, Chile is the perfect location for the variety of dishes available.

So make friends with strangers, feel the vibe of Chilean music, and let Chile get into your pores.

Colombia

For most people Colombia is an unknown, the forgotten part of South America. This makes it a fantastic place to explore. Colombia's geography is one of the most diverse in South America; it really is a kaleidoscope of colour, life and culture. It has an undeserved reputation due to some internal instability but the warmth of its people mean that it is worth the challenge to see such a fascinating country. Colombia is on the beautiful Caribbean coast and the home to some of the best coffee in the world.

The culture of fiesta is a central to the national psyche with the country, playing host to some of the most fabulous carnivals in the world. The Carnival of the Barranquilla lasts four days, celebrating the tradition of Colombian dance and music.

With many festivals and parties, the opportunity to relax might sound out the question, but along with the lively ongoing parties, cooking is an important icon of Colombia. Fritanga is a set of dishes enjoyed throughout the country. A barberque style meat full of flavours and aromas that will leave your mouth watering is accompanied by small potatoes and tortilla style bread. If meat isn't your preference, then the plantain of many vegetables and pulses is a beautiful choice of a meal.

Colombia's glorious sands and upbeat lifestyle is there to be cherished, and there is no doubt it will leave a special mark on your travels.

Costa Rica

Welcome to the easiest going place on earth. Welcome to beauty and paradise. Welcome to Costa Rica - so reads the national tourist board literature. Although hyperbolic it's hard to disagree.

Costa Rica has some of the most scenic views in Central America. The Poás Volcano National Park is a chance to get to the heart of a crater and see the astonishing views of the green lake. Paths leading up to these can lead to the amazing wildlife that lives in the park. Mountain squirrels, clay coloured robins and hummingbirds can be seen and heard all around, and it adds to the reasons why it is one of the most visited places in Costa Rica.

In Costa Rica you can try something new every day, and Costa Rican food is just beautiful. Let your mouth water from the juices of the fresh fruit and vegetables in the country. Have breakfast the traditional way - fried plantains, egg and orange juice is the perfect way to experience yet another flavour of Costa Rica.

Ecuador

Ecuador is a small country with a diverse landscape including highlands, volcanoes, numerous national parks, stunning Pacific beaches, and the enthralling Galapagos Islands.

The Amazon rainforest has the greatest bio diversity on the planet. And it's possible to take trips deep into the rainforest to see jaguars, monkeys, iguanas and uncountable numbers of insects. Off the coast is the Galapagos Islands, arguably one of the world's most prestigious wildlife destinations.

If heart racing activities is more your thing then Ecuador has plenty to offer. Surf the waves, trek through the foothills or step out of the ordinary and try some mountaineering.

Aside from the outdoors and wildlife there are lots of great colonial towns or cities. And Quito has a more relaxed atmosphere than most Latin American capitals. Lying in a hollow at the base of Volcano Pichincha, the old city is a



maze of steep cobbled streets with finely carved overhanging balconies. Its mixture of colonial and new architecture together with its European and Indian cultures make this a fascinating city.

As you explore, the discovery of food will be found and the choice of a traditional meal is hard to turn down. Ecuadorian cuisine is again diverse, and different regions boast different meals. Meat, potatoes and rice are popular in the mountain regions, where as the coastal areas boast fantastic meals containing marinades of fish onions and delectable seasonings.

There are many types of music in Ecuador and the most popular is the rhythm filled, dancing type which can get you up on your feet and joining in with the sounds of panpipes, bamboo flutes, drums and charangos.

With so much to offer and explore - Ecuador is the place to be if you want to try something new every day.

El Salvador

El Salvador is one of the most fascinating and exciting countries in Central America.

El Salvador translates as "the saviour" in Spanish, and there is much culture similar to Spain. It has many notable dishes, one being a delectable chicken and shrimp paella. Many dishes can be found in restaurants around the country, and although influenced by Spanish cuisine, it has its own distinct taste. Like the food, the music is also distinct. There are many types of music in El Salvador including folk, popular and alternative tunes. Influenced by South American music of Mexico, Colombia and Cuba, this country has managed to develop the sounds to make it their own. The capital, San Salvador is home to some fantastic gastronomy festivals, and is the place to discover typical El Salvadorian cuisine, music and art. The largest city in El Salvador is a generally Spanish speaking city, and this runs throughout the country.



With some of the most beautiful areas in the whole of Central America, El Salvador is one of the most captivating places to visit.

Guatemala

With mountains and volcanoes setting the landscape, Guatemala is a perfect place to get out and explore.

The capital is Guatemala City, and it is a city bursting with culture. From the amazing art galleries and museums, to sporting venues and shopping centres, Guatemala City is full of life.

Quetzaltenango is the city with everything. Climb a volcano, hike through the countryside and listen to some live music by local bands. Known as Xela by the locals, it is the place in Guatemala to learn Spanish, help on extraordinary volunteer programmes and see amazing picturesque views.

In Guatemala, there is a tradition to eat certain foods on certain days. "Paches" is a potato based dish and is usually eaten on a Thursday. These traditions continue into special occasions such as Christmas. Like food, music is an important tradition in Guatemala and the national instrument is called the marimba. This type of xylophone is heard all over the country. It is not the only type of music in the country and the traditional music could be Marimba music, Garifuna and even rock music.

For a country with a difference, and many traditions, Guatemala is the place to visit.

Honduras

Honduras has an amazing coastline spanning hundreds of miles along the Pacific coast

With some of the whitest beaches in Central America, escaping and exploring is a must. The Bay Islands is the place to be for snorkling and scuba diving. The Mesoamerican Barrier Reef is the second longest in the world, and submerged below the clear waters lie unspoilt coral and an array of colourful underwater life. With bright fish, manta rays, sea turtles and even white sharks split into 3 isles, it makes the Bay Islands the perfect place to explore.

Away from the coastline are the fantastic mountains that soar above the country. There is some amazing scenery in Honduras and it is the place where so many resources are found. Gold, silver, lead and zinc are only a number of these.

Another treasure to be found is the Honduran music scene. Garifuna and Reggae are two of the most popular sounds of country. Music is important to Honduras and there is an institution in the city of Comayagua. It's a central point in Honduran meals, especially the national dish of Plato Típico. This meal is a centre of beef surrounded by drinks and

music. These two Honduras' icons are brought together, and made a magnificent part of Honduran culture. The food is influenced by Spanish and African cuisine. Typical Honduran food has infused these two flavours together to create its own specific taste.

The capital city of Honduras is Tegucigalpa, and it is also the largest city in the country. There are so many places of interest including museums and national parks. The river Choluteca runs through the capital city which runs over 200 miles into the Pacific Ocean. The city is surrounded by mountains and the heart of Honduras is ready to explore.

Nicaragua

The rugged beauty of Nicaragua makes it one of the most interesting places in Central America to visit. The landscape is lined with many volcanoes, of which you can climb and explore.

The capital, Managua is flowing with adventure. The tranquil surrounding of trees and many untouched trails means exploration is a must. Discover the magic of poetry flowing through the city and enjoy one of the most relaxing capitals in Central America.

The contrasting city of Leon however, is full of culture. Churches, cathedrals and many art galleries are scattered around the city. Exploring sites and learning about the culture can be hard work, but with the wide variety of food and drink available, are a chance to relax. There are many street barbeques about, and with grilled meats and lovely pastry dishes. Nicaragua is a country that grows tropical fruits all year round. Juicy fruits such as mangoes, bananas, watermelons, plums, dragon fruits, star fruits and passion fruits are just some of the many wonderful fruits that can be found across the country. Like the fruit, the wildlife too is colourful. It is the place to find the three toed sloth. This wonderful animal can be seen swinging through the tree life, so keep your eyes peeled and there is a high chance you can see one. Other animals include anteaters, armadillos, sea turtles and spider monkeys.

A country brimming with culture is also home to some beautiful music. The Marimba is a xylophone styled instrument and infused with guitars and drums, the sound of Nicaragua can be heard. On the east side of the country, the music is heavily influenced from an Indian and Spanish culture, while on the west, the music is influenced by Africans.

Nicaragua is the forgotten treasure of Central America and is a perfect place to explore.

Panama

Panama is the southernmost country of Central America and links Central America with South America having a land border with Colombia. Despite this travel between the two continents is difficult due to the Darien Gap and the security situation within it. That said Panama is a safe country to travel around with a stable economy and because of its key geographic location, it is an important country in the area with a well developed service sector heavily weighted towards banking, commerce and tourism.

Democracy is now strongly emerging in the country as Panama puts behind it the political turmoil of the Noriega regime which saw American troops invading the country in the late 1980's and early 1990's in support of the Panamanian people who were being repressed.



The Panama Canal is obviously intrinsically important to the economy and has been since it was built between 1904 and 1914 and the tolls from the canal now form a considerable part of the country's gross domestic product.

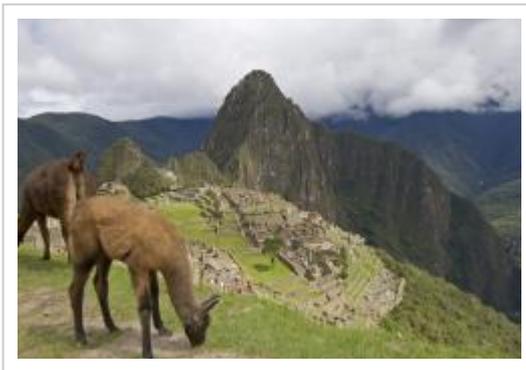
Panama does not produce any banknotes of their currency, the Balboa, but use the American dollar. One dollar has the same value as one balboa, though it is difficult to find out what exactly a balboa is as the last and only time the currency was in use was back in 1941 and only for 7 days!

Peru

Peru is home to some of South America's most glorious landmarks, and the opportunity to partake in an activity seems endless.

The capital is [Lima](#) and it is known as 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 pathways 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 unspoiled 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 makes Peru one of the most enjoyable countries in the world to visit.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Antigua

Thu 23 May 2013

Today is free for you to explore Antigua and there will be a group welcome meeting at 6pm. During the day the more adventurous of you may wish to try and climb up Pacaya, an active volcano. We stay the night in a lovely colonial hotel.

Hotel for the night: Posada La Merced
Posada La Merced
7a. Avenida Norte 43
Antigua
Guatemala
Tel: +502 7832197

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the beautiful town of Antigua	Included in tour
Pacaya Volcano Walk from Antigua	USD 15

many bars and restaurants create a fantastic atmosphere. It is usually possible to arrange an excursion to the Pacaya Volcano. This can be one of the most exhilarating experiences as it is often active.

The reward for a few hard hours of climbing in the late afternoon is to sit and watch the spectacular eruptions of the volcano from close quarters. The red hot lava explodes into the dark night air and lights the whole sky like a spectacular firework display.

Day 2 to 3: El Imposible National Park

Fri 24 May to Sat 25 May 2013

This morning we drive roughly 300kms and across the El Salvador border to El Imposible National Park. We camp for a couple of nights and explore this incredible park with its great diversity of plant and animal life where you may be lucky enough to see pumas, tigrillos or black-crested eagles.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore El Imposible National Park	Included in tour

El Imposible National Park

As you can guess from its name this is a remote area, a national Reserve set up to protect the flora and

Antigua

Antigua, the old colonial capital of Guatemala, is only a short distance from the international airport at Guatemala City. Once the capital of Guatemala, Antigua remains the cultural centre of the country and has a mixture of Indian markets and colonial buildings. Its cobbled streets and indigenous marimba music in the

fauna of the rocky slopes and forests of the Cordillera de Apaneca. This area was named for the perilous gorge which used to claim the lives of farmers and pack mules transporting coffee to the Pacific port. Today the park makes a great place for a trek and maybe the chance to see pumas, tigrillos, wild boars, king hawks and black-crested eagles. Hiking can get muddy and steep but offers grand vistas of misty peaks and the gleaming Pacific Ocean.

Day 4: Cerro Verde National Park

Sun 26 May 2013

An early start takes us some 170kms to Cerro Verde National Park which offers amazing views of the surrounding volcanoes and countryside. We camp in the park which has basic facilities.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit Cerro Verde National Park	Included in tour

Cerro Verde National Park

The highlight of Cerro Verde National Park is the Cerro Verde, an extinct volcano which last erupted around 2500 years ago. On the top of its crater there is one of the few cloud forests in the country, located at 2030 meters above sea level. The Cerro Verde along with the volcanoes of Santa Ana and Izalco form one of the most impressive landscapes in El Salvador. These 2 otehr volcanoes can be viewed from lookout points inside Cerro Verde national park. The park offers some wonderful treks enabling fantastic views of northern El Salvador.

Day 5: Suchitoto

Mon 27 May 2013

We take a short drive to the lovely town of Suchitoto, with it's cobbled streets and whitewashed houses where we stay in a local hotel for the night.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Free time to explore the wonderful town of Suchitoto	Included in tour

Suchitoto

Suchitoto is a reminder of El Salvador's past. A beautiful colonial town with painted houses and cobbled streets it is a world away from modern El Salvador. The town overlooks the Embalse Cerrón Grande, also known as Lago Suchitlán, which is a haven for migrating birds, particularly falcons and hawks.

Day 6 to 7: Copan

Tue 28 May to Wed 29 May 2013

We cross the border and enter Honduras. Once border formalities are dealt with we will continue to the spectacular ruins of Copan where we camp for two nights in the grounds of a hotel for the night.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Enjoy a guided tour of the ruins at Copan	Included in tour

Copan

The ancient ruins of Copan are the southernmost of the great Mayan sites for which Central America is famed. This particular site is unique because of the 21 stelae or columns that have been found there. These are heavily carved with reliefs depicting the passage of time and the lives of the Royal families. There are also a number of small pyramid shaped temples and excavated vaults.

Day 8 to 10: Roatan Island

Thu 30 May to Sat 01 Jun 2013

A drive of just over 300kms brings us to the caribbean port town of La Ceiba from where we will get our flight to the stunning Bay Islands and to Roatan. Here we stay for 3 nights in a lovely posada near many of the bars and restaurants the island has to offer.

Please remember there is a 25 USD airport tax not covered by kitty.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights stay on Roatan Island in crystal clear Caribbean waters	Included in tour
Go diving or snorkelling off the coast of Roatan Island	USD 50
Explore Roatan island by bicycle	USD 20
Rent sea Kayaks and explore the Caribbean waters surrounding Roatan island	USD 45

Roatan Island

Roatan Island is one of the famous Bay Islands. This archipelago of coral islands set in the Caribbean is known for its laid back atmosphere. The scuba diving around the reefs is said to be some of the best in the world and extremely good value. During your stay on Roatan Island you can snorkel, go sea kayaking, hire jeeps or even get your PADI licence.

Day 11: Lake Yojoa

Sun 02 Jun 2013

We start early today to catch our flight back to the mainland. Upon arrival back at La Ceiba we head 230 kms to Lake Yojoa, half way between San Pedro de Sula and Tegulcigalpa where we can camp for the night by the lake.

Please remember there is a 25 USD airport tax not covered by kitty today.

Day 12: Leon

Mon 03 Jun 2013

We enter Nicaragua today and after a long drive of 400kms head to the university town of Leon, with wonderful colonial architecture ranked second best in the country behind that of Granada. We stay the night in a centrally located hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the charming colonial city of Leon	Included in tour
If the season is correct it may be possible to see turtles on the nearby beach of Playa La Flor	USD 30

Leon

The town of Leon is lined with derelict buildings and the walls are adorned with political murals and graffiti. Given this extraordinary setting it is a pleasant surprise to discover that you receive a cheery welcome from the locals in the market, though the variety of goods and foodstuffs available is limited.

Day 13: Masaya National Park

Tue 04 Jun 2013

We drive approximately 130kms to Masaya national park, possibly stopping in Managua en route if time allows. We will visit the national park and the active volcano that lies in the middle of the park, viewing the crater and lava flows. We spend the night camping in the park.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the volcano at Masaya National Park	Included in tour
Visit the market at Masaya	USD 5

Masaya National Park

At the Masaya National Park, the twin volcano craters of Masaya and Santiago are an incredible sight. At the bottom of a vast crater a glowing red fire, like a furnace, fills the air with a pall of pungent sulphurous fumes and rocks and volcanic ashes still cover the area surrounding the volcanoes. The park is inhabited by many different kinds of animals including coyotes, skunks, raccoons, opossums, deer, iguanas, and monkeys and the park makes a wonderful place for trekking.

Day 14: Granada

Wed 05 Jun 2013

A short hour long drive in the morning brings us to Granada, Nicaragua's oldest city, oozing with colonial charm where we spend the night in a hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Free time to explore the colonial city of Granada	Included in tour

Granada

Granada is the oldest city of the 'new world' having been founded in 1524 and was registered as such in the official records of the Crown of Aragon and the Kingdom of Castile in Spain. Due to its Moorish and Andalusian appearance it is nicknamed as the Great Sultan, La Gran Sultana, and has a rich colonial history. The city resides on the banks of Lake Nicaragua and simply is a beautiful place to visit.

Day 15 to 16: Ometepe Island

Thu 06 Jun to Fri 07 Jun 2013

This morning we will hop aboard a boat and across Lake Nicaragua, Central America's largest lake, to Isla Ometepe. On the island we will stay in a small hotel for 2 nights giving you the chance to explore all the island has to offer.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights on Ometepe Island	Included in tour
Climb the Madera volcano on Ometepe Island	USD 25

Ometepe Island

Isla de Ometepe is beautifully located within Lake Nicaragua and is formed by the 2 volcanoes which rise from the lake. In fact, the name of the island literally means 2 volcanoes in the Nahuatl language with 'ome' meaning two and 'tepetl' meaning mountain. The island's wonderful hourglass shape is home to great beaches and deep jungle making it a great place to spend a day or two.

Day 17 to 18: La Fortuna/Arenal Volcano National Park

Sat 08 Jun to Sun 09 Jun 2013

We drive 240kms to La Fortuna in Costa Rica, near the shores of Laguna de Arenal where we camp by the lake for fantastic vistas of the Arenal volcano and its lava flow glowing in the night. We stay by the lake for a couple of nights allowing you time for optional activities around the lake.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights around Volcano Arenal	Included in tour
Visit the thermal pools around the Arenal volcano	USD 20
Kayaking and rafting around La Fortuna	USD 60

La Fortuna/Arenal Volcano National Park

La Fortuna is a small town situated just a few minutes away from Costa Rica's most active volcano: the majestic Arenal. The Arenal Volcano is a regularly spewing smoke and ashes and is beautiful to behold at night as it glows from across Lake Arenal, the second largest man-made lake in Central America. Besides the panoramic views offered of Arenal from La Fortuna, the town also offers a range of other activities such as the 70 metres high La Fortuna Waterfall, stunning lush forest, rare plants, animal watching and also some water sports on Lake Arenal.

Day 19 to 20: Monteverde

Mon 10 Jun to Tue 11 Jun 2013

We continue south through Costa Rica to the dense rainforest of Monteverde where we stay in a hotel for a couple of nights. This stunning area offers an incredible diversity of flora and fauna which hopefully you will be lucky enough to see during a visit to the Cloud Forest Reserve.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Cloud Forest Reserve of Monteverde	Included in tour
Mountain biking around Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve	USD 25
Travel above the Cloud Forest of Monteverde on a zip line	USD 25

Monteverde

Monteverde and the cloud forests which surround it are considered the top destination in Costa Rica and certainly one of the top eco-tourism destinations in the world. The bulk of Monteverde's rainforest and cloud forest can be found in the Reserva Biológica Bosque Nuboso Monteverde which attracts huge numbers of naturalists each year and the area is one of the best in Central America to view the indigenous bird, the Quetzal.

Day 21: San Jose

Wed 12 Jun 2013

We leave the cloud forest behind and head to Costa Rica's wonderful capital city of San Jose, some 140 kms away. We stay in a centrally located hotel allowing you the day and night to explore the city.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in Costa Rica's capital, San Jose with free time to explore.	Included in tour

Day 22 to 23: Manuel Antonio National Park

Thu 13 Jun to Fri 14 Jun 2013

We leave the capital behind and head towards Quepos on the Pacific coast when the Parque Nacional Manuel

Antonio is located. We spend 2 nights in cabins in the park enjoying jungle walks with a variety of optional activities on offer.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights in Manuel Antonio National Park	Included in tour
Horse riding near Manuel Antonio National Park	USD 30
Relax on the beach at Manuel Antonio National Park	USD 1

Manuel Antonio National Park

At Manuel Antonio National Park there is the possibility to fish, walk or ride, but either way there is opportunity to see a host of wildlife. The park is situated on the coast with beautiful secluded beaches.

Day 24 to 25: Chiriqui

Sat 15 Jun to Sun 16 Jun 2013

We travel across the Panama border today to the Chiriqui highlands and the town of Boquete where we stay in a small pension for 2 nights. The area is famous for rafting, hiking, horseriding and the nearby Volcan Baru, the highest point in Panama.

Chiriqui

Chiriqui claims to be Panama's wonderland and it's a little surprise. The province boasts of an amazing variety of scenery from pristine beaches on the Golfo de Chiriqui to lush tropical forests where you'll find exotic flora and fauna. The area is also Panama's main coffee growing area as well as being home to the Parque Internacional La Amistad for great hiking through the forests as well as incredible white-water rafting.

Day 26: Santa Clara

Mon 17 Jun 2013

We head towards the capital today and drive roughly 340 kms before arriving by the beach at Santa Clara for a chance to relax and dip your toes in the Pacific Ocean. We will camp for one final time in Panama by the beach.

Day 27: Panama City

Tue 18 Jun 2013

A short 3 hour drive brings us to Panama City where we stay for the night in a centrally located hotel. We will visit the Panama Canal today and have time for you to explore the city's old and modern parts.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Panama Canal	Included in tour
Spend the night in Panama City, the country's capital.	Included in tour

Day 28: Panama City

Wed 19 Jun 2013

The trip ends today after breakfast and no accommodation is provided.

However if you are continuing on to Cartagena then your leader will assist you with getting to the airport for your included flight. You will overnight tonight in a comfortable hotel in either Panama City or Cartagena (depending on the flight times and availability).

Day 29: Cartagena

Thu 20 Jun 2013

Border Information: If joining in Cartagena, enter Colombia at Cartagena airport.

Free time to explore Cartagena with a group meeting day at 18:00hrs. We stay in a comfortable hotel in central Cartagena

Hotel for the night: Villa Colonial

Villa Colonial

Calle de Maravillas (C10)

No 30-60, Getsemani

Cartagena

Tel: 664 4996 / 664 5421

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights in vibrant Cartagena	Included in tour

Cartagena

Cartagena is one of the most historic cities in South America. It is legendary both for its history and beauty and tends to be a favourite of all travellers who visit it. Having been the centre of many battles, the city



is heavily fortified and huge defensive walls surround its narrow cobbled streets and colonial buildings. The city is made up of various districts, the new town with its high rise hotels, apartments and nightspots; and the older colonial parts of the city. The old city is the main attraction particularly the inner walled town, packed with churches, monasteries, plazas and mansions. Wandering through the streets you get a real feel of the sense of history of this amazing city. The waters of the Caribbean surround Cartagena on three sides. It is possible to take a day trip by boat to the idyllic coral islands of Rosario. This archipeligo of small coral islands is surrounded by the largest and most magnificent coral

reefs on the Colombian Caribbean coastline. Marine life is abundant and the whole area is protected under National Park status.

Day 30: Cartagena

Fri 21 Jun 2013

A full day in the beautiful city of Cartagena. In the morning we will have a walking tour of the city and then the rest of the time is free for you to enjoy the many optional activities on offer. We stay in the same centrally located hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore Cartagena on a guided walking tour	Included in tour
Visit the historic Castillo San Felipe	USD 20
Visit the mudbaths at the Totumo Volcano	USD 25
Go Diving Or Snorkelling Out To the Islas Del Rosario	USD 10

Day 31 to 32: San Bernardo Islands, Covenas

Sat 22 Jun to Sun 23 Jun 2013

We drive 150kms to Covenas on the Morrosquillo gulf and camp in the grounds of a local hotel for 2 nights near the beach with free time to relax. On the second day we will take a guided day tour out to the idyllic San Bernardo islands.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Take a boat trip out to the spectacular San Bernardo islands for the day	Included in tour

San Bernardo Islands

The islands of San Bernardo are made up of ten small islands with fine beaches and are the real travel highlight of this area. Sitting within the Golfo de Morrosquillo in the Caribbean sea the archipelago belongs to the National Natural Park Corales del Rosario and San Bernardo and consists of the islands of Boqueron, Cabruna, Ceycén, islote of Santa Cruz, Mangle, Maravillar, Múcura, Palma, Pandora and Tintipán.

The Islet of Santa Cruz which is an artificial island is supposedly the most densely populated piece of land in the world with just over a thousand people in less than a hectare of land!

Not all of the islands are accessible but contain stunning beaches, marshes, mangroves and diverse wildlife ranging from flamingos and monkeys to birds and crabs of all colours.

Day 33 to 34: Medellin

Mon 24 Jun to Tue 25 Jun 2013

A 525kms drive takes us to Colombia's second city, Medellín where stay in dorm accommodation in a centrally located hostel allowing you to enjoy the vibrant nightlife.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 Nights to explore the vibrant city of Medellín	Included in tour
Day trip to Santa Fe de Antioquia	USD 1
Visit the Catedral Metropolitana in Medellín	USD 1
Visit Medellín's beautiful Palacio de la Cultura Rafael Uribe Uribe	USD 1
Relax and unwind on a stroll through the Medellín's gorgeous Botanical Gardens.	USD 1

Medellin

The rapid transformation that has taken place in Colombia's second largest city is one like no other. Having spent the 1980's and 90's with international reputation of one of the world's most dangerous cities, Medellín has certainly turned itself around.

With the infamous *Pablo Escobar* and the *Medellin Cartel* holding the largest drug-trafficking base here for decades, the city suffered a seriously damaged reputation amongst international travellers and has only recently become a popular destination amongst backpackers. Despite the damage of the city's past, the Paisas (as people from Medellín are known) have strived to change the it's reputation. Almost nothing of those former days can be seen in the character of the city today and visitors can comfortably enjoy the beautiful architecture, excellent facilities and all round well developed city!

Set amid the rolling green hills of the Aburrá valley and with a warm climate and comfortable altitude of 1538 metres, Medellín has seen more and more travellers flocking to the city in the past few years. With some of the country's finest museums, parks and most impressive architecture as well as a much safer and comfortable atmosphere, it's easy to see why.

Medellín is also one of Colombia's easiest cities to get around with the immaculate and convenient metro system passing all the main points of interest. If you use the metro then make sure you head up on El Teléferico, the city's cable car, as this is included on your metro ticket and gives you a great view of the city.

Why not visit the Museo de Antioquia which combines pre-colombian exhibits with displays by several of Colombia's best known artists including a collection by the famous Fernando Botero and head to the 'Jardines Montesacro' to see where the infamous Pablo Escobar is buried.

A great side trip from Medellín is Santa Fe de Antioquia. Set in a lush low lying hot and sultry valley

on the banks of the Rio Cauca, Santa Fe de Antioquia is the oldest settlement in the region. Founded in 1541 it served as the capital of the department until 1826 when the state capital moved to Medellín. The town has kept much of its Colonial charm, the narrow streets and whitewashed colonial style buildings many of which with large central courtyard in which to relax away from the midday heat. The central plaza is dominated by the principal church of the town. The plaza is also home to a daily market where vendors sell various varieties of Tamarind product that grow locally, take a tour of the stalls and try a few samples of this local delicacy. There are several other churches and important colonial buildings to visit but the greatest pleasure is simply exploring the narrow streets infused with history of the region.

Day 35 to 37: Guatapé

Wed 26 Jun to Fri 28 Jun 2013

We make a short drive this morning of a couple of hours to the small town of Guatapé which is beautifully located beside a lake in rolling countryside. The town is famous for the towering El Peñón de Guatapé which will visit before enjoying 3 days of camping by the lake for various activities in the local area.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Climb the 644 steps to the top of El Peñón de Guatapé for spectacular views.	USD
Waterfall treks around Guatapé	USD 6
Hire kayaks to explore the lakes around Guatapé	USD 6
Rent mountain bikes to explore Guatapé	USD 3

Guatapé

Guatapé is a picturesque town surrounded by the Embalse del Peñol, an artificial lake built in the early 1960's and wonderful countryside yet with a colourful and historic centre. On weekends,



the waterfront malecón (boardwalk) fills up with local vendors selling beautiful Paisa art, food, and souvenirs. The area is great for activities but one of the main reasons to visit is to see El Peñón de Guatapé, a 650 foot tall granite monolith that divides the countryside and offers amazing views from the top. El Peñón is very similar to Sugar loaf mountain in Rio de Janeiro and has 644 steps which you need to climb to get to the top, but it is well worth it.

Day 38 to 40: Manizales

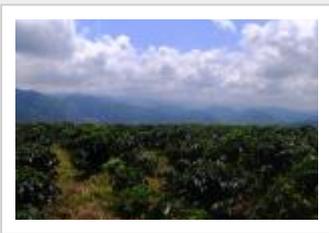
Sat 29 Jun to Mon 01 Jul 2013

We head 185kms to Manizales where we stay for 3 nights on a coffee plantation, camping in the grounds of a traditional finca. During the next few days we will enjoy a night of music and dancing, a city tour of Manizales and a coffee plantation tour. Will will also visit a local childrens's charity which we support.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Enjoy a night of traditional live Colombian music	Included in tour
Explore Manizales on a city tour	Included in tour
Explore a working Colombian coffee plantation	Included in tour
Stay On A Coffee Plantation Near Manizales	Included in tour
Visit to Sagrada Familia childrens project	Included in tour

Manizales

Manizales is a friendly city right in the heart of Colombia's coffee region with a comfortable climate and plenty to see and do. Although still opening up to international tourism, Manizales has a lot to offer the visitor in the way of outdoor activities and ecological attractions. The town itself is a relaxed and friendly place centred around the magnificent cathedral with attractions such as the botanical gardens, thermal springs and eco-parks all easily access able from the centre of town. Venturing a little further, you will find coffee haciendas and plantations in the surrounding area as well as some beautiful country landscapes perfect for trekking or just taking a relaxing break in the great outdoors.



In Manizales we stay on one of these working coffee plantations covering approximately 480 acres which provides people from around the world a taste of the finest Manizales fair trade coffee. The plantation employs around 100 people all throughout the year and about 400 people during the peak picking season.

Day 41 to 42: Cali

Tue 02 Jul to Wed 03 Jul 2013

Today we head out early overlanding to Cali, Colombia's most lively city. In the evening there may be the chance to head out for a tour of the city in a traditional chiva bus and there is the chance for optional salsa classes. During

the day time there are lots of attractions to keep you entertained.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore Cali in the evening on a chiva bus	USD 10
Learn to Salsa like a local	USD 20
Enjoy Colombia's best nightlife in Cali	
Visit Cali Zoo, probably the best in South America.	USD 5
Get wet at Cali's Water park!	USD 5
Visit Museo Arqueológico la Merced, Cali's best museum.	USD 2
Visit the Museo del Oro in Cali, with it's wonderful gold collection.	USD 1

Cali

Cali is a big and bustling city with a warm climate and pleasant atmosphere. Although there are comparatively few sights of special interest, just wandering through the mix-match architecture and relaxing in the sociable parks and plazas is a nice way to spend some time.

The city has made it's reputation in traveller circles thanks to it's nightlife and social scene and as such is increasingly popular. The Salsa capital of Colombia provides great opportunities to test out those dance moves and hit the fashionable bars and restaurants with the locals. For party seekers and those who enjoy the faster paced city life, Cali shouldn't disappoint. Avenida Sexta, is Cali's party street. With rows of bars, clubs, restaurants and cafes, this is where to head for a night on the town.

For others, the old neighbourhood of San Antonio is a lovely spot with arty, Bohemian cafes, shops and restaurants lining picturesque Colonial streets.

Alternatively why not head to Las Tres Cruces which is a great point from which to catch the best views over Cali. It's quite a hike up there but it's a peaceful spot and a nice break from the rush of the city.

Day 43: Popayan

Thu 04 Jul 2013

A short 140kms drive brings us to the beautiful town of Popayan where we stay for the night in dorm accommodation in a hostel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in the beautiful old town of Popayan	Included in tour

Popayan

Nicknamed the White City, Popayan is a beautiful colonial town of white-washed houses and grand churches encircled by rolling green hills. Although the capital of the Cauca region and the former capital of Southern Colombia, Popayan somehow retains its relaxed small town feel. The friendly locals can often be found sipping coffee in one of the city's excellent cafes or relaxing in one of the shaded parks, catching up with friends and watching the world go by.



The cool and sunny climate of the lower Andes makes Popayan a very comfortable place to stay and as the main university town of the region, there's a young, sociable feel to the city. The leafy parks marked with elegant church towers provide a sociable and relaxed location where you could easily spend an afternoon, while an evening's entertainment could be chatting with the friendly locals in a classy cafe bar or salsa club.

Whilst staying in the town there are some lovely walks offering excellent views of the Historic Centre, several worthwhile museums and galleries and many good cafes, bars and restaurants to make the most of.

Another highlight of this area is the Silvia Indigenous Market. This beautiful Andean market town is absolutely bursting with colour and energy when the market opens on Tuesdays. Guambiano Indians from the surrounding communities make their way into Silvia to sell their produce and socialise with friends from neighbouring towns.

Day 44: Ipiales

Fri 05 Jul 2013

Today we drive the 315km to the border town of Ipiales. We stay the night in a local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the jaw dropping Santuario La Lajas on the outskirts of Ipiales	Included in tour

Ipiales

Ipiales is the border town on the Colombia/Ecuador frontier. The town has some pleasant plazas squares and the sight of locals using a horse and cart gives it a quaint, countryside feel.



The star attraction of Ipiales, 7 km outside of town, is the famous *Santuario de Las Lajas*, the site of many a miracle and apparition over the years. Set amid breathtaking scenery, El Santuario is a spectacular gothic-style church straddling a dramatic gorge with rushing

river below. It is one of the most impressive churches on the continent and its fantastic setting and quirky museum make it a highlight of any visit to Colombia.

Day 45: Otavalo

Sat 06 Jul 2013

Border information: Exit Colombia at Ipiales. Enter Ecuador at Ipiales

We cross the border into Ecuador and head to the Indian market town of Otavalo where we stay in a friendly hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay in the market town of Otavalo	Included in tour
Horseshooting, rafting, biking or village tour around Otavalo	USD 15

Otavalo

Otavalo is a small town known for its market, nestled in beautiful surroundings a short distance north of Quito. Many of the local indigenous communities in this area still wear their traditional clothing made from intricately woven and decorated fabrics, and the men tend to wear their hair in long ponytails. Infact, the Otavalan's weaving skills are quite renowned and they are rightly famous for their textiles, so rugs, wall hangings and knitwear are all well worth buying here. There are numerous other activities to do in the surrounding area, including horse-riding and trekking into the surrounding hillsides. If you have time, it may also be possible to visit the hot springs at Papallacta.

Day 46: Quito

Sun 07 Jul 2013

120kms drive to the capital, Quito arriving in the afternoon where we stay in a local friendly hotel. En route we will stop at the Equator for the must have photo ops.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay in historic Quito	Included in tour
Visit the equator at Mitad del Mundo	Included in tour
Visit the Museo De La Ciudad	USD 2
Take a trip on El Telerifiquo, the world's second highest cable car	USD 4

Quito

Quito has a more relaxed atmosphere than most Latin American capitals. Lying in a hollow at the base of Volcano Pichincha, the old town is a maze of steep, cobbled streets with intricately carved, overhanging balconies. Its mixture of old colonial and modern architecture and the mix of European and Indian cultures make this a really fascinating city. Wandering around, you will come across stalls displaying Indian textiles, colourful wall hangings, jewellery, pottery and woodcarvings - and the old town has some of the best examples of Spanish colonial art and churches anywhere in the Americas. With so much to see and do, it is well worth extending your time in South America to ensure you experience all that Quito has to offer.



Day 47: Quito

Mon 08 Jul 2013

Free day to explore Quito.

Border information: If you are finishing in Quito, exit Ecuador at Quito airport.

Day 48: Quito

Tue 09 Jul 2013

Border information: If you are starting at Quito, enter Ecuador at Quito airport.

Day to explore Quito with a group meeting at 18.00hrs. We stay in a local, friendly hotel in the city.

Hotel for the night: Alston Inn Hotel
Alston Inn Hotel
Juan Leon Mera N23-41 y
Ventimilla
Quito
Tel: 00 593 2 22 22721

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay in historic Quito	Included in tour

Day 49: Coca

Wed 10 Jul 2013

Today we will drive around 350 km into the heart of the Amazon to Coca (Puerto Francisco de Orellana). This is where we will set off from tomorrow for our Jungle Expedition.

Coca

Coca is the more commonly known name for Puerto Francisco de Orellana, which is also the capital of the province of Orellana in the 'oriente' or the Est of Ecuador deep in the jungle. The city is located at the

confluence of the Napo River and the Coca River which gives the nickname to the city.

Francisco de Orellana is the famous explorer who gives the name to the city. He explored the confluence of the Napo River and the Coca river. History says he set off from the current location of the city and made his way deep into the Amazon Jungle and river crossing indigenous tribes in which even women used to fight. He sailed all the way eventually making it to the Atlantic. Francisco de Orellana died on his second expedition along the Amazon delta not being able to find his way through.

Day 50 to 52: Panachoca Amazon Experience

Thu 11 Jul to Sat 13 Jul 2013

We will set off in the morning on a motorised canoe and leave civilization behind. For the next 4 days will be all about the jungle.

During your 3 nights here you will take trips out into the rainforest on foot and by boat to explore for wildlife.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights, 4 days exploring the deep jungle along the river Panachoca. Jungle walk, bird watching, piranha fishing and all that the deep jungle has got to offer, very far away from any other tourists. A truly unique experience.	Included in tour

Day 53: Rio Verde

Sun 14 Jul 2013

An early boat ride brings us back along the Rio Napo to Coca from where we rejoin our overland vehicle and drive 300kms to the beautiful town of Rio Verde. We stay at a campsite with great facilities

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 or 3 nights camping at the stunning Rio Verde	Included in tour

Rio Verde

A few kilometres from Banos, is the small town of Rio Verde, named after the clear green water of the river that flows through the town. A number of waterfalls are found along its course, the most spectacular being The Devil's Cauldron ('El Pailon del Diablo'), a 20-minute walk out of town. Whilst staying here, you will have the opportunity to take part in optional adventure activities like as horse-riding, canyoning, mountain biking and rafting, as well as



making the short trip into Banos to visit the thermal springs.

Day 54 to 55: Banos, Rio Verde

Mon 15 Jul to Tue 16 Jul 2013

These are non-driving days with free time for a range of adrenalin activities or a possible visit to nearby Banos. We stay at the same campsite

Activity	Approximate Cost
Rafting and horseback trekking around Rio Verde	USD 35
Explore the beautiful hills surrounding Banos with an abundance of activities on offer	USD
Half day rafting at Banos, including lunch	USD 75
Half day canyoning at Banos	USD 45

Banos

Set in the hillside of the Tungurahua volcano is the exquisite town of Banos. Tungurahua may be the biggest volcano in Ecuador, but it is also one of the most popular to climb. This creates hiking opportunities and if you explore you will discover the thermal baths and gorgeous waterfalls. Banos is also the perfect place if you want exciting bike rides when the unknown always lies ahead. Pitch black tunnels, sheer drops - it is a place for the bold, it is a place for the daring and most importantly, it is a place that will bring out the adrenaline seeker in us all!

Day 56: Chugchilan, Lake Quilotoa

Wed 17 Jul 2013

An hour's drive brings us to the town of Quilotoa to see the stunning Crater Lake and begin one of Ecuador's best day hikes back to Chugchilán. We will trek with a local guide and the mostly downhill trek takes between 4-6 hours. There is however a section towards the end of the trek with a steep incline which you will need to be physically fit for.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overland around the stunning Quilotoa Loop	Included in tour
Trek from Quilotoa to Chugchilan	Included in tour
Go Mountain Biking around Chugchilan	USD 20

Chugchilan

Set on the slopes of the Rio Toachi Canyon, Chugchilán is our base for 2 nights where we either stay in a wonderful eco-lodge or an equally fantastic hostel. From the front door of the lodge, several day hikes are available, the most famous being one from Lake Quilotoa which is considered to be one of the best hikes in Ecuador.



We will drive from Chugchilán to Quilotoa where you will be able to climb down the crater to the waters edge before we begin a 4-6 hour guided trek, mainly downhill, back to our eco-lodge base. A moderate level of fitness is required as the trek is at altitude but the walking itself is not too strenuous.

Lake Quilotoa

Lake Quilotoa is a beautiful volcanic crater lake located at 3800 metres (12,400 feet) between the towns of Zumbahua and Chugchilán. Its emerald water spans two kilometres. Local legend claims it is connected to the ocean and is therefore salty and sulfuric. Quilotoa is an active volcano, the last major eruption was over 850 years ago.



It is possible to hike down from the crater rim to the lakeside. The descent takes 30 minutes and climbing back up takes about an hour. It is possible to swim in the lake, but the water is very cold (5° celsius). If the climb back up from the laguna is too strenuous, you can hire a mule to ride for a few dollars.

The lake also lends it's name to the Quilotoa Loop, given to the winding circuit of spectacular dirt roads that connect Lake Quilotoa to Latacunga and the Pan-American Highway. The roads that lead away from Latacunga are unpaved, winding and have spectacular views of the mountains, rivers and verdant landscape. We will head to the town of Chugchilán on the northern section of the loop and after a 2 night stay head out on the southern section of the loop allowing you to see some of the more remote people and culture of the central Andes of Ecuador.

Day 57: Chugchilan

Thu 18 Jul 2013

An early morning starts a 300kms drive on the northern section of the spectacular Quilotoa Loop to the town of Chugchilán. We stay the night in a fantastic hostel.

Day 58: Riobamba, Chugchilan

Fri 19 Jul 2013

This morning we will drive the southern section of the Quilotoa Loop and then head to the Riobamba area where we probably will stay in a hotel for the night but may push on and find somewhere to camp. We will cover approximately 320kms today.

Day 59 to 60: Cuenca

Sat 20 Jul to Sun 21 Jul 2013

A 250kms drive will take us to Cuenca with a chance to explore the town and possibly visit it's famous Panama Hat factory.

We spend the next 2 nights in a guesthouse

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in colonial Cuenca	Included in tour

Cuenca

Cuenca is Ecuador's third-largest city and it's small centre is home to some beautiful architecture. This small university town is a pleasure to wander around and explore, take to the streets and you'll discover impressive churches that date back to the 16th and 17th Centuries, attractive colonial buildings, tranquil plazas and lively markets. The Ecuadorians consider it the finest city in the country and many of its buildings are constructed from marble and decorated with stunning woodwork and ironwork. Cuenca is also the home of the Panama hat, and you can visit some of the famous hat factories, where you can watch the craftsman and marvel at their skill first-hand.

Because of all the students who are based here, the town has a lively night-life and there are some good bars and restaurants to choose from. Top that off with an evening stroll around the Plaza and you'll have spent the perfect day enjoying the city.

Day 61: Punta Sal

Mon 22 Jul 2013

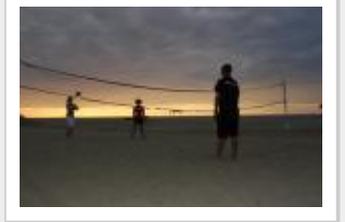
Border information: Exit Ecuador at Tumbes. Enter Peru at Tumbes.

A 285kms drive takes us across the Peruvian border to Punta Sal, on the shore of the Pacific Ocean where we camp at a hostel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Try horse riding, fishing, salsa and surfing at Punta Sal	USD 20

Punta Sal

Situated on the shores of the Pacific Ocean in a long, curvy bay, Punta Sal is a haven of sun and sand. The warm and tranquil waters are a pleasure to swim in and there's also the opportunity to set out on



fishing trips and boat trips along the coast line. For those who prefer to stay on dry land, horse riding along the beach and salsa lessons can be arranged, or just kick-back in a hammock and laze the day away, enjoying the peace and quiet of this beautiful spot.

Day 62 to 63: Punta Sal

Tue 23 Jul to Wed 24 Jul 2013

2 days with free time to enjoy the beach and activities at Punta Sal. Second and 3rd night camping at the same hostel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 night stay on the pacific coast at Punta Sal	Included in tour

Day 64: Lambayeque, Huanchaco

Thu 25 Jul 2013

610kms drive to Huanchaco, visiting Lambayeque for the Lord of Sipan Museum visit enroute. On arrival in Huanchaco we will be camping at a site with good facilities

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the northern Peru Desert	Included in tour
Guided tour of Moche Pyramids and the Chimu city of Chan Chan	Included in tour
Visit to the Lord of Sipan Museum	Included in tour

Lambayeque

The small Peruvian town of Lambayeque is home to the impressive Museo Tumbas Reales de Sipan, a world-class museum that showcases the finest artefacts from the archaeological finds at nearby Sipan. This area on the northwest coast of [Peru](#) is well known for its rich historical heritage and the name Lambayeque originates from the ancient pre-Inca civilisation of the Lambayeqes. Amongst the most extraordinary discoveries made here is the famous 'Lord of the Sipan', a Moche Priest found buried amidst an array of gold, jewels and fabrics.

Huanchaco

Once the capital of the ancient [Peruvian](#) Moche civilisation, Huanchaco is a small town on the Peruvian coast that is rapidly acquiring a reputation for the quality of the surfing off its relaxed beaches.



Wandering along the sea front you will come across the local fishermen's "caballitos de tortora", curved reed boats that they leave propped up in groups together on the sand.

Huanchaco is an ideal location from which to explore the numerous archaeological ruins the surround nearby Trujillo, such as the enormous pre-columbian complex of Chan Chan, a vast adobe city constructed by the emperor of the Chimu people, as well as the world famous Moche pyramids the Huaca del Sol and Huaca de la Luna.

Day 65: Huanchaco

Fri 26 Jul 2013

Visit to numerous ruins in and around Huanchaco, the enormous ruins of Chan Chan, and the world famous pyramids of Huaca del Sol and Huaca de la Luna. We stay at the same campsite.

Day 66: Lima

Sat 27 Jul 2013

A full drive day of 530kms brings us to the country's capital, Lima, arriving late in the afternoon. We stay in a comfortable hotel in the city centre

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Gold Museum & Catacombs of Lima	USD 20
Overnight stay in colonial Lima	Included in tour

Lima

Lima is a city of hidden beauty. Dive in and explore the Peruvian capital's streets, parks and plazas and you will discover a real gem of a city. Infact there's so much to see here, a city tour is a great opportunity to find out about more about the rich history of Lima itself and [Peru](#) as a whole. The city was founded by Conquistador Pizarro in 1535 and was originally the administrative centre for Spain's Vice royalty in South America, making it the continent's most important city for nearly three centuries. It became a city of great wealth financed by the massive



quantities of gold and silver that were mined in the area.

Whilst you are here there are many museums you can visit, such as the Museo de la Nacion and the Gold Museum, which showcase the finest artefact's from the country's many ancient civilisations. You can also visit the finely preserved catacombs at the Church of San Francisco, and take in a bit of local culture at an evening folklore show.

Day 67: Lima

Sun 28 Jul 2013

Free day to explore Lima.

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

Hotel for the night: Hostal Bonbini
Hostal Bonbini
Jiron Cailloma 29
Centro
Lima
Tel: +51-1-4274681

Day 68: Lima

Mon 29 Jul 2013

Border information: If you are starting in Lima, enter Peru at Lima Airport.

Day free to explore Lima, with a group meeting at 18:00 hrs. We stay in a good quality hotel in the centre of the city.

Hotel for the night: Hostal Bonbini

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay in colonial Lima	Included in tour
Visit the Gold Museum & Catacombs of Lima	USD 20

Day 69: Paracas, Ballestas Islands, Huacachina

Tue 30 Jul 2013

We have a very early start and head south and out of Lima to begin a 270kms drive to Paracas. There we board a boat trip to the Ballestas Islands to view wildlife before returning to Paracas to explore the national park. We will bush camp either in Paracas National Park or in Huacachina for optional sand boarding and dune bugging

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to Paracas National Park, coastal wildlife reserve.	Included in tour
Boat trip to see the seals & seabirds on the Ballestas Isles	Included in tour

Paracas

Spanning 335,000 hectares of land and sea, Paracas National Park is widely regarded as one of the most important marine reserves in the world. This coastal and marine national park is located on a peninsula in the Pacific Ocean and is home to one of the highest concentration of marine birds in the world. Providing a vital habitat for sealions and dolphins, Paracas is without doubt one of the most biologically diverse coastal areas in the Americas.



Historically the peninsula was the home to the Paracas people from 1200BC through to around 200 AD and some remains of their culture can be found in the area, the most spectacular of which is the enormous candelabra - a giant etching depicting a cactus inscribed onto a coastal hill overlooking the ocean.

Ballestas Islands

The Ballestas Islands has weird and wonderful wildlife. From the boat trip you will be able to see Humboldt Penguins, Blackish Oystercatchers, Guano Cormorants and Peruvian Boobies living alongside vast colonies



of Sea Lions nosily crowding the Ballestas coastline. The startlingly biodiversity around the Ballestas Islands and [Paracas](#) National Park is the result of two merging currents; the warm northern waters El Nino and the cooler waters of the Humboldt. The climatic conditions produced by the combination of these two currents create the perfect environment for a proliferation in the number of plankton and fitophankton, the core constituents in the diet of fish. The Ballestas Islands are one of the most popular ecotourism points of view along the Peruvian coast.

Huacachina

Known as the 'oasis of America', Huacachina is near Ica in northern Peru, and is perhaps more reminiscent of the Sahara than South America. The picturesque lagoon is surrounded by palm trees and towering sand dunes and creates a tranquil oasis in the dusty coastal desert. The small town here has become a popular destination for sand boarding and bugging, although care should be taken before going on any of these trips, as standards are not always quite up to western expectations.

Day 70: Huacachina, Nazca

Wed 31 Jul 2013

In the morning we will have a chance to stock up on supplies before driving approximately 200kms to Nazca

where we camp. En route we have the chance to glimpse the Nazca lines from a viewing platform

Activity

Approximate Cost

Dune bugging or boarding in the spectacular sand dunes of Peru Desert USD 20

Nazca

Nazca is home to the famous and enigmatic Nazca lines, enormous designs inscribed in the Desert on the arid high plateau between Nazca and Palpa. Many of the lines form stylised depictions of animals, for example you can make out llamas, monkeys, sharks and spiders, as well as trees and other designs.



Archaeologists believe the lines were created between 200BC and 700AD by three successive, different civilisations. The global importance of the region is reflected in UNESCO's declaration of the Nazca lines as a World Heritage Site in 1994. You can view the lines from viewing towers or take a flight in a small plane to see them from above.

Important - Flight over the Nazca Lines - As of November 2010 some western countries' travel advisories advise against this optional activity due to concerns around proper aircraft safety and maintenance standards not being reliably adhered to. For more information please refer to your country's travel advice website. Please note that due to Dragoman's internal safety policy our leaders are specifically prohibited from recommending or assisting with booking this activity.

Close to Nazca is the Chauchilla Indian Cemetery, where you can see the tombs of people of the ancient Nazca civilisation, dating from 100AD to 700AD. It is something of an eerie sight to see the skulls, bones and even hair of the dead, preserved in a remarkable state thanks to the dry desert air.

Day 71: Nazca, Puerto Inca

Thu 01 Aug 2013

In the morning there is an optional flight over the mysterious Nazca lines and an included visit to Chauchilla cemetery. In the afternoon there is a 270kms drive to Puerto Inca for an overnight stay at a beach camp site

Activity

Approximate Cost

Visit to the Nazca Lines and Chauchilla Cemetery Included in tour

Fly over the Nazca lines USD 100

Puerto Inca

Puerto Inca is situated on the Peruvian coast in a beautiful bay and was once the Inca port that supplied the city of Cusco with supplies of fish. There are a number of Inca ruins here, which includes a cemetery, a temple of reincarnation and part of the road that set out from the coast to Cusco is still clearly visible. It is a great place to relax with a nice beach, the sea and swimming pool; water sports are also sometimes available. However, swimmers should be aware that there is often a strong under-current here.

Day 72: Arequipa

Fri 02 Aug 2013

380kms drive day takes us to altitude and to the 'white city' of Arequipa where we overnight in a good quality hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 night stay in the beautiful white city of Arequipa	Included in tour

Arequipa

Situated on the Peruvian Altiplano, Arequipa sits at almost 3500 meters above sea level and is the second largest city in the country. Set against the stunning backdrop of the snow-covered volcano "El Misti", salt



lakes, thermal springs and high-altitude deserts, the landscape of the area around Arequipa truly unique. If you have time, it's possible to arrange mountain-biking and rafting trips in the area as day tours from the city - and at certain times of year you can even try for an ascent of El Misti itself, though it's not an easy trek at these altitudes, so not for the faint hearted.

The city itself is very beautiful, full of beautiful colonial buildings built out of the soft white volcanic rock that is found in the area. As a university town, there is always a lively buzz about the place and there are plenty of good bars and restaurants to discover.

No trip to Arequipa would be complete without paying a visit to Juanita, the "Ice Maiden." This mummy of a young Inca girl has been described as one of the 10 most important historical discoveries of recent times by Time Magazine. Because the body was frozen at such low temperatures and high altitude, a really extensive study into the physical health of ancient Peruvian civilisations has been possible, with fascinating results. You should also try to visit the Santa Catalina Convent, which is almost a city within a city in the centre of the town. Not only are the buildings of the convent stunningly beautiful, with brightly painted walls and shady courtyards, it also has a fascinating history which you can learn about on a guided tour.

Day 73: Arequipa

Sat 03 Aug 2013

Free day to explore the colonial city of Arequipa

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided tour of Arequipa's Santa Catalina convent	USD 10

Day 74: Chivay and Colca Canyon, Chivay

Sun 04 Aug 2013

Time in Arequipa to explore further in the morning. Then drive 150 km drive to Chivay with an optional visit to thermal springs. Overnight in a hotel at Chivay.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 night stay and guided trip to see Colca Canyon and condors	Included in tour
Visit the thermal springs in Chivay	USD 10

Chivay and Colca Canyon

Chivay is a small town nestled in the hills at the base of the Colca Canyon. The River Colca runs from high in the Andes right down to the Pacific, and between Chivay and Cabanaconde it flows through the



bottom of a deep gorge, often claimed to be the deepest in the world. It is certainly spectacularly beautiful, the vast Andean terraces tower up over the canyon, dotted by tiny villages that haven't changed in centuries. The canyon is also renowned as a haven for condors and they can often be seen here at quite close range as they float on the rising thermals and scan for carrion far below. Catching a glimpse of these magnificent birds as they rise from their nests, gliding high above you is a truly magical experience and one you will never forget.

Chivay is also home to some natural hot springs that provide a welcome relief from the cold night air high up here in the Andes. The springs are known as "La Calera" and are located just a short distance outside the town.

Chivay

Upstream from the renowned Colca Canyon, lies the rural town of Chivay. Heated pools just outside the town are one of the main highlights and a place to relax after a morning exploring the town centre and markets. Another magnificent site is the



stone Inca bridge that crosses the Colca River Ravine that is thousands of years old.

Day 75: Chivay and Colca Canyon, Chivay
Mon 05 Aug 2013

Short driving day to visit the spectacular Colca Canyon to view condors and also local communities. Overnight in the same hotel at Chivay.

Day 76: Raqchi
Tue 06 Aug 2013

Drive day to Raqchi and stay overnight in local homestay. We stay in traditional family houses with clean but basic facilities. Whilst we are there we enjoy some of the ceremonial aspects of village life as well as much singing and dancing. This is a great local experience.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Quechua Indian homestay and community crafts project	Included in tour
Guided visit to the Raqchi ruins	Included in tour

Raqchi

Raqchi is a small village situated a short distance outside of [Cusco](#). On Dragoman trips we stay here as guests of the local families in their traditional houses, a fantastic way to get a real insight into how people live here and to learn about their culture and customs. If we are lucky there may be the chance to participate in some of the ceremonial and spiritual aspects of village life - and there is always plenty of singing and dancing as we get to know our new Peruvian families. The village is also well known for it's talented craftsmen and women and there will be the chance to buy some of the beautiful hand-made and intricately decorated pottery that is made here.



Day 77: Cusco
Wed 07 Aug 2013

In the morning we visit the ruins at Raqchi and also a local artisan centre. In the afternoon we drive 160kms drive to Cusco. Overnight in a lovely colonial hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
7 nights in and around Cusco and the Urubamba Valley	Included in tour

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 few 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 78: Cusco
Thu 08 Aug 2013

Non-driving day with free time to explore the wonderful city of Cusco, the capital of the Inca kingdom. There will be a trekking briefing today and we stay in the same colonial hotel

Day 79 to 82: Inca Trail , Sacred Valley, Cusco
Fri 09 Aug to Mon 12 Aug 2013

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	Included in tour
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.	

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

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 which 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 alpacas, 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

Inca Trail

When people talk about "The Inca Trail", they are usually referring to a particular trekking route that follows an ancient pathway that leads to [Machu Picchu](#). What many people don't realise is that there are 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.

Unfortunately, in recent years the classic trail has almost become a bit of a victim of its own popularity.

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 trails 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 Urubamba 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 Ollantaytambo, 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 archaeological sites which include the magnificent ruins of Pisac, Sacsayhuaman and Ollantaytambo, as well as the Lost City itself. Together with the temperate climate, lively markets, sleepy andean villages and stunning surrounding landscape, 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, stopping 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 83: Machu Picchu

Tue 13 Aug 2013

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 Urubamba 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 84: Cusco

Wed 14 Aug 2013

Free day 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

Day 85: Cusco

Thu 15 Aug 2013

Border information: If you are starting in Cusco, enter Peru at Cusco Airport.

Group meeting at 10:00 hrs to plan the following day's trekking with the rest of the day free to enjoy Cusco. We stay in a good quality colonial hotel in Cusco.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Cahuide

Hotel Cahuide
Calle Saphi No 845
Cusco
+ 51 84 222771

Activity	Approximate Cost
7 nights in and around Cusco and the Urubamba Valley	Included in tour

Day 86 to 89: Inca Trail , Sacred Valley, Cusco

Fri 16 Aug to Mon 19 Aug 2013

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
Tour of the Sacred Valley, Sacsayhuaman and Ollantaytambo	Included in tour
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	Included in tour
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.	

Day 90: Machu Picchu

Tue 20 Aug 2013

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

Day 91: Cusco

Wed 21 Aug 2013

Relax after the trek with optional activities available such as white water rafting. Overnight in the same colonial hotel.

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

Day 92: Puno, Sillustani Ruins

Thu 22 Aug 2013

In the morning we have a 440kms drive to Puno. We will visit the Sillustani ruins and museum en route and overnight in hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to the pre-Inca Sillustani Ruins near Puno	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.

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.

Day 93: Copacabana, Puno

Fri 23 Aug 2013

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

We head out on a boat on Lake Titicaca to the floating reed islands of Uros before a 200kms drive takes us across the Bolivian border to the lakeside town of Copacabana where we overnight in a hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Boat trip to the floating islands on Lake Titicaca	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 94: Copacabana

Sat 24 Aug 2013

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
Stay in the pretty lakeside colonial town of Copacabana	Included in tour

Day 95: La Paz

Sun 25 Aug 2013

A 160kms drive brings us to La Paz, Bolivia's capital where we have time to explore the city and do optional activities. Overnight good quality colonial hotel in central La Paz

Activity	Approximate Cost
Free time to explore the vibrant city of La Paz	Included in tour

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 they 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 fetuses 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 excursions to 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 96: La Paz

Mon 26 Aug 2013

Free time to explore La Paz or do activities such as downhill mountain biking.

Border information: If you are leaving in La Paz, exit Bolivia at La Paz Airport.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Downhill "gravity assisted" mountain biking from La Paz to Coroico	USD 105
Guided tour to explore Tiahuanaco Inca Ruins	USD 20

Day 97 to 98: La Paz

Tue 27 Aug to Wed 28 Aug 2013

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

Free time to explore La Paz, one of the highest cities in the world. There's to see and do including the prison tour or the down hill mountain biking. We stay in a good quality colonial hotel in the centre. On the 1st day there will be a group meeting at 18:00 hrs.

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	USD
Downhill "gravity assisted" mountain biking from La Paz to Coroico	USD 105
Guided tour to explore Tiahuanaco Inca Ruins	USD 20

Day 99: Livichuco

Thu 29 Aug 2013

This morning we will head to the small community of Livichuco for an overnight stay in this small Andean village. Accommodation will be in very basic shared accommodation but a chance to see an area of Bolivia few tourists ever will.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay in the Andean community of Livichuco.	Included in tour

Livichuco

The village of Livichuco lies in a remote location where visitors can stay with a community of people of Aymara origin who delight in sharing their Qaqachaqa culture.

There are several short treks around the community that are possible, with ancient Inca paths and you are also able to share some songs and dancing, discovering the typical instruments of communities in this quiet and charming place.

The community will cook for us and food is typically original, made with local organic products and recipes passed down from generations. Staying here is a great way of giving back to the local community.

Day 100 to 101: Potosi

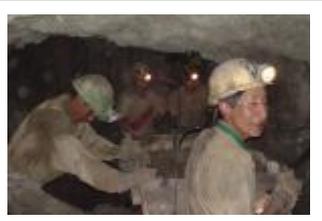
Fri 30 Aug to Sat 31 Aug 2013

Today we will leave Livichuco after breakfast and head to the colonial mining town of Potosi, the highest town in the world. We stay in a local, friendly hotel. Second day will be free for activities

Activity	Approximate Cost
Head down into the tunnels of the Potosi silver mine	USD 20
Visit the famous Casa de la Moneda museum in Potosi.	USD 3

Potosi

Potosi is a colonial mining town, founded in the sixteenth century after the Spanish discovered huge silver deposits in the nearby Cerro Rico mountain. Situated at over 4000m altitude, high up on the Bolivian altiplano the city can claim to be one of the highest in the world.



Whilst in Potosi you can arrange to visit a mine that is still being worked, which offers a challenging and yet fascinating insight into how mining has shaped the history and culture of this town. Entering a dark maze of tunnels you will descend to four levels below, down to the work face where miners use hammers, chisels and dynamite more reminiscent of the 1800's than the 21st century to dig out the remaining metal. Most of the silver here is long gone - it's tin the miners are looking for now.

If you do choose to head down into the mines it's become a custom to take the miners gifts of dynamite, fuses and cocoa leaves in exchange for their stories

of how their working conditions have not changed in centuries. Life is harsh for all who work here but the mines have now all been organised into co-operatives and so at least today the men have a say in their own future. You should note that visiting these primitive mines is not for everybody as it is pretty tiring, you will be in enclosed spaces and it can be dangerous.

Back in the city of Potosi itself, the winding streets are worth a wander. The town has a bit of an air of fading grandeur, many of it's beautiful colonial buildings and plazas having seen better days, but it's a fascinating place to explore nevertheless. You can also visit the "Casa de la Moneda", the old mint, which is a great place to learn more about Potosi's history and the story of the mines.

Day 102: Uyuni

Sun 01 Sep 2013

Today we will journey 190kms to Uyuni, gateway to the salt flats of the Salar de Uyuni. We overnight in a friendly hotel serving the highest pizzas in the world!

Uyuni

Arriving in Uyuni feels a bit like you've reached the end of the road, which in many ways is true. This remote small town sits on the edge of the high altiplano, a wilderness that extends for hundreds of kilometres towards the border with Argentina and Chile. So it's hardly surprising that the town can have a bit of a wild-west feel about it.



Affectionately nicknamed 'La Huja Predilecta de Bolivia', which means "Bolivia's favourite daughter", Uyuni is perhaps best known for its proximity to the Bolivian salt flats known locally as the "Salar de Uyuni". Also in the area and definitely worth a visit is the Cementario de Trenes, a graveyard for the carcasses of old steam engines that have been left here to rust, an unwordly and eerie sight set in the bright altiplano sunshine, set against the background of the distant Salar.

Day 103: Salar De Uyuni

Mon 02 Sep 2013

We venture out on to the salt flats of the Salar de Uyuni in jeeps spending a full day on this stunning location. Great for all those perspective bending photographs.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Take jeeps out onto the dazzling Uyuni Salt Flats	Included in tour

Salar De Uyuni

The Bolivian Salt Flats are a truly unforgettable sight, this is a landscape quite unlike anything you're likely to ever have seen before. The Salar de Uyuni is a dry lake of over 12,000 sq kms made of blinding white interlocking salt crystals. It is Bolivia's largest salt pan and when there's a little water on the flats, it reflects the bright blue sky of the altiplano perfectly, acting like a mirror and making the horizon disappear. The effect is positively eerie. When dry, the Salar becomes a blinding white expanse that stretches for miles and miles, as far as the eye can see.



On the edge of the flats, local workers carve blocks of salt by hand for processing in nearby antiquated factories, covered head to toe in old rags to keep their bodies protected from the harsh conditions. Then when you head out onto the Salar proper, you'll experience this unique "nothingness" of this unusual landscape. Miles and miles of bright white salt. Bizarrely there is a hotel situated out on the flats, where everything is made completely of salt from the walls to the furniture

Day 104: Bolivian Altiplano

Tue 03 Sep 2013

Today we cross the altiplano in a spectacular 320kms drive towards the Chilean border via Laguna Colorado and Laguna Verde. We stay the night in a basic hostel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Exploration of Bolivia's high Altiplano, Laguna Colorado and Verde	Included in tour

Bolivian Altiplano

The high Bolivian altiplano stretches hundreds of kilometres from the small town of Uyuni out across to the borders with Argentina and Chile. This is real wilderness, there are no roads up here, just a few tracks to follow and you're more likely to see a flamingo or llama than another human being. The only way to cross the altiplano is by travelling in a specialist expedition vehicle like one of our trucks, or local jeeps. The crossing is an adventurous one, with no roads to speak of it's rough travelling and the trip from Uyuni to the border normally takes a couple of days - but it's without a doubt one of the most unforgettable journeys you'll ever make, because the landscape here is out of this world.



Wild and remote, the high altiplano is barren semi desert, but impressive nonetheless. The open plains are dotted by streams and lakes, many of which appear vividly coloured, due to the mineral deposits in the water. In the background the lakes are flanked by the impressive volcanic peaks of the high Bolivian Andes, awe-inspiringly beautiful and undoubtedly some of the most spectacular mountain scenery you'll have ever seen. You'll also pass a few remote villages, Quechua farmers who try their best to eke out a living up here from the rough pasture, grazing a few llamas and alpacas.

The altitude here is considerable and it can be very cold and windy. When travelling here you should be prepared for the cold temperatures and it is worth making sure you have a really good quality sleeping bag.

Day 105 to 106: San Pedro De Atacama

Wed 04 Sep to Thu 05 Sep 2013

We descend from the altiplano and a 150kms drive takes us across the border into Chile. We camp for the night in San Pedro de Atacama in a good campsite and visit the extraordinary Moon Valley, hopeful of a stunning sunset. In the evening there is also the chance to go stargazing (only possible when there is not a full moon).

Border information: Exit Bolivia at Uyuni, enter Chile at San Pedro.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the dramatic landscape of the Moon Valley	Included in tour
Observe the night skies at a Chilean observatory	USD 33

San Pedro De Atacama

San Pedro is a small oasis town in the Atacama desert. It's a quirky little place, low-lying adobe buildings line the narrow streets, leading to a sleepy tree-lined plaza that's home to a pretty white-washed church and a fascinating small museum, home to some interesting mummies and various other Indian artifacts.



Pleasant though the town is, the real attraction here is the surrounding landscape. This part of the Atacama has become well-known as a tourist destination because of the spectacular scenery. Perhaps most well known is the unusual desert landscape of "Moon Valley", just a short distance outside San Pedro, where otherworldly rock formations, unusual layer-cake landscapes and huge dunes combine to create some incredible views. The sunsets here can be amazing, the changing

light turning the stone and sand a kaleidoscope of different colours, so the end of the day is definitely the best time of day to visit.

There are also a whole host of other activities on offer here, from star-gazing to horse-riding and mountain-biking in the surrounding countryside. The town itself is also a pleasant place just to kick-back and relax, with some good bars and restaurants thanks to the developing tourist-trade.

Day 107: Salta
Fri 06 Sep 2013

A full 550kms drive takes us across the border into Argentina and to the fine Spanish colonial city of Salta. We stay in a simple hotel in the centre of the city.

Border information: Exit Chile at San Pedro, enter Argentina at Paso Jama.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Get the adrenaline pumping with some white water rafting in Salta	USD 40

Salta

Salta is an attractive town in the north west of Argentina. Nicknamed "Salta la Linda" (or "Salta the fair") the city is well known as a handsome town in a beautiful area. Home to some fantastic colonial architecture, the old town centres around the main plaza which is lined with cafes and restaurants, a great place to while away a couple of hours people-watching over a traditional morning snack of a cafe con medialunas (coffee and small croissant like pastries). It is an elegant and relaxed city, with a nice relaxed atmosphere, a perfect place to wander the streets and explore. To get a better view of the city and surrounding area you can take a cablecar from Parque San Martín up to the Cerro San Bernardo view point, and the many churches and the cathedral are also worth a visit. Salta is also home to some fantastic museums, making it a good place to learn a bit more about Argentinian history and culture.



Day 108: Salta
Sat 07 Sep 2013

Today is a non-driving day with free time to explore Salta staying in the same hotel

Day 109: Salta
Sun 08 Sep 2013

We have a short morning drive to a campsite just outside Salta where you have the opportunity to go rafting or get involved in other adventure activities.

Day 110: Cafayate
Mon 09 Sep 2013

150kms drive to Cafayate, lying at the centre of Argentina's principal wine producing region where we will visit a vineyard. We stay at a camp site with good facilities.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Discover the bodegas and stock up on wine in Cafayate	

Cafayate

Cafayate is a small town in north-west Argentina and an important wine-growing area. The surrounding vineyards produce some of the best quality wine in South America, and you should look out for the



Torrontes in particular, a distinctive white wine that is typically Argentinian and similar in style to a Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio. Cafayate itself is small with a sleepy laid-back feel, although it can become busy during Argentinian holiday periods. Many of the local bodegas offer tastings and tours of their wine cellars and this is easily organised while you are here. Also worth seeking out is the local ice-cream parlour, which together with the more usual flavours, also offers red and white wine ice-cream! If wine is not your thing, the area is also popular for walking and mountain-biking, as the gently undulating terrain makes for pleasant hiking and cycling.

Day 111: Quilmes Ruins
Tue 10 Sep 2013

We cover around 400kms as we head south through beautiful scenery, visiting the Quilmes ruins en route. We will camp tonight

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Quilmes ruins	Included in tour

Quilmes Ruins

The ruins of Quilmes are located in Tucuman province in north-west Argentina. The people of Quilmes were an indigenous tribe who inhabited this area as far back as 1000AD, resisting Inca invasions in the 15th and 16th centuries and even holding out against the Spanish for over one hundred years, before finally succumbing to a siege led by the colonial powers in 1667. After the siege Spanish took the area over, deporting the few surviving indigenous people to a "reservation" close to Buenos Aires. The 2000 remaining Quilmes Indians were forced to make this 1500 km journey on foot, which meant that many died along the way, never reaching their final destination. At it's height, the city we see the ruins of here would have

housed nearly 5000 people, today there are only a handful of Quilmes descendents left in Tucuman. It is interesting to wander among the ruins here today and imagine the city that would once have been.

Day 112 to 114: Rio Ceballos

Wed 11 Sep to Fri 13 Sep 2013

270kms drive via the National Jesuit Museum, to a unique Anglo Argentinean estancia for 3 nights. We will spend time with the Gauchos - learning their skills, go horse riding, hiking and have a traditional asado or Argentinian BBQ.

Activity

Approximate Cost

Spend 3 unique days staying at an Anglo-Argentinian estancia to ride pure-bred horses

Included in tour

Rio Ceballos

To the east of the Andes in the centre of Argentina is the country's second major city, Cordoba. Nearby are the beautiful hills of the Sierra de Cordoba where we will spend three nights at a unique Anglo



Argentinean estancia. This has been in the same family for four generations, and is a working cattle ranch, farming the prized Argentinean Aberdeen Angus cattle. Here we will sample the traditional hospitality of the Anglo Argentinean ranching community, with great food straight from the farm. An asado or Argentinian BBQ with local wines will also be enjoyed on one of our nights here. The visit to the estancia is based on horse riding excursions on the beautiful horses here. Daily expeditions will be arranged to ride through the hills to neighbouring estancias. The horses are fabulous and even the most "horse-fearing" feel like Gauchos in a short time. For those who do not like horses, alternative hikes or maybe bike riding trips can be organised. There is also the chance of visiting the local school to see how rural Argentinean children live their lives.

Please note however that there is a weight limit for all riders of 15 stones / 95kg so to ensure the horses are in no way harmed. If you are heavier than this weight then unfortunately you will be unable to ride.

Day 115: Cordoba

Sat 14 Sep 2013

Leaving the Estancia we have a short 70kms drive to the lively university city of Cordoba. We stay in central Cordoba in a hostel

Cordoba

Cordoba is Argentina's second biggest city, located at the heart of the Argentinian Sierras. It's a lively

university city and an important economic and commercial centre, which makes for a vibrant busy atmosphere and some excellent nightlife. There is plenty to see and do in the city, from great museums and galleries to beautiful colonial churches and bustling street markets. If shopping's your thing, it's also worth seeking out some of the specialist craft markets that have sprung up thanks to a growing alternative arts scene.

Day 116: Buenos Aires

Sun 15 Sep 2013

An all day drive brings us to the wonderful city of Buenos Aires, where we stay in a centrally located hotel.

Buenos Aires

At the mouth of the River Plate lies Buenos Aires, the cosmopolitan capital of Argentina. It's a buzzing, energetic city that often feels more European than Latin American, so much so that it's often referred to as "the Paris of the South". Not surprising when you consider how much the city has been influenced by immigration, with it's large Italian and Spanish communities.



There is a huge amount to do see and do here and a good place to start is with a city tour, which will help you get your bearings and see all the main sights. You can take in a lot on foot, as the wide streets are very pedestrian friendly and the underground metro system is cheap and easy to navigate. The neighbourhoods of San Telmo, Recoleta and Palermo are certainly all worth exploring, San Telmo for it's olde worlde charm, antique shops and Sunday street market, Palermo for it's unique quirky shops and restaurants and Recoleta is the "Mayfair" of Buenos Aires and home to the La Recoleta cemetry, Eva "Evita" Peron's final resting place. The waterfront area known as La Boca is also worth a look, this slightly down-at-heel neighbourhood is Buenos Aires' most colourful barrio, the ramshackle buildings painted in a rainbow of different bright colours.

In the evenings, you are also spoilt for choice. Buenos Aires has a vibrant nightlife, with a huge number of bars and night clubs to choose from. Restaurants here vary from cheap and cheerful to world class and it's a great place to get stuck into some of Argentina's finest steak and red wine. Of course this is also the home of Tango, and there are many evening Tango shows you can buy tickets for, or if you want a more "real" Tango experience you can check the local papers for details of where tango "milongas" are being held. This is where the locals go to tango, with dances held in school halls, meeting rooms and even warehouses. You might also like to visit the Teatro Colon, one of the world's greatest opera houses - even if you don't go to watch a

show, it's usually possible to take a guided tour of the building during the day.

Everywhere you go you'll be surrounded by some fantastic architecture. The Plaza de Mayo is perhaps the most historically interesting - as this is the site of the Cabildo (original town hall), Casa Rosada (the Presidential Palace) and the cathedral where the body of General San Martin lies. Finally, if you get the chance, try and get hold of tickets for an Argentinean football match while you're here, even if you're not usually a sports fan, the electric atmosphere of a local match is definitely something you'll never forget - tickets are usually available from local tourist agencies - and if you've still got time to spare, why not take the hydrofoil across the water to Uruguay for a day.

The trip finishes this morning. Night in hotel is not included tonight. If you wish to stay longer in beautiful Buenos Aires (and we highly suggest so), please contact the Dragoman Sales Team which can arrange extra post accommodation nights for you.

Border information: If you are leaving in Buenos Aires, exit Argentina at Buenos Aires Airport.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Splendid
Hotel Splendid
Avenida Rivadavia 950
Buenos Aires
Argentina
+54 11 4345 2800

Day 117: Buenos Aires

Mon 16 Sep 2013

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 authorities 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 offer climbing Huyana Picchu as an optional activity. Our leaders are specifically prohibited from recommending or assisting 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 which 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 Sun Gate & 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 from Machu 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 than 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 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 "Sun Gate" 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 sales 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 Cancha 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 Pituisiray (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, where 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 been 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. 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 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 treks. 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.

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!

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.

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 hiking 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.

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Note on camping kit for South America

There is a miss conception about being cheaper to buy camping equipment in South America. Every where in South America is easy to find good quality camping kit if you want to fly light, but prices are very similar to UL if not more. Please keep this in mind when you are planning your trip.

Physical preparation for Central America Itineraries

Central America is diverse continent so you should therefore be prepared for the adventure. There will be time for hiking 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. The Central 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.

Guatemala

Nationals of many countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most European countries do not need a visa for tourist visits of up to 90 days. For nationalities requiring a visa, these should be obtained in advance from your local embassy or consulate.

Brazil

Nationals of the EU, New Zealand, South Africa, Turkey, Switzerland and the UK do not need a visa for tourist visits of limited duration.

Nationals of Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Korea and the USA need a visa to enter Brazil. This visa must be obtained before entering Brazil.

If your nationality was not included in the above mentioned group, please contact your nearest embassy to find out your visa requirements.

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

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.

El Salvador

Nationals of many countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most European countries do not need a visa for tourist visits of up to 90 days. Many nationalities however are required to purchase a tourist card upon arrival which cost 10USD. For nationalities requiring a visa, these should be obtained in advance from your local embassy or consulate.

Chile

Nationals of most countries including Australia, USA, 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 Chile

Honduras

Nationals of many countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most European countries do not need a visa for tourist visits of up to 90 days. For nationalities requiring a visa, these should be obtained in advance from your local embassy or consulate.

Argentina

Nationals of most countries including Australia, USA, 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 Argentina.

The Argentine government has recently introduced a reciprocity tax which applies to Canadian, US and Australian citizens. The amounts are as follows:

ARGENTINA RECIPROCITY TAX:

The Argentine government charges a reciprocity tax which applied to Canadian, US and Australian citizens. The amounts are as follows:

Australians - US\$ 100 (multiple entry for up to 1 year from date of issue)

Canadians - US\$75 (single entry) or US\$ 150 (multiple entry for up to 5 years from date of issue)

Americans - US\$40 (multiple entry for up to 10 years from date of issue)

Fee can be paid on line through the following websites: www.migraciones.gov.ar or www.provinciapagos.com.ar. For instructions on how to process this payment, please visit http://cnyor.mrecic.gov.ar/userfiles/Online_payment_instructions_0.pdf

IMPORTANT: Up to June 2013 computers will be made available at Ezeiza International Airport and Jorge Newbery Airport (Aeroparque) to facilitate this online payment to travellers who fail to make this payment prior to arrival. We expect this will potentially cause long delays to those travellers so we strongly advise to pay this fee before arriving to Argentina.

Nicaragua

Nationals of many countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most European countries do not need a visa for tourist visits of up to 90 days. Most nationalities are also required to purchase a tourist card upon arrival which cost 10USD. For nationalities requiring a visa, these should be obtained in advance from your local embassy or consulate.

Costa Rica

Nationals of many countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most European countries do not need a visa for tourist visits of up to 90 days. For nationalities requiring a visa, these should be obtained in advance from your local embassy or consulate.

Panama

Nationals of many countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most European countries do not need a visa for tourist visits of up to 90 or 180 days. Depending on your nationality you may however be required to obtain a tourist card which are available upon arrival and cost \$5. For nationalities requiring a visa, these should be obtained in advance from your local embassy or consulate.

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 appropriate fee - <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.

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on trips in Central America, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US\$20 and a maximum of US\$40 per day.

This will covers expenses such as your drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permit

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 Permethrin 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 these 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.

Currencies & Cash

It is not really worth trying to buy local currencies before you travel. Do also 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, traveller's cheques and ATM cards is best. However, most of our past passengers have said they wished they had been told to bring more cash. Throughout Central America the US Dollar is king.

Also in this trip you will have the departure tax for the flight to Roatan not included in kitty. You will need 25 USD each way for this.

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 23/05/2013