Overland between Rio & Lima via Brazilian Amazon (LRM)

Rio De Janeiro to Lima 40 days, departing 14 May 2013

Comfort Zone: Basic Luxury
Physical Challenge: Easy Hard
Trip Style: Overlanding
Route: Rio De Janeiro to Lima
Length: 40 days
Transport:
Accommodation:

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

Brazil

Brazil has a totally different feel to it than the other Latin American countries. It positively vibrates, it is dynamic and the whole country has a unique energy. Its ethnic mix is very different from most South American countries with a predominance of Afro American people, especially in the Bahia coastal region. Brazil is a much underrated country in terms of tourism. Our trips explore much of the country, especially the little known regions and National Parks.

Most visitors start in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's most famous city and home to the Christ the Redeemer statue. The deeper you travel into the country, the more the culture of Brazil is exposed. This is a chance to hear the soulful music which is influenced from Africa and Europe and brings the distinctive sounds of Samba, Choro, Brega and more, echoing throughout the land.

With the Amazon Rainforest covering large parts of Brazil, the natural environment is home to much wildlife and bio deversity. Eco safari in the rainforest and Pantanal are becoming popular elements of Brazilain tour

One of the many wonders is the language. Although Portuguese is the main language in Brazil, over 200 languages are spoken in the country, and the diversity of each reflects the diversity of the regions.

Brazil is also the place to taste many unique foods. Inspired by others to cook, no matter what direction you head in the country, you are bound to find something new each time. To the south of Brazil is the taste of grilled meats that melt in your mouth, and to the north is the amazing Manicobo dish, that takes at least a week to prepare.

Peru

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Rio De Janeiro

Tue 14 May 2013

Free time to explore Rio de Janeiro, with a group meeting at 18:00 hrs. We stay in a good quality hotel near the beach in Flamengo.

Departures on the 18th of June 2013 (ZRC130618A0, on the 9th of July 2013 (ZRC130730A) and 30th of July 2013 (ZRC130730A) will not be staying at Hotel Argentina but at Hotel Village Icarai (www.hotelvillageicarai.com.br) in Niteroi.

Carnival departures (6th of March 2014 and 19th of February 2015) the joining hotel will be Hotel Paysandu http://www.paysanduhotel.com.br/ . Hotel Paysandu is located only 5 minutes walk from Hotel Argentina and is our Overlanders Carnival Hotel.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Argentina

Hotel Argentina
Rua Cruz Lima, 30
Flamengo
Rio
Tel: +55 21 2558 7233

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the world famous statue Christ the Redeemer	
Take a cable car up Sugarloaf mountain in Rio	USD

Rio De Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro has to be one of the most beautifully situated cities in the world. Sugar Loaf Mountain rises up out of Guanabara Bay, the sandy beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana cut

beautiful curves in the shoreline, all under the watchful gaze of Christ the Redeemer.

This is a city with something for everyone; beaches, history, shopping, culture, fantastic food and amazing nightlife. For amazing views of this spectacular city, take the cable car up to the top of Sugar Loaf, or "Pao de Azucar" as the Brazilians call it, ride the train to Corcovado or jump on the tram to the historic hillside neighbourhood of Santa Teresa. If you're interested in learning more about Rio and Brazil, the Historical, Indian and National Museums are all well worth a visit, and even just wandering around the older parts of the city you'll be able to see some fantastic architecture. Kick back and relax on the beach, enjoy a beer or caipirinha at one of the many pavement cafes and then when evening comes you can party the night away - Rio has some unbelievable bars and clubs, Lapa is always a fun night out and Ipanema is always buzzing too. If you need a bit of quiet time to recover, take a walk in the Botanical gardens, or escape town for the day on an excursion to the lust forests of nearby Tijuca National Park.

Of course Rio is particularly famous for it's huge annual party - Carnival. The celebration of Mardi Gras 6 weeks before Easter is a great Brazilian tradition - the whole city goes wild for a full 7 days in a whirlwind of music and colour. Samba schools compete with ever more awe-inspiring dance displays and costumes putting on marathon perfomances in the Sambadrome, street parties are held all over the city and friends and families take to the beach.

Day 2: Ouro Preto

Wed 15 May 2013

Today is a full day 480kms drive to the beautiful old colonial mining town of Ouro Preto where we stay at a camp site with facilities

Ouro Preto

Ouro Preto is a beautiful colonial town with cobbled streets and many baroque churches. Famed for its school of mining, it was originally the capital of Minas Gerais, one of the world's great mining regions. Many different types of gemstone can be bought here. We can visit the gold mine of Minas de Passagem and you may wish to also visit the Museum of Mineralogy. Some of Ouro Preto's many churches feature the work of Aleijadinho - Brazil's most famous sculptor - who worked in wood and soapstone. Replicas of his carvings can be bought in the town.

Day 3: Ouro Preto

Thu 16 May 2013

Today is a non-driving day with free time to visit the mine, museum or many of the baroque churches here. We spend a second night at the same camp site.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Head underground into the gold mines of Ouro Preto	USD 6
Time to explore unique colonial Ouro Preto and its architectural heritage	USD

Day 4: Tres Marias

Fri 17 May 2013

Today will be a full driving day of around 600kms through Brazilian countryside and towns. We will find somewhere to bushcamp for the night, probably near to Tres Marias.

Day 5: Cavalcante

Sat 18 May 2013

We continue our journey through the Brazilian hinterland passing Brasilia en route to the town of Cavalcante where we will spend the night with the Kalunga people, a rarely visited tribe, and camp for the night on their lands.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Kalunga community in Cavalcante	Included in tour

Day 6 to 8: Chapada Dos Veadeiros National Park

Sun 19 May to Tue 21 May 2013

We head 170kms to Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park with two full days to explore the landscape and wildlife. There is time to hike in the jungle, visit waterfalls and swim in the warm springs. We stay in an eco-tourism campsite.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 Full Days To Explore Chapada Dos Veadeiros National Park	Included in tour
Guided tour of the national park	Included in tour
Various adventure activities such as canyoning or a canopy tour	USD 60
Abseiling or Canyoning in Chapada dos Veadeiros national park	USD 30

Chapada Dos Veadeiros National Park

Located in the State of Goiás, about 250 km from Brasília, the Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park is, according to NASA, the most luminous point seen from the Earth's orbit. This is due to the quantity of quartz crystals present in the soil, besides several other metals and minerals.

The main river that flows in Veadeiros National Park is Rio Preto. Along its course, there are many spectacular waterfalls, including Rio Preto Falls (120 metres high, 80 metres at the base) and the Cariocas. The canyons are just as beautiful, with walls of up to 40 metres high and valleys of up to 300 metres. Forests are also present in the region, and are well worth exploring primarily because of the rich variety of flora, more than 25 species of orchids can be found for example. The rich fauna of the region includes species threatened with extinction such as the Pantanal deer, the Jaguar, the Maned Wolf. More common are the Rhea (Brazilian ostrich), Seriema, Tapeti, Armadillo (Tatu Canastra), Anteater, Capybara (Capivara), Tapir (Anta), Green-Beek Toucan, Black Vulture, King Vulture. While the forests are home to this amazing wildlife it can be quite difficult to see, nonetheless this is a great place for us to explore for the amazing flora and landscape alone.

Day 9: Brasilia

Wed 22 May 2013

In the morning we will have an early start and drive 230 km to Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. We will have a tour of the city with a local guide exploring this extraordinary city with its wealth of architecture and sculpture. We stay in dorm accommodation in a relatively basic hostel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Full day guided tour of Brasilia	Included in tour

Brasilia

Brasilia is listed as a world heritage site and is one of the major examples of this century's modern movement in architecture and urban planning. Oscar Niemeyer was the chief Architect for the incredible project, an amazing feat that turned unpopulated swamp land into a purpose built city. To really appreciate the plan of the city with its bow and arrow or plane shape, try a trip up the television tower for a panoramic view. From there take taxis or walk to sights of your choice. The Metropolitan Cathedral shaped in a crown of thorns with amazing angels suspended from the ceiling should not be missed, neither should the incredible blue glass of Dom Bosco. Whatever you have time for, there is an amazing wealth of fantastic architecture and sculpture to take in within this unique city.

Day 10 to 11: Central Brazil Wildcamp

Thu 23 May to Fri 24 May 2013

Overland 1300 km towards the Pantanal of central Brazil, we will take it slowly to enjoy the sights and overlanding experience. We will be camping along the way.

Day 12: Pocone

Sat 25 May 2013

We arrive into the small town of Pocone, our base for the Pantanal trip. We stay in a local,friendly hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Journey through the heart of Brazil to the Pantanal	Included in tour

Day 13 to 15: Pantanal

Sun 26 May to Tue 28 May 2013

3 day trip into the Pantanal, the vast wetlands of Central Brazil. From a ranch base we explore the surrounding area on horseback, from boats, from canoes and on foot. You will be leaving mid morning on the last day doing a 'game drive' on the way out of the Pantanal and driving as far as possible tonight for a bush camp.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 day safari exploring the backwaters and ranches of the Brazilian Pantanal	Included in tour

Pantanal

The Pantanal is the vast wetlands of Central Brazil, which are teeming with birdlife, caiman (or jacare) and rare mammals. There is in fact over 230,000 sq km of these wetlands and we now embark on a three day trip through this unique area. Here cattle ranchers live side by side to anacondas and jacare. The list of wildlife is staggering, and there is probably no-where else in South America where the visitor has such access to the indigenous species of wildlife. There are over 250 species of birds, including parakeets, macaws, kingfishers, ibis, storks, kites and hawks, hummingbirds and more. The mammalian and reptilian population is no less impressive, with prolific numbers of jacare, anacondas, iguanas, 2 species of anteaters, ocelot, jaguars, cougars, giant river otters and thousands of pamba and march deer. One of the easier animals to spot is the capybara, a giant guinea pig type rodent. They grow up to 60 kg. and live in large herds in the swamps. You may see jacare sunning themselves with their mouths wide open on the edge of the water-ways. These animals are dangerous and care must be taken while visiting this region. A visit to the Pantanal is really the highlight of a trip, from a ranch base we explore the surrounding area on horseback, from boats and on foot. Night fall brings a whole new variety of animals out for us to discover and if that isn't enough there is always a chance to try your hand at piranha fishing! We stay at a ranch and explore the surrounding area. We will ride out on horseback while our guide points out the local flora and fauna and explains how the local ranchers live in this wilderness area. We can also take out boats down the waterways and go piranha fishing. Our guides will be on hand to point out the

amazing wildlife and explain how people live in the area.

Day 16 to 18: West Brazil Wildcamp, Porto Velho, Rio Branco

Wed 29 May to Fri 31 May 2013

The next few days will be an incredible exploratory journey across the rarely visited parts of central Brazil via Porto Velho and Rio Branco covering over 2000kms towards the Peruvian border bushcamping along the way.

Porto Velho

This town retains elements of the American Wild West. In fact, it is riding out the tail end of a gold rush and there are still a few gold shops that you can explore. However, this town is now more popularly used as an access point to the Amazon River.

Day 19: Puerto Maldonado, Peruvian Amazon

Sat 01 Jun 2013

We cross from Brazil over the Rio Acre and enter into Peru at Assis. Once through border formalities we drive on to Puerto Maldonaldo, the base in which we will launch ourselves into the 3 day jungle trip.

Tonight we will stay in a small local run hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 night Amazon jungle lodge stay near Puerto Maldonaldo	Included in tour

Peruvian Amazon

Peru has the second largest portion of the Amazon rain forest after the Brazilian Amazon. The Peruvian Amazon jungle area stretches from the east of the Andes to borders with Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil and Bolivia. This region comprises 60% of the country and is marked by a huge degree of biodiversity. It is one of the most biologically diverse areas on Earth. Most species have probably still not been discovered, or adequately studied. As a nation, Peru has the largest number of bird species in the world and the third largest number of mammals.

The Peruvian Amazon is traditionally divided into two distinct ecoregions:

The first being the lowland jungle which is also known as Omagua region, Walla, Anti, Amazonian rainforest or Amazon basin. This ecoregion is the largest of Peru, standing between 80 and 1000 meters above sea level. It contains long and powerful rivers such as the Apurimac, Mantaro, Amazon, Urubamba, Ucayali, Huallaga, Marañón, Putumayo, Yavarí, Napo, Pastaza, Madre de Dios, Manu, Purus, Yurua and rio Tigre. The Apurimac River is the Amazon River's greatest contributor.

The second is the highland jungle which is also called Rupa-Rupa region, andean jungle, ceja de selva. This ecoregion extends into the eastern foothills of the Andes, between 1000 to 3800 m above the sea level. The eastern slopes of the Andes are home to a great variety of fauna and flora due to the different altitudes and climates within the region. Temperatures are warm in the lowlands and colder in higher altitudes. There are many endemic fauna because of the isolation caused by the rugged terrain of this area.

Day 20: Posada Amazonas

Sun 02 Jun 2013

We transfer by boat to the Posada Amazonas. This is a forty five minute boat ride from the Tambopata Port to Posada Amazonas and will take us into the Community's Primary Forest Private Reserve.

Upon arrival, you will be briefed with important navigation and security tips.

A twenty minute walk from Posada Amazonas leads to a 30 meter scaffolding canopy tower. A bannistered staircase running through the middle provides safe access to the platforms above. From atop you obtain spectacular views of the vast expanses of standing forest cut by the Tambopata River winding through the middle. Now and then toucans, parrots or macaws are seen flying against the horizon, or mixed species canopy flocks land in the treetop next to you.

After dinner we have an Ecotourism Lecture from one of the staff members about the Infierno ecotourism.

Overnight at Posada Amazonas.

Posada Amazonas

The Posada Amazonas is a rainforest lodge just a 45-minute boat ride from the town of Puerto Maldonado. The lodge offers outstanding opportunities to see Amazonian wildlife.

The Lodge is community Owned by the indigenous Ese-Eja community of Infierno and managed in partnership with Rainforest Expeditions, Posada Amazonas is located within the Ese-Eja's communal reserve, next to the Tambopata National Reserve.

The lodge has a 30 metre scaffolding canopy tower giving you spectacular views of the vast expanses of standing forest and the Tambopata River. You will have good chances of spotting toucans, parrots or macaws

Despite being relatively close to Puerto Maldonado, the Posada Amazonas offers ample opportunities to see wildlife and experience the Amazon's rich ecosystem at firsthand, including Monkeys such as Saddle Backed Tamarins, Squirrel Monkeys, Brown Capuchin Monkeys, Red Howler Monkeys , Dusky Titi Monkeys and you can also see wildlife such as: Parrots, Giant River Otters, Caymans and capybaras on the river banks.

Day 21: Posada Amazonas , Tres Chimbadas Lake

Mon 03 Jun 2013

After breakfast we head to Tres Chimbadas Lake which is thirty minutes by boat and forty five minutes hiking from Posada Amazonas. Once there you will paddle around the lake in a catamaran, searching for the resident family of nine giant river otters and other lakeside wildlife such as caiman, hoatzin and horned screamers. Otters are most active from dawn to eight or nine in the morning.

We also visit a Parrot Clay Lick which is only a twenty minute walk from Posada Amazonas. From a blind located about twenty meters away you will see dozens of parrots and parakeets descend on most clear mornings to ingest the clay on a river bank. Species such as Mealy and Yellow- headed Amazon, Blue-headed Parrot and Dusky headed Parakeet descend at this clay lick. The clay lick is active at dawn, during the late mornings and mid-afternoons.

After lunch we have a Ethnobotanical tour. A twenty minute boat drive downriver leads you to a trail designed by the staff of the Centro Ñape. The Centro Ñape is a communal organization that produces medicines out of forest plants and administers them to patients who choose their little clinic. They have produced a trail which explains the different medicinal (and other) uses of selected plants.

After dinner you will have the option of hiking out at night, when most of the mammals are active but rarely seen. Much easier to find are frogs with shapes and sounds as bizarre as their natural histories.

Overnight at Posada Amazonas

Tres Chimbadas Lake

There are several types of habitats in the Peruvian rainforest and each makes its own contribution to biodiversity. One of the most important types of wetland habitats in the Amazon rainforest is the oxbow lake. Formed by bends in rivers that get cut off from the main channel, these lakes have much calmer waters than the river itself and can be filled with fish and wildlife. Tannins from the vegetation give the water a clear, dark, tea-like color and marshes grow in shallow parts of the lake. In Tambopata, birds like Hoatzins and Horned Screamers are found nowhere else, troops of Squirrel Monkeys are frequently seen as they forage in secondary growth at the edge of the lake, and animals like Anacondas, Black Caimans, and even Giant Otters make their home in the dark waters.

“Tres Chimbadas” was named after a nearby place in the Tambopata River that can be supposedly forded with three jumps (“tres chimbadas”). The wild, protected forests of Tambopata are one of their strongholds and Tres Chimbadas Lake is managed to protect the family of Giant Otters that reside there. These sensitive and intelligent animals roam the lake in cohesive groups that sleep, play, travel, feed and take care of their pups together.

Day 22: Urcos

Tue 04 Jun 2013

Today you will leave your jungle lodge early in the morning, get to the truck and drive as far as possible towards Cusco. You will go from the hot jungle to some of the highest passes in South America. Tonight will be spend bushcamping.

Day 23: Cusco

Wed 05 Jun 2013

After breakfast we transfer by boat back to Puerto Maldonado.

A full days drive from the jungle brings us to the amazing town of Cusco, gateway to the Inca Empire. We spend the night in a lovely hotel close to the Plaza Mayor.

Cusco

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

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

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

Lima to La Paz

Lima to Cusco

Cusco to La Paz

Day 24: Cusco

Thu 06 Jun 2013

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

Free day to explore the wonderful city of Cusco, the capital of the Inca kingdom. There will be a group meeting at 10:00 hrs. Staying 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 25 to 28: Inca Trail , Sacred Valley, Cusco

Fri 07 Jun to Mon 10 Jun 2013

Trekking in the Andes - either the community trek or the classic trek. This is one of the world's best treks and a highlight for most visitors to Peru.

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 Trek the Classic Inca Trail up the Royal Inca Road **IF YOU WISH TO BOOK THE CLASSIC INCA TRAIL THIS MUST BE ADVISED AT TIME OF BOOKING OTHERWISE YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE PUT ON OUR COMMUNITY TREK.**	Included in tour

Inca Trail

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

The Classic Inca Trail

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

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

The Community Inca Trek

Dragoman's Community Inca Trek is a unique trekking route where you'll hike through pristine unspoilt andean scenery, walking ancient Inca Trails and staying as guests of the local communities as part of our pioneering community-based tourism project, Tarpuy Yachay. This trek is all about getting away from the overcrowded thoroughfares of the Classic Inca Trail and getting out into the real Andes - not to mention being part of a project with provides a genuine, direct benefit to the host communities we travel through, by supporting education, income generation and environmental sustainability projects. The trek itself is about the same as the Classic Inca Trail in terms of length and difficulty, taking three to three and a half

days and ascending to about 4800m when you cross the highest pass. The scenery out here is truly magnificent, spectacular mountain peaks, verdant hillsides dotted by isolated villages and the odd llama and alapaca, you are unlikely to see another tourist here. If you were to ask Dragoman which one we prefer, there is no contest, Community Inca Trek and Tarpuy Yachay Project is a much better and far more worthwhile experience.

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

- You will trek through genuinely unspoilt, spectacular mountain scenery without seeing any other western tourists
- We camp as guests of the villages we pass through, meeting the local families and getting involved with the local communities, for e.g. helping with school refurbishment projects or harvesting crops
- Llamas, mules and horses are used instead of porters to carry equipment. These animals are sourced from the communities we travel through, providing a direct source of income for local families
- You'll be helping to give something back to the local community. On this trek the staff and pack animals are all from the local villages, so they directly benefit from your trekking
- We also make a financial donation from the group kitty, matched by Dragoman, for every person who does this trek. These donations help support a variety of projects, for e.g. paying for full-time teachers in each community's school
- By having the horses and mules along with us, you also have a much needed safety net if you suffer from altitude or exhaustion....because you can always swallow your pride and hitch a ride

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

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

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

Cusco to La Paz

Lima to Cusco

Lima to La Paz

Sacred Valley

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

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

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

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

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

to Ollantaytambo from Pisac, exploring the ruins here that afternoon and camping overnight, heading to the Classic Inca Trail start point early the next morning.

Day 29: Machu Picchu

Tue 11 Jun 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 Urambamba running through the gorge far below. It's thought that the city was the location of a royal palace and estate, home to the Inca emperors, or possibly a sacred religious and ceremonial sight.

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

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

Lima to La Paz

Lima to Cusco

Cusco to La Paz

Day 30: Cusco

Wed 12 Jun 2013

Today is a free day to recover from trekking with optional activities available in Cusco 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 31: Raqchi

Thu 13 Jun 2013

Drive to Raqchi and visit ruins and local artisan centre. We 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 32: Chivay

Fri 14 Jun 2013

440kms drive day to Chivay with optional visit to thermal springs. We stay overnight in a hotel at Chivay

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay in Chivay and guided trip to the Colca Canyon and Condors	Included in tour
Visit the thermal springs in Chivay	USD 10

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 33: Chivay and Colca Canyon, Arequipa

Sat 15 Jun 2013

Today we will visit the spectacular Colca Canyon to view condors and also local communities. We will then head on to the beautiful white city of Arequipa.

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

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.

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 34: Arequipa

Sun 16 Jun 2013

Free day to explore Arequipa.

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

Day 35: Puerto Inca

Mon 17 Jun 2013

380kms drive day to Puerto Inca where we stay at a beach side campsite.

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 36: Nazca

Tue 18 Jun 2013

A 270kms morning drive takes us to Nazca where you will have the chance of an optional flight over the mysterious Nazca lines and visit Chauchilla cemetery. We stay at a campsite with a pool.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Fly over the Nazca lines	USD 100
Visit to the Nazca Lines and Chauchilla Cemetery	Included in tour

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 37: Huacachina

Wed 19 Jun 2013

We drive 220kms and visit the oasis town of Huacachina for optional sand boarding and sand buggying and an overnight trip to the dunes.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Dune buggying or boarding in the spectacular sand dunes of Peru Desert	USD 20

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 buggying, although care should be taken before going on any of these trips, as standards are not always quite up to western expectations.

Day 38: Paracas National Park

Thu 20 Jun 2013

A short drive via the town of Ica takes us to Paracas National Park where we will visit the museum in the park before bushcamping in this spectacular location.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to Paracas National Park, coastal wildlife reserve.	Included in tour

Paracas National Park

Spanning 335,000 hectares of land and sea, Paracas National Park and 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 National Park 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. 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.

Day 39: Ballestas Islands, Lima

Fri 21 Jun 2013

In the morning we board a boat trip around the Ballestas Islands to view wildlife. We then head 270kms to Lima, arriving late in the afternoon. We stay in a good quality hotel in central Lima

Activity	Approximate Cost
Boat trip to see the seals & seabirds on the Ballestas Isles	Included in tour
Overnight stay in colonial Lima	Included in tour

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.

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 civlisations. 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 40: Lima

Sat 22 Jun 2013

Free time to explore the city. There are many museums you can visit, such as the Museo de la Nacion, as well as cathedrals, plazas and cafes. It is also possible to visit the catacombs.

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

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Gold Museum & Catacombs of Lima	USD 20

Visa Information:

Important Notes

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

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

The Classic and Community Inca Trails — more information

Trail Permits

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

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

The Inca Trail usually refers to the ancient pathway used by the Incas leading to Machu Picchu, but in fact there are a number of Inca Trails running through the Urubamba Valley. On all Dragoman trips that travel via Cusco we include the choice to either trek the Classic Inca Trail or to trek our Community Inca Trek, which is exclusive to Dragoman (and by the way, it's unique to Dragoman and not the Lares trail that other operators use!)

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

Option 1: The Community Inca Trek

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

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

Option 2: Classic Inca Trail

If you want to do this option, you MUST

1. Inform Dragoman at the time of booking your trip

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

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

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

Option 3: Non Trekking Package

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

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

DAY 1

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

DAY 2 and 3:

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

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

DAY 4:

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

DAY 5:

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

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

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

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

Non Trekking Package Includes:

Transport to Ollantaytambo via the Sacred Valley.

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

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

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

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

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

Entrance fee to Machu Picchu

Transfer Poroy train station – Hotel.

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

Huayna Picchu

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

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

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

Still Unsure of Which Trail?

Community Inca Trek or the Classic Inca Trail?

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

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

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

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

Points against The Inca Trail & Quechua Community Project

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

The Classic Inca Trail

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

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

And Finally Our Opinion

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

Full daily itinerary for the Community Inca Trail

Day 1

Cusco – Cancha Cancha

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

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

Meals provided: Lunch, Dinner, Snacks, Tea Time

Approximate walking time: 4 hrs

Distance: 9km / 5.4 miles

Day 2

Cancha Cancha – Quishuarani

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

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

Approximate walking time: 8 hours

Distance: 13.5km / 8 miles

Day 3

Quishuarani – Lares

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

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

Approximately walking time: 5 hours

Distance: 10km / 6 miles

Day 4

Lares - Ollantaytambo

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

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

Meals provided: Breakfast, Lunch

Approximate walking time: 2 ½ hours

Day 5

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

Community Trail Inclusions

Guide for Sacred Valley tour

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

Lunch in Pisac

Overnight in Ollantaytambo hostel

Entrance fees including Machu Picchu

High quality double-occupancy tents and camping equipment

Sleeping mattress

Hot water in the morning for washing

Drinking water throughout the trek

Dining tent, kitchen tent, and latrine tent

Oxygen bottle and first aid kit

Professional, English-speaking guide and camp staff

Llamas and mules to carry camping equipment and passenger bags

Emergency mule/ mules in case of illness

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

Bus ticket from Machu Picchu to Aguas Calientes

Communities Supported On The Trail

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

The fairly recent introduction of tourism to the region has brought some needed assistance and economic development to the communities, but there is still much more to do. Our local trekking operator working within the guidelines of sustainable tourism has met with the communities and discussed the pros and cons of tourism in the area. Together they have established still un-official guidelines for trekking and tourism through the Cordillera such as: established campsites to avoid contamination of community areas, use of community animals and personnel on treks, training of community members through workshops on camp maintenance, hygiene, client service to enhance their economic viability, maintenance of camp trails, camp sites, and environmental conservation. Many agencies respect these guidelines, but because making things official often brings on unwanted government intervention, they are now a pact between the communities, agencies, and tourists.

Full daily itinerary for the Classic Inca Trail

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

Day 1

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

Day 2

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

Day 3

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

Day 4

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

Day 5

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

Trail fitness for either trek

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

Trekking - what to bring

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

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

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

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

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

Responsible Trekking

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

Departures leading in or out of Rio Carnival

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

Physical Preparation

Physical preparation for South America Itineraries

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

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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.

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.

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

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

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

Personal Spending

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

What else you need to know

Currencies & Cash

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

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

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

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

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

Pre and post trip accommodation and connecting flights

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

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

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

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

Accommodation on tour

Dragoman overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying in hotels and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip, in accommodation ranging from twin to multi-share. The type and variety of accommodation is determined by conditions on each of our routes. The campsites will range from rather basic to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars. In some cases it may also be possible to upgrade locally to bungalows, lodges or even tree-houses. One of the highlights of overlanding is that in more remote areas we will wild camp. This allows us to get far away from the tourist crowds to some beautiful, secluded spots. We will also arrange as many village or local homestays as possible, allowing us to get close to indigenous populations and ensures our money stays within local communities.

Group size?

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

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

Who travels with Dragoman?

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

Our Community

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

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

Our crew and guides

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

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

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

Medical conditions

We ask all of our passengers to declare any pre-existing medical conditions and in some cases you will be asked to complete one of our medical questionnaires. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude we also require all passengers to complete an altitude questionnaire. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and

in some cases passengers should be prepared for some long driving days and possible limited facilities. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns.

Vaccinations

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

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

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

Malaria

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

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

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

Meals and group participation

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

Responsible tourism & code of conduct

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

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

Overland travel and security

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

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

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

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice

Reports from other travel companies and local suppliers

Leaders reports from off the road

Local contacts we have built up over 29 years of experience

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emergency contact

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

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

Emergency Number: +44 (0) 7985106564.

Insurance

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

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

Issues on the trip

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

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

Passports

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

Luggage & Kit List

Although you will not have to carry your main bag long distances you will need to help load and unload them onto the truck. For this reason we recommend that you use a backpack or soft bag rather than a heavy suitcase. During your trip your main luggage will be kept in the back locker so you will also need a small daypack. This can be used to carry your camera, water bottle and other personal effects for daily use.

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

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

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

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

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

- Sleeping bag - Check the expected climate en route. Nights in desert and mountain regions can be very cold in winter months
- Mattress or compressed foam
- A day pack is useful for short hikes in the countryside, wandering around cities, etc and also for keeping inside the vehicle for items used during the day
- 2 sets of comfortable travelling clothes (light, easily washable cotton clothes are best)
- 1 set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out. Women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf for visiting places of worship
- 2 pairs of shorts
- Sun hat or warm hat if trekking
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- Warm sweater/fleeces
- 1 waterproof jacket with hood
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes/boots (or ankle height canvas jungle boots)
- 1 pair of sandals or flip-flops
- Underwear and socks (thermals are also a good idea if you are travelling to altitude or to the desert as it can get very cold at night)
- Swimwear
- 2 small towels
- Washing kit, including a small mirror
- Clothes washing detergent, small scrubbing brush & washing line (just a length of cord)
- Head torch/flashlight with spare batteries & bulbs (only the 3 standard sizes of round 1.5v batteries are widely available en route)
- Passport photos (average of 2 per country for which visas will be applied for en route)
- Good water bottle at least 1 litre
- A pouch or money belt worn inside your clothing, or unobtrusive pocket sewn into the inside of a pair of loose fitting trousers, is a must.
- Alarm clock
- Pocket calculator (useful when exchanging money)
- Writing materials & notebook/diary
- Multi purpose knife

- Cotton sheet sleeping bag (or sheet folded and sewn up on 2 sides). It will help keep your sleeping bag clean, and can be used on its own on warm nights.
- Mosquito net - The tents supplied by us have mosquito netting and you will only need a net if you think you will sleep out under the stars a lot of the time.
- "Wet Ones" (moistened tissues) and hand gel
- Toilet paper – this can be purchased almost everywhere en-route but one roll is worth packing
- Assorted sized plastic bags - protects clothing and equipment from dust and damp

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

Water

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

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

Personal medical kit

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

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

Electrical equipment

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

The kitty

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Continuing your trip

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

Contingency emergency fund

Sometimes, civil or political unrest, or reasons beyond Dragoman's control (e.g. a natural disaster), can mean that an itinerary is disrupted and we have to make a contingency plan. This may involve hiring alternate transport or even the whole group flying over an area. Although Dragoman will help organise travel arrangements, in circumstances outside Dragoman's control you should be prepared to contribute towards the costs and therefore we ask you to bring along a 'Contingency Fund' of USD400. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you take along an internationally recognised credit or charge card with a decent limit in case of emergencies, such as medical treatment en route, or even the need to be repatriated; though these occurrences are rare. Remember that travel insurance policies usually only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.

Tipping

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

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

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

These trip notes were printed on 19/05/2013