

Peru: Amazon River Cruise, the Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca and the Andean Explorer train journey

Tour Highlights

- River Cruise on the Amazon on the m/v Amatista
- Amazon jungle experience
- The Sacred Valley of the Incas
- Machu Picchu- one of the new Wonders of the World
- Cusco and its cultural highlights
- Luxury train journey across the Andes
- Puno and Lake Titicaca
- Lima and the Peru's colonial heritage

START DATE: Sept. 07, 2015

Day 1 Arrive in Lima

Today we arrive in Lima, Peru and transfer to our in fashionable Miraflores.

In recent years, this city has undergone some wonderful restorations of the plazas, ornate facades, and wooden balconies for which it is famous. Named the 'City of Kings' by the Spanish Conquistadors, Lima is the capital of Peru. Founded in 1535 by Francisco Pizarro, where the River Rimac meets the Pacific Ocean, this was the most important Spanish city during the colonial era with a population of about 100,000 inhabitants. Today the city is home to more than 7 million people.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores).

Day 2 Fly from Lima to Iquitos (the Amazon area). Amazon River Cruise

Arrive to Iquitos, transfer to Nauta, VIP reception at a private port, embarkation on the cruise ship. On our way we see a variety of bird species typical of the river or forest edge. The La Amatista - meaning amethyst, is a classic, wooden Amazon River vessel, built and fitted out by Amazon carpenters and shipwrights, so as to create an authentic atmosphere while providing all the facilities for a relaxing and comfortable stay.



The amenities include delicious international and local cuisine, an observation point on the boat's upper deck equipped with a full service bar, and cabins that are air-conditioned and with hot water in the

private bathrooms. One of the few remaining traditional wooden riverboats on the Peruvian Amazon, cruises aboard the La Amatista give you a real glimpse into the old world charm of Amazonia.

Trained naturalist guides and the entire crew provide a first class service with a personal touch that completes the experience. Overnight on the Amazon luxury river boat. Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 3 Amazon river cruising and jungle experience

Amazon cruising. Jungle exploration by skiff and jungle trail walk; also piranha fishing and night safari. Overnight on the Amazon luxury river boat. Breakfast, lunch & dinner.

Day 4 Amazon river cruising and jungle experience

Zapote River and Supay Lake tours by skiff and kayak. Overnight on the Amazon luxury river boat. Breakfast, lunch and dinner.



Day 5 Amazon river cruising and return to Lima

Visit the Amazon Rescue & Rehabilitation Center of River Mammals (ACOBIA) to learn about manatees and other threatened species. Drive to Iquitos airport and fly to Lima. Overnight in Lima. Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 Fly to Cuzco. Drive to the Sacred Valley

Early this morning we fly to Cuzco, located in a fertile valley at 3354 m (11,004 feet). This is the archaeological capital of the Americas and the ancient capital of the Inca Empire that, at its height, stretched from Colombia in the north, through Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and down to central Chile in the south. Although the empire already existed in the 12th century, it remained small until the mid-15th century. Over the next 100 years, it expanded massively but declined due to the civil war and the conquest by the Spanish conquistadors under Francisco Pizarro in 1533.

On arrival we will travel by road into the Urubamba Valley, or "Sacred Valley of the Incas," along one of the most scenic drives on our trip.

Time permitting, we will make a side trip to visit to the Inca ruins of Ollantaytambo located on a spectacular ridge with deep valleys on either side. We can admire the carefully constructed and maintained farming terraces on the surrounding hillsides.

We continue to the town of Yucay on the bank of the Urubamba River (2300m / 7,590 ft). This is an attractive little town of particularly fertile lands whose name translated into Spanish means "deceit" or "bewitchment". According to legend, in the middle of the 15th century, the Inca Huayna Capac was captivated by the incomparable magnificence of Yucay's setting and decided to settle here.

Overnight in Yucay.

Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner

Day 7 Yucay - Machu Picchu –Cusco.

We take the morning train from Ollantaytambo to Aguas Calientes and Machu Picchu. The train journey to Machu Picchu is a highlight of any trip to the Andes; the scenery is simply spectacular, and the train allows you to enjoy it in comfort. The 2 hour trip takes us through a changing landscape with wonderful vistas of the mountains and, deep in its dramatic canyon, the beautiful Urubamba River.



Upon arrival at the Aguas Calientes train station, a bus will take us on the 6 km twisting journey up the mountainside to the site of Machu Picchu. We proceed immediately for a guided 3-hour walking tour of the ruins (please be prepared with all that you need for our tour). We will enter the site through the House of the Terrace Caretakers, which flank the agricultural sector. Once on the site, we will see, among other features: the Temple of the Sun, the Fountain Caretaker's House, the Royal Sector, and the puzzling Temple of the Three Windows. We will also see the Common District, the Sacred Rock, and the prison-like Temple of the Condor.



Machu Picchu, popularly known as the 'Lost City of the Incas,' is an ancient city of stone palaces, towers, temples and staircases. It is a very mysterious place, and to this day our knowledge of it remains sketchy. There are no records or artifacts on the site to indicate what any of the buildings were used for. Archaeologists have ascertained that the site was most likely a ceremonial centre and possibly used for administrative purposes for the populous region.

This afternoon, there will be some free time to explore the side streets of Aguas Calientes, the town set in a dramatic canyon at the foot of Machu Picchu.

Later, we board the Vistadome train from Aguas Calientes to Poray and then do a short drive to our Cuzco hotel.

Overnight in Cuzco. Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 8 Cuzco

This Inca city was laid out around a great central square in the shape of a puma, the god of lightning. Today, stone walls built by the Incas line most of Cuzco's central streets and form the foundations of colonial and modern buildings. The Inca buildings were so well built that the Spaniards simply knocked down the upper parts of the Inca temples and palaces and built their churches and mansions on top of the Inca walls. Shortly after the Spanish conquest, the capital was moved to Lima on the coast. Thus Cuzco has retained a wonderful, untouched colonial atmosphere. The culture is also very much alive here, and is evident in the music, clothing and handicrafts of the people.

This morning we visit some of the most important Inca sites in the Cuzco area.

Sacsayhuaman is an impressive complex which, like so many others of that time, had both a religious and military purpose. The fortress known as the 'storehouse of the sun' incorporates some of the largest stones ever used in a building. The zig-zag walls represent the teeth of the sacred puma and provide an excellent defensive structure. The stones fit so perfectly together without mortar that not even moss can grow in the cracks!

We also visit the ruins at Tambo Machay, Puca Pucara and Qenko. The latter is an Inca sacrificial site carved with inscriptions.

In the afternoon we return to Cuzco and enjoy a tour of the town. We visit Coricancha, the temple of the sun which was the most important location in the Inca empire. Entombed in the closed cloister of the Santo Domingo Church, these sacred walls were hidden from modern civilization until the colonial walls were brought down in 1950 by a powerful earthquake. We also visit the church of San Blas with its fabulously carved pulpit. Wandering the narrow streets of the San Blas artisan region we make our way to the cathedral which towers impressively over the Plaza Mayor. Inside we find precious paintings from the Cuzco School of Art, one of the most prolific of its era.

Overnight in Cuzco. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner

Day 9 The Andean Explorer Train to Lake Titicaca

Today we take the "Andean Explorer" train from Cuzco to Puno, a full day's journey.

From Cuzco, our train heads south-east, following the Urubamba River through green fields dotted with willow trees and eucalyptus groves, passing outlying communities gathered around colonial churches that conceal their artistic treasures behind crumbling adobe facades. The first half of the journey is dominated by magnificent Andes, towering over the deep valleys of the meandering Huatanay River. It then reaches the gentler, rolling Andean Plains, where vicuna and alpaca are often seen. This is a wild, high, windswept and sunburned prairie of isolated communities of shepherds and cattle farmers, wedged between the two distant branches of the Andes visible occasionally on either horizon, when not melting completely with the giant cumulus clouds that dominate the skyline.



The train continues to climb La Raya, some 210 km (130 mi) from Puno. At 4321m (14,260 ft) above sea level, we reach the highest point on our journey, a cold, remote place whose surrounding snow-draped peaks are often shrouded by mist or fine rain, and whose eerie silence is at least partly attributable to eardrums blocked by the dizzying altitude.

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Puno, at 3830m (12,562 feet), is the main settlement on the Peruvian shore of Lake Titicaca and the highest place on our tour in which you will spend some time. Puno is the greatest centre of Peruvian

folk dancing and traditional instruments; the markets and streets of Puno are bustling with the brightly coloured costumes of the different groups of the region.

Overnight in Puno. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 10 Puno and the Floating Islands of Lake Titicaca

This morning we travel north and east to Sillustani, situated on a wind-swept peninsula on tiny Lake Umayta. The burial towers of the nobles of the Colla civilisation are up to 12 metres / 40 feet high. However, it is not known exactly when they were built. Known as chullpas, it is thought that whole families were buried in the towers.

Returning through the stark landscape to Puno, we take an afternoon boat excursion to the floating islands of Los Uros. The Uros people began their floating existence centuries ago in an effort to isolate themselves from their rivals, the Collas and the Incas. Today, about 300 people live on the islands. The islands are constructed from many layers of floating tortora reeds which grow in the shallow waters of Lake Titicaca. The reeds rot away from the bottom and are replaced at the top, so the ground is soft and springy as you walk over it. Even the buildings on the islands are made of tortora. The whole life of the Uros people revolves around the reeds. They even eat the lower stalk and root, which is supposed to taste like celery.



Overnight in Puno. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner

Day 11 Return to Lima

We drive the short distance to Juliaca and then fly to Lima mid afternoon. Evening free in Lima to head to the nearby trendy area of Miraflores where people stroll along the cliff tops and watch the sun setting on the Pacific Ocean.

Overnight in Lima. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner

Day 12 Lima sightseeing.

This morning we start our tour with a visit to San Francisco's Church to visit the extensive catacombs that lie underneath. We then continue to the Plaza de Armas, the most important plaza in Lima. The oldest surviving part of the plaza is the impressive bronze fountain, erected in 1650. Surrounding the plaza is the exquisite Archbishop's Palace, the cathedral, and the Government Palace where handsomely uniformed presidential guards are on duty all day. We visit the cathedral where the conquistador Francisco Pizarro's tomb lies.

We then proceed to the Larco Museum, which showcases remarkable chronological galleries and an excellent overview on 3,000 years of development of Peruvian pre-Columbian history. Located in a unique vice-royal mansion of the 18th century built over a 7th century pre-Columbian pyramid, is surrounded by beautiful gardens. Features the finest gold and silver collection from ancient Peru and

the famous erotic archaeological collection, one of the most visited Peruvian tourist attractions. For an unforgettable experience, Larco is one of the few museums in the world where visitors can also choose to enter the storage area with its 45,000 classified archaeological objects.

Late departure transfer to airport for our late night return flight to Canada.

Price: C\$ 5690 per person . Single Supplement: C\$1570*

*(Single on cruise subject to availability and possible higher cabin price)

INCLUDED:

- Experienced Tour Leader for the land part of the tour. Expert guides on cruise
- Most meals as stated in itinerary
- All sightseeing on a private guided basis with entrance fees included
- Accommodation in a twin or double rooms in Peru in superior hotels
- Bottled water during transfers and excursions
- Domestic air tickets within Peru
- Tips & gratuities to guides and drivers

NOT INCLUDED:

- Personal medical or travel insurance.
- Tour Escort gratuity
- International airfare