

Walk Peru

Choquequirao to Machu Picchu



Machu Picchu – colonial Cusco – Cachora – Choquequirao
expert guides – amazing wildlife – comfortable hotels – carefully paced

Hike nearly 100km across the Andes between two beautiful Inca citadels: Machu Picchu and Choquequirao.

Cross the entire Vilcabamba mountain range with its steep valleys, high passes, cloudforest and Inca ruins.

Explore the barely visited Inca ruins of Tarawasi, Sahuite and Choquequirao before finishing at Machu Picchu.

This is a Pura *handpicked* holiday with an activity rating *high* and a comfort rating *standard*.



During this walking holiday hike over the clouds.



Holiday Itinerary



Hike the entire Vilcabamba mountain range to see Machu Picchu.

Day 01 | Cusco | **land in Cusco**

Please note: flights for this holiday are quoted separately.

On arrival we transfer you to your hotel and start acclimatising to the rarefied air of this beautiful city.

In the afternoon, take a short walking tour of the centre of Cusco to familiarise yourself with the main sights, museums and restaurants.

This is also a chance to stretch your legs and experience hiking at over 3,000m.

At a convenient time your guide will arrange a full briefing for the days ahead.

Day 02 | Cachora | **visit Inca ruins**

Travel by vehicle to the village of Cachora, the start point of the trail across the Vilcabamba mountains.

En route, visit traditional villages and Inca ruins.

The village of Cachora is in a beautiful setting high above the River Apurimac canyon.

Camp just below the village and enjoy spectacular views of snow-capped mountains in the distance.

To stretch your legs if time permits you can hike the final descent into Cachora. (b,l,d)

Day 03 | Apurimac | **start hiking**

Today meet our trekking team, mules and porters and start the trek.

The hike you are about to undertake is a beautiful but strenuous trek covering nearly 100km of mountainous landscape with altitudes ranging from 1,450m to 4,600m along the way.

You are actually very close to the ruins of Choquequirao at this point, you just have the small matter of the Apurimac Canyon to cross.

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What is Choquequirao?

Choquequirao (cho-kay-key-rhow) is a large Inca citadel sometimes known as the 'Sacred Sister of Machu Picchu'.

The site is located about 40km as the crow flies from Machu Picchu. It's a 72km walk between the two, up and down all the way and hardly a flat surface between them.

What do we know about it?

Given that Inca had no written history, what we know about the culture is essentially filtered down to us through the Spanish conquistador chronicles.

Information is patchy at best.

What we do know is that Machu Picchu was built in the 1400s by the great Inca ruler Pachacuti.

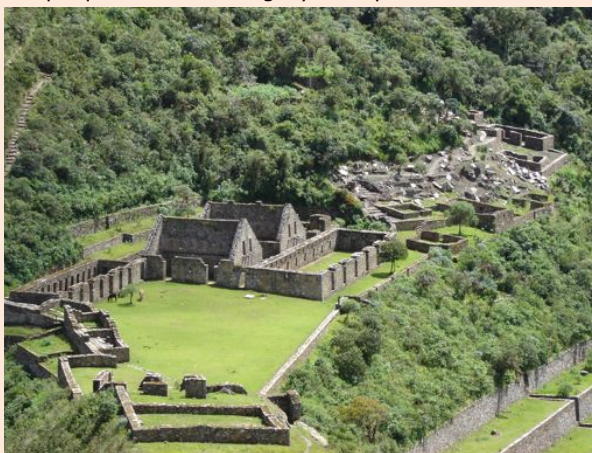
Choquequirao was built by his son and successor Túpac Inca.

There are many theories and much speculation around the purpose of Machu Picchu. Our favourite is that expounded by Hugh Thomson in his wonderful book "The White Rock".

This is that Incan Emperors built up their legacy almost as an offering to the gods. Their achievements passed with them into afterlife.

In the light of this Machu Picchu would almost be a place for Pachacuti to reside in the afterlife.

Choquequirao was the legacy of Túpac Inca.



Machu Picchu vs. Choquequirao

If they are sisters then Machu Picchu is unarguably the prettier of the two.

To push the analogy to breaking point, she is also the one who has had all the cosmetic surgery.

Most of Machu Picchu's 4,000 hectares have been not only excavated but beautified to please the nearly 1 million visitors she receives each year.

Meanwhile, Choquequirao's 2,000 hectares are only around 30% excavated for her 10,000 or so annual visitors. There are still great swathes of the site which are covered in dense cloudforest vegetation.

This is really the big difference between the two. To visit Machu Picchu is to enjoy one of the most beautiful of human achievements.

To visit Choquequirao is to feel like an explorer.

This means that the next two days are spent descending to the river before ascending the far side of the valley.

With full mule support descend 1,600m into the Apurimac canyon, cross the roaring river and climb up to camp at Santa Rosa.

This is a long tough day requiring an early start but the scenery more than makes up for the hardships endured. (b,l,d)

Day 04 | Choquequirao | **hike up a canyon**

Rising early hike up out of the canyon in the morning, regaining nearly back to the altitude you started at yesterday.

Set up base camp just short of the Choquequirao ruins.

If energy or time permits we can enjoy a quick tour of the ruins in the afternoon but many will prefer to have a rest and save it for the next day! (b,l,d)

Day 05 | Choquequirao | **explore ruins**

Arrive early at the amazing ruins of Choquequirao with time to explore and marvel at this dramatic location nearly 1,700m above the roaring Apurimac River.

There is an enormous curving bank of fine terracing, a chain of ritual baths and a central plaza surrounded by fine ceremonial and residential architecture.

Large areas still remain covered in the thick cloudforest giving an insight into how the first explorers felt arriving at this deserted city.

Its purpose is also still largely unclear as the largest of the outlying sites it is unmentioned in the chronicles of the Conquistadors. In fact it remained uncharted until the 18th century.

There are several theories as to the purpose of Choquequirao.

One says that the stonework is that of enslaved Chachapoyans from the north of Peru.

They were supposedly more than happy to burn and then desert the site on the downfall of the Incas.

Another is that the site would have been used as a lookout over the main highway during the Inca's thirty year exiled rule in Vilcabamba.

Return to base camp below to ponder your own theories for the evening. (b,l,d)

Day 06 | Maizal | **hike over hills**

Leaving at the crack of dawn, bid farewell to Choquequirao.

A short, sharp climb is followed by a descent of 1,400m into the Rio Blanco canyon unfortunately famous for its biting sand-flies.

Another tough climb of 1,200m gets you back up to the small campsite of Maizal at an altitude 3,000m.

This is the toughest day of the trip but allowing all day and using the support horses where necessary, it is manageable by fit trekkers. (b,l,d)

Day 07 | Yanama | **spectacular views**

Starting early you climb to the Abra San Juan pass at 4,000m. From here enjoy spectacular panoramas of the Cordillera Vilcabamba mountain range, passing en route the interesting old silver mines of Mina Victoria thought to have been worked for a thousand years.



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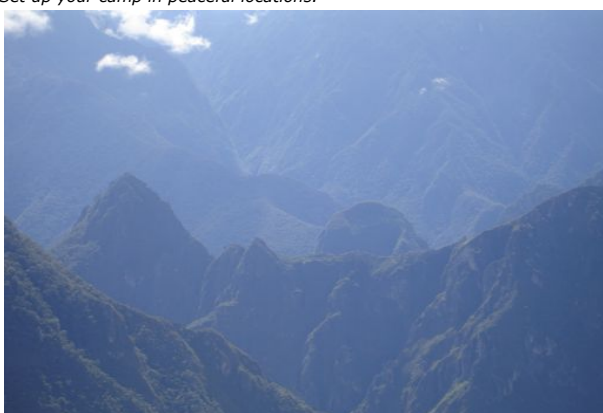
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Set up your camp in peaceful locations.



Your first, distant views of Machu Picchu.



Hike through remote and beautiful areas.



Tough hiking is rewarded by incredible views and great camaraderie.

Tonight you camp at the charming Andean village of Yanama. (b,l,d)

Day 08 | Tatora | **climb at 4,600m**

Today hike up the Yanama valley turning right and climb towards our final challenge - the Tatora pass. This is the highest point of the trip at 4,600m. With luck you have spectacular views of the snow-capped peak called Sacsayraoc from the pass. Camp is pitched tonight below the pass beside the small community of Tatora. (b,l,d)

Day 09 | Lucmabamba | **bird watching**

A day of incredible changing scenery as you descend nearly 2000m to your camp beside the village of Lucmabamba, which is semi-tropical.

Follow the Rio Santa Teresa down for nearly seven hours hiking but the views of waterfalls, a variety of bird life and differing vegetation make it all worthwhile.

As Lucmabamba has a small shop selling beer and soft drinks, you might find yourself celebrating nearing end of your epic journey with sundowners. (b,l,d)

Day 10 | Aguas Calientes | **hike in cloudforest**

Your final day of hiking takes you through lush vegetation of coffee and tropical fruit plantations, into pristine cloudforest.

Follow an ancient Inca Trail to an Inca site that has only recently been excavated.

Today you should get your first, distant views of Machu Picchu from an angle that few tourists get to see.

We descend sharply to the Urubamba valley and the hydroelectric plant train station.

From here we have the option of either wait for the short but spectacular train journey or hike the two or three hours up the railway line to the village of Aguas Calientes just below Machu Picchu.

Check into your hotel for a shower before heading out to enjoy one of the many restaurants and bars. (b,l)

Day 11 | Cusco | **explore Machu Picchu**

First thing in the morning you catch a bus (or the energetic can hike) to Machu Picchu and have it virtually to yourself for a fully guided tour.

Thereafter you will have the time to climb Huayna Picchu, walk out to the Inca bridge or else just wander through the ruins soaking up the amazing atmosphere.

Return to Aguas Calientes to board the afternoon train back towards Cusco and your hotel.

If you have the energy you can then explore Cusco's excellent nightlife. (b)

Day 12 | Cusco | **day to relax**

There is so much to see and do in Cusco that today, it yours to explore and relax after your hike. (b)

Day 13 | travel | **leave Cusco**

Transfer to Cusco airport in time for your flights home or to connect to the next part of your holiday. (b)

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Holiday Information

Pura's opinion

This eight-day mule supported hike to Choquequirao and beyond takes in high passes, perfectly preserved Inca Trails and awesome Andean peaks, ending with a spectacular and rarely seen view of Machu Picchu and a full guided tour of these world famous ruins.

This expedition is ideal for travellers looking for a challenging trek in a remote mountain environment.

This is a long, spectacular and strenuous hike crossing the entire Vilcabamba mountain range from the Apurimac to the Urubamba watershed.

It is approximately 100km long with almost 5,000m of both ascent and descent with passes up to 4,600m and river crossings as low as 1,450m.

This is your chance to be amongst one of the few adventurers to visit this incredible site and complete this rewarding trek to Machu Picchu

How active?

The focus of this holiday is on hiking. You must be a keen walker to enjoy this holidays.

This expedition involves trekking over several high passes up to 4,600m and involves steep descents: it is recommended that all clients should have some previous trekking experience and should be in good shape.

Day one is a short walk in Cusco, this is a chance to stretch your legs and experience hiking at 3,300m.

Day two to day four is an active hike going up and down cliffs up to 3,000m.

Day five is an exploration of Choquequirao, ruins much bigger than Machu Picchu.

Day four to day ten is an active hike going up and down cliffs up to 4,600m.

Day eleven is the visit of Machu Picchu and the climb of Huayna Picchu.

Day twelve you have the all day free to visit Cusco.

How comfortable?

On this expedition we will be experiencing extremes of Peruvian climate, from freezing high Andes to the sweaty sub-tropics.

During the day hopefully it will be generally sunny enough for lightweight trousers and long-sleeved T-shirts though having a fleece and rain gear handy is advisable.

In the Apurimac and Urubamba river canyons, we recommend you wear long-sleeved shirts and trousers to avoid the strong tropical sun and persistent sand-flies.

It may get cold (as low as 0°C whilst camping) especially in the evenings so bring a warm fleece jacket, a good waterproof and some warm clothes including thermal underwear, scarf and woolly hat as well as one set of smarter clothes for Cusco.

Good quality Alpaca jumpers are available in Cusco. A good quality sleeping bag is essential for your enjoyment of this trip.

In Cusco and Aguas Calientes stay in basic but reasonably comfortable three star hotels.

How independent?

This is a fully guided small group tour with occasional

How responsible?

Pura Aventura is passionate about the places it visits.

To help preserve the integrity of these destinations we:

- Work directly with local businesses and organizations to directly benefit local economies.
- Work with local guides so that our holidays are more interesting for clients and more beneficial locally.
- Make payment to suppliers before our clients arrive.

We strictly adhere to the Porter Protection Policies which govern porters' work in Peru.

Please note

The "Choquequirao –Trek the Andes" travels through a remote and rarely visited part of Peru and we believe our clients should be aware that the remoteness that makes this trail so very special could also cause certain problems.

Thus, whilst Pura Aventura and its local partners endeavour to minimise the chances of anything unexpected happening, it has to be noted that no itinerary can or should be rigidly adhered to.

This is the very nature of adventure travel and we expect our clients to be prepared for delays and slight alterations in our programmed events.

Prices and departures

2011	12 Sep £1,325pp
Flights	<i>Price does not include flights.</i> We can arrange these for you (guide price £800 - £1,000 depending on season) or you can arrange your own.
Price includes	Comfortable but not fancy three star hotels in Cusco and Aguas Calientes; Entrances & guided tour of Cusco, Machu Picchu, Tarawasi, Sahuite, Choquequirao; Transfers and transport as above; Camping and cooking equipments needed; and meals (b,l,d) as per itinerary.
Not included	Flights; personal expenses; tips; sleeping bag hire.
Note	Private departures available from £1,980pp assuming two people travelling.

Prices are per person based on two sharing.

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