

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

Note you all must be in Cusco morning of May 12. You may want to stopover in Lima or go a day early to acclimatize. We can help you with air but you can find great rates on own roundtrip to Cusco. Trip Tips to come.

May 12 - Lima - Cusco – Sacred Valley

Land tour begins! It's perfect to begin here to slowly acclimatize to elevation. Our past groups loved 2 nights at Casa Andina Resort. Enjoy gourmet food, free wifi, and massage treatments in the fabulous spa.

Upon arrival in Cusco, you are driven to the "Sacred Valley of the Incas", a succession of picturesque Andean towns, agricultural terraces, and many archaeological sites, as well as the world's most famous white corn cultivated for export. The mild climate, the varied and dramatic scenery of snow-capped mountains, flowering meadows, lush green hills and spectacular flora and fauna, make the Valley a prime adventure destination in South America. At a lower elevation than Cusco, the Valley is a warmer and less physically taxing environment for visiting the many attractions of the region, including Machu Picchu.

On your way to the Sacred Valley you will visit **Sacsayhuaman** which is the largest and most impressive of four archaeological ruins on the outskirts of Cusco. Built by the Incas, it served an important military function and was the site of a major battle with the Spanish in 1536. The complex was constructed out of massive stones, some weighing as much as 300 tons, cut to fit together without the use of mortar.

Then, visit the town of **Pisac** and its market, originally a place where people from remote communities used to barter their products. Pisac has evolved to one of South America's most famous souvenir markets. Make sure to sample some 'empanadas' baked in traditional clay ovens. Try your bargaining skills here always keeping in mind handmade artwork is worth it! Alpaca scarves make perfect gifts for all.

Finally, you will arrive in your selected hotel in the Sacred Valley.

Overnight: Casa Andina Premium Valle Sagrado Hotel & Villas

May 13 - Sacred Valley, River Rafting Urubamba, Ollantaytambo

Eat a hearty breakfast. You may opt to go river rafting! (\$159) A mid-morning drive takes you to a put-in point on the upper Urubamba River. This dramatic river flows from the high Andes down through the Sacred Valley of the Incas, past Machu Picchu and into the jungle. You'll be on the finest, clearest and most scenic section of the river. It's exciting and unforgettable. Each raft carries 5 to 8 people and the rapids have a degree of difficulty ranging from 2-4. As always, you're in the hands of expert guides so you can focus on just having fun. At the end, you'll relive your new memories over an A la Carte lunch at El Albergue hotel.

Finally, visit the incredible Fortress and Citadel of **Ollantaytambo** through Calca and Urubamba. Ollantaytambo was built to protect the entrance of this part of the Valley and prevent the possible invasions of tribes from the jungle. The Citadel consists of a series of superimposed terraces. We will have the opportunity to walk among the town's little streets and get a clear idea of what this military, religious and cultural center was like during the Inca Empire.

Overnight: Casa Andina Premium Valle Sagrado Hotel & Villas (B)

May 14 - Your trek begins! Sacred Valley - Wayllabamba

About 4.30am, our private transport and staff will pick you up from your hotel. We drive to Piskacuchu (2700m/8856ft), a community located on the 82nd kilometer of the Cusco –Machupicchu railroad, which is the starting point of the Inca Trail. We begin our hike by crossing the bridge over the Urubamba River and walking along its left shore as it flows northwest along the Sacred Valley. Following the trail along a flat terrain, we arrive in Miskay (2800m/9184ft), to then ascend and finally see, from the tallest part of an overlook, the impressive Inca city of Llactapata (2650m/8692ft). We continue trekking along the valley created by the Kusichaca River, gradually climbing for about five hours until we reach the community of Wayllabamba (3000m/9840ft), where we set our first camp. All along the way we enjoy spectacular views of the Vilcanota ridge on the opposite side of the Urubamba River, where the impressive Veronica peak reigns at 5832 meters (19,133 ft) above sea level. Not to mention the diversity of wild flora and fauna that can be found all along the valley.

- *Total distance:* 12 km (7.46 miles)
- *Estimated time:* 5-6 hours
- *Maximum altitude point:* 3,000 m (9,840 ft)
- *Campsite altitude:* 3,000 m (9,840 ft)

Overnight: Campsite (B, L, D)

May 15 - Wayllabamba - Pacaymayo

We wake up about 6:00 am and after breakfast, we begin the most difficult part of the trek, which consists of an abrupt and steep ascent that stretches for 9 km (5.6 miles). Along this climb, the landscape changes from sierra to puna (a dry and high area with little vegetation). On the way to the first mountain pass, the Abra Warmihuañusca (Dead Woman´s Pass – 4200m/13,776ft), we may see domesticated llamas and alpacas grazing on ichu, one of the few plants that grow at high altitude. We also cross an area of the so called cloud forest, which is the habitat for many different kinds of birds like hummingbirds and sparrows, and the Andean bear, which is also called the Spectacled Bear (Tremarctus Ornatus). We advise that on this day especially, your daypack is well stocked with candies, chocolates and coca leaves that will keep your sugar level high, and help with altitude sickness. Immediately after the pass, we descend into the Pacaymayo Valley (3600m/11808ft), where we camp after approximately 7 hours of hiking.

- *Total distance:* 11 km (6.84 miles)
- *Estimated time:* 6-7 hours
- *Maximum altitude point:* 4,200 m (13,776 ft)
- *Campsite altitude:* 3,500 m (11,480 ft)

Overnight: Campsite (B, L, D)

May 16 - Pacaymayo - Wiñayhuana

This day is the longest but also the most impressive and interesting, due to the number of archaeological sites and the lush cloud forest area that's so rich in Andean flora and fauna. From Pacaymayo we climb to the second pass, the Abra Runkurakay (3970m/13,022ft). Halfway up, we stop to visit the archaeological complex with the same name. This site, located at 3800m/12,464ft, consists of a small oval structure that is believed to have served the purpose of a watchtower. We then descend towards Yanacocha (Black Lagoon) and enter the cloud forest to finally arrive at Sayacmarca (3624m/11,887ft). This is a beautiful complex made up of a semicircular construction, enclosures at different levels, narrow streets, liturgical fountains, patios and irrigation canals.

Continuing up an easy climb, we arrive at the third pass, the Abra Phuyupatamarca (3700m/12,136ft). Along this climb we can appreciate the magnitude of the Incas ancient craft, by walking along paths semi-detached

from the mountain, and seeing rocks that fill up ravines in perfect order, saving the trail from the multi-leveled Andean geography. We go through an Inca tunnel to later arrive at one of the most complete and best-preserved archaeological complexes along the Inca Trail to Machupicchu, located on the highest point of a mountain. Curiously, Phuyupatamarca means "town over the clouds". From above, you can observe a sophisticated sacred complex made up of water fountains with solid foundations, and also impressive views of the Urubamba River valley. We continue our trek down the long descending stone steps that lead us to Wiñaywayna (2,650m/8,692ft), an Incan agricultural center with many terraces, a religious sector and an urban sector, close to which our camp is located. Here we enjoy our farewell dinner at our camp.

- *Total distance:* 16 km (9.94 miles)
- *Estimated time:* 8 hours
- *Maximum altitude point:* 3,900 m (12,792 ft)
- *Campsite altitude:* 2,650 m (8,692 ft)

Overnight: Campsite (B, L, D)

May 17 - Wiñayhuana – Machupicchu - Cusco

THIS IS IT! On the last day of our hike we get up at 4 am to leave Wiñaywayna an hour later and climb to the Intipunku, or **The Sun Gate**. This hike takes you along a trail of flat stones on the edges of cliffs in highland jungle. From this fabulous spot, we may see the sacred citadel of Machupicchu. From Intipunku we descend into Machupicchu, and 40 minutes later we enter the citadel from the highest point through the "House of the Guardians". Continue to the control point where we register ourselves and leave our backpacks.

We begin a guided tour of the Inca citadel. Then free time to walk around, climb the Huaynapicchu Mountain to experience spectacular views of all of Machu Picchu, the valleys and mountains that surround it (please note that there are only 400 visitors allowed per day), or visit the Temple of the Moon or the impressive Inca Bridge. In the afternoon, we meet in the town of Aguas Calientes where, if you like, you can visit and relax in its hot springs. From here we take the train back to the city of Cusco, where we arrive after nightfall.

- *Total distance:* 4 km (2.49 miles)
- *Estimated time:* 2 hours
- *Maximum altitude point:* 2,700 m (8,829 ft)

* Departure and arrival times are approximated.

** Campsites are subject to change according to the designation of the governmental institution regulating the use of the Inca Trail, as well as to our guide's criteria and the group progress.

Time to luxuriate in our hotel rated 5 stars on TripAdvisor and great location in Cusco.

Overnight: Novotel (B) <http://www.novotel.com/gb/hotel-3254-novotel-cusco/index.shtml>

May 18 - City Tour Cusco

Welcome to fabulous Cusco at 3,400 meters (12,467). Old ways are not forgotten in this magical city which was once called, "The Bellybutton of the World" and capital of the Inca empire until the Spaniards conquered it in the 16th century. Today this UNESCO Site is filled with ancient wonders. Uncover layers of Cusco's vivid history. It's such fun to explore this town crowned with the main square of Plaza de Armas, a great place for coffee shops and people watching. Evenings come alive with music. Massages are now omnipresent and dirt cheap or indulge your sweet tooth at the Chocolate Museum of Cocoa.

Morning city tour of Cusco. Your guided walk starts with the visit to Santo Domingo Monastery, the legendary Korikancha (Temple of Gold), the most important Inca temple devoted to worshipping the Sun, whose walls used to be plated with sheets of gold. Continue to the Plaza de Armas or Main Square to visit the Cathedral.

You follow along to the San Blas quarter with a walk by this quaint district and one of the finest views of the city. This quarter is home to the workshops and stores of the most renowned craftsmen in Cusco, including Mendivil, Merida, Rojas and Palomino.

Afternoon at leisure. You may want to add an extra day here or explore Lima.

In the evening, bid your AFS fellow trekker friends goodbye with a farewell buffet dinner at Picanteria Cusqueña.

Overnight: Novotel (B)

May 19 - Cusco – Lima Depart to Airport

After breakfast transfer to the airport to take your flight to Lima airport for flight home. All flights depart in evening so you may be landing in USA May 20.

Optional Skylodge Adventure Suites for 6 on first come basis can be arranged for 2 days with an overnight. More details later. \$550 You'll be picked up at 2pm, transferred back 3pm next day so you'll need late flight out of Cusco.

Skylodge Adventure Suites

Located in the Sacred Valley of Cuzco, Peru, the exclusive Skylodge Adventure Suites offers you the chance to sleep within a completely transparent, hanging bedroom, that allows you to appreciate the impressive view of this magic and mystic valley. To sleep at Skylodge, people must climb 400 mt. (1312 ft) of Via Ferrata or hike an intrepid trail through ziplines. One night at this place will make your dreams come true.

This afternoon, you will be taken to Pachar. Perched high above the Sacred Valley of Cusco in Peru, you will find Skylodge: three totally transparent capsule suites and a dining room/kitchen suspended 400m above the valley floor. Capsules sleep four. Total capacity 8, subject to availability. Each suite has a private bedroom separated by wall and private toilet. It's total comfort with lights, solar power and down bedding at 1200 ft up the mountain slope.

Getting to your bed has never been such an adventure. After a 1.5 hour climb straight up the mountain, you will enjoy a gourmet dinner in a circular, glass dining room pod and then enjoy a good night's sleep under the stars in your sleeping capsule (complete with its own private bathroom). The next morning, climb back to the dining room and enjoy a delicious breakfast with a view before zip-lining back down the mountain. Transfer back to Cusco hotel or airport is included.

Fitness Level 1 – strenuous + high altitude. You will be required to sign a medical waiver. Full detailed trip information to follow.