

8-DAY ADVENTURE

THE VILCABAMBA TRAIL

Peru

This five day trek takes you right off the beaten track and far into the jungle where the Incas made their last stand against the Spanish. As well as enjoying a wealth of flora, fauna, snow peaks and impressive valleys, trekkers visit some of the last domains of the great Inca empire, and trek along some excellent examples of the Qhapaq Ñan – the royal roads of the Incas.

The route runs through the sparsely populated Cordillera Vilcabamba, which looks much the same as when Hiram Bingham first explored here a century ago. This trek is not for the faint of heart or weak of legs. It is a particularly challenging route with long trekking days and some tough ascents and descents.

The trip begins in Cuzco, the ancient capital of the Incan empire. As well as having the opportunity to soak up the local culture, these first two days will also help your body to acclimatise before you begin the trek itself. The trek crosses three high mountain passes, each around 4500 metres, before reaching Aguas Calientes and your visit to Machu Picchu

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek deep into the Cordillera Vilcabamba mountains
- Fascinating range of bio-diversity
- High guide to client ratio



ITINERARY

DAY 1

ARRIVE IN CUZCO

All trekkers need to organise their own flights to Cuzco Airport (CUZ). From the airport we will arrange an airport transfer for you. That evening you will meet your local Kandoo representative and have a full pre-trek briefing.

Max. altitude: **3400 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

DAY 2

ACCLIMATISATION IN CUZCO

The city of Cuzco sits at an altitude of 3400m and is a great place to acclimatise before you start your Vilcabamba trek. You'll have plenty of time to explore this charming city and soak up the local atmosphere.

Max. altitude: **3400 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included: **Breakfast**

DAY 3

CUZCO TO HUANCACALLE TO PILLAOPATA

We leave Cuzco at 4 am this morning to transfer to our trek start point, passing through the scenic Sacred Valley. We stop for a break in the village of Ollantaytambo, before ascending up a steep winding road to reach the pass at Abra Malaga (4315m). We descend down to Chaullay (1890m) before heading towards Huancacalle where we will have our lunch. From here we can trek to the archaeological sites of Vitcos-Rosaspata and the Ñustahispana (or White Rock). After hiking for a further hour and a half, we will reach our campsite at Pillaopata.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**

Descent: **300 m**

Max. altitude: **3400 m**

Accommodation: **Camping**

Meals included:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 4

PILLAOPATA TO RACACHACA VIA ASUTINA PASS

After an early breakfast we begin our trek up to the Asutina Pass (3915m) after which we descend quickly along well-preserved Inca Roads to Pillaukasa (3860m). From here we have wonderful views of the surrounding snow-capped peaks of Lasoma as we leave the high jungle and arrive in the Andes. We spend the night at Racachaca.

Hiking time: **8 - 9 hours**

Ascent: **900 m**

Descent: **300 m**

Max. altitude: **4000 m**

Accommodation: **Camping**

Meals included:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 5

RACACHACA TO LAJO VIA YANOCOCOA PASS, TULLU TACANCA & ABRA MOJON

Today is a demanding trekking day with many changes in altitude as we traverse three high Andean passes. We start by climbing up to Hatun Pampa (3860m). From here we continue ascending to reach the first pass of the day, Yanococha (4420 metres). We then begin a steep descent down to Yanacocha Lake, only to start climbing back up to the second pass, Tullu Tacanca (4500m) and then onto the well-known third, and final, pass, Abra Mojon (4510m). After descending from Abra Mojon we will camp at Lajo campsite.

Hiking time: **9 - 10 hours**

Ascent: **710 m**

Descent: **1710 m**

Max. altitude: **4510 m**

Accommodation: **Camping**

Meals included:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 6

LAJO TO AGUAS CALIENTES

After breakfast, we start our descent, entering once again into the high jungle. Our route today will take us through deep canyons and coffee, fruit and granadilla plantations, before arriving at the village of Yanatile. From here, we will transfer by vehicle to the Hydro-Electric station, where we will have lunch, after which we begin the final section of our route following the railway tracks all the way to Aguas Calientes where you stay in a hotel for the night.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**
Descent: **1750 m**
Max. altitude: **3800 m**
Accommodation: **Hotel**
Meals included: **Breakfast**

DAY 7

TOUR OF MACHU PICCHU. TRANSFER TO CUZCO

An early start to take the bus to the Citadel of Machu Picchu where you will have a guided tour for around 2½ to 3 hours. There is also the option of climbing Huayna Picchu, the iconic mountain behind Machu Picchu, but you will need to book a permit in advance. After the tour of the ruins we will take the bus down to Aguas Calientes where you will catch the train to Ollantaytambo to be met by our driver who will take you back to your hotel in Cuzco.

Max. altitude: **3400 m**
Accommodation: **Hotel**
Meals included: **Breakfast**

DAY 8

ONWARD JOURNEY

After a much needed night's rest, we will bid you goodbye. We will collect you from your hotel and transfer you to Cuzco Airport for your departing flight.

Max. altitude: **3400 m**
Meals included: **Breakfast**

TRIP INFORMATION

DIFFICULTY

The Vilcabamba Trail is considered a **difficult trek**. It's the longest and most strenuous trek to Machu Picchu. However, the beautiful wilderness you trek through certainly makes the extra effort worthwhile!

No technical skills are required but you should have a high level of fitness with recent experience walking in a mountainous environment for several days in a row. You may be walking for up to 10 hours a day and you be reaching altitudes well over 4000m.

The highest point of the trek is the Abra Mojon Pass at 4510m.

FOOD & DRINK

Staying well-fed on your trek is absolutely vital, especially when conditions are such that you might not want to eat or drink as much as you should. Because so many trekkers experience a loss of appetite at altitude, our head chef has developed special menu plans that are appealing, healthy, and filled with all the energy you need to make it to Machu Picchu. By default, our meals include fresh fruit and vegetables every day, as well as fresh meat and fish.

BREAKFAST

Breakfast is usually fairly hearty. Of course, you'll also have hot drinks, generally a choice of tea, coffee or hot chocolate. Let your guide know if you are still hungry, or even if you think you could 'pack in a few more bites'. Our cooks always try to provide more food than necessary to ensure everyone gets a good meal.

LUNCH

Lunch is packed for you, to carry in your rucksack.

AFTERNOON TEA

Afternoon Tea is served at the end of the days walking, once you get to camp. In addition to tea and other hot drinks, there are plenty of snacks to help restore some of the energy you've just burned off.

DINNER

Dinners are quite filling. They usually begin with a nice hearty soup, and then a main course with fresh vegetables, and plenty of rice, pasta or potatoes, followed by a yummy dessert.

DRINKING WATER

On the trek, we filter and boil all the water that we give to you for drinking. You may wish to bring purification tablets as an extra precaution but they are not essential. Every morning we will fill up your water bottles or hydration bladder with at least 2 litres of water.

COCA TEA

Coca tea is thought to help relieve the symptoms of altitude sickness. In Cuzco, all the hotels have dried leaves and hot water available throughout the day so you can make your own tea whenever you wish. On the trek we will take coca leaf tea bags for you.

ACCOMMODATION

We use only the very best **high altitude mountain tents**, Eureka K-2 XT, to ensure you stay warm, dry and comfortable on your Choquequirao trek. Please bear in mind, these are proper mountain tents, designed to cope with extreme conditions so don't expect to be able to stand up and walk around inside!

Your meals will be taken in a **separate mess tent** where you will be able to sit comfortably, while you relax and chat to your team mates and enjoy the wholesome food that our cook has freshly prepared for you. Inside, you'll be pleased to find a table (of course) and a proper, comfortable chair. With a full 2 metres of headroom, even the tallest climbers will be able to stretch a bit, and move about without hunching over. They are fully waterproof, and regularly withstand the worst weather the Andes has to offer.

The hotels in we use in Peru all have western, flushing toilets. Whilst on the trek the toilet situation will be a little less luxurious. At camp each evening we will set up a **toilet tent**. This is a simple facility that provides a little privacy and comfort whilst on the trail. The toilet tent will contain a portable, sit down toilet. Whilst trekking, if you need to go you will have to find somewhere hidden, off the path and go wild. There's plenty of places to hide in the Peruvian forests!

Our pre- and post-trek accommodation is based in Cuzco, with an additional night in Aguas Calientes after the trek. Where your hotel basis is B&B, you can usually purchase snacks or meals at the hotel, which can be paid in Peruvian Sols, or often in US Dollars. Alternatively, there are plenty of restaurants in Cuzco within walking distance of your hotel.

TRANSPORT

We insist on using a **high standard of vehicle** and driver for all of our transfers. In Peru it is not a legal requirement to have seatbelts fitted in the back of vehicles, and while we try to use vehicles that do have rear seatbelts fitted, this cannot always be guaranteed. If you are unhappy about any aspect of the vehicle or the standard of driving, please speak to the driver or our local office immediately.

LUGGAGE

Bag Weight: 7kg

Kandoo Adventures operates a **strict limit of 7kg** for your main equipment bag. This limit includes your sleeping bag, even if it is rented from us. This is more than sufficient for your needs on the trek. Your bag will be weighed before you leave the hotel to start the trek and if it is overweight you will have to take items out and leave them at the hotel.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

There are two good ways to get to Cuzco from Europe or the UK. The first is to fly KLM to Lima with a stopover in Amsterdam. The second is to fly BA who offer direct flights from Gatwick to Lima or Iberia who fly to Lima via Madrid. From Lima you will have to get a domestic flight to Cuzco. Domestic airlines include LATAM, Avianca, Star Peru or Peruvian Air. We recommend flying with LATAM as their planes have the capability to land in the foggy conditions that can affect Cuzco and Lima. Most flights from Europe land in the evening, local time. Most flights for Cuzco don't leave until the morning, so if you don't fancy loitering in the airport all night (which we do not recommend), you'll need an overnight stay in Lima.

Trekkers starting off in North America have a much wider set of options. American Airlines and US Airways both offer flights into Lima, as do several other carriers. In addition to existing security measures at international airports, passengers MAY be required to show that the electronic devices in their hand luggage are charged up. You may therefore be asked to turn on any electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets, e-books and laptops in front of the security team and/or demonstrate the item's functionality. We recommend that any electronic devices that you are carrying in your hand luggage are fully charged before you travel. If you have any further questions then you should check with your departure airport.

If you are changing airlines or re-checking your luggage at an airport on route, please ensure you leave a minimum of 3 hours between flights. This will account for any delays on arrival, travel time across airports (this can take longer than you think) and time taken to re-check baggage.

BUDGET & CHANGE

The **Peruvian Sol** can be purchased in advance, although US Dollars are also widely accepted in larger establishments. If you want to change money when you arrive we can take you to an ATM or foreign exchange bureau. When changing money, request small denominations (10's, 20's and 50's) as the larger notes can be hard to spend. If you withdraw money from an ATM, you are likely to receive 100 sol notes. Peru is generally still a cash society, particularly whilst you are travelling through the smaller villages and towns it is worth having enough cash with you for personal expenses. ATMs will also not be available in these areas so ensure you have exchanged enough money whilst in Cuzco, before leaving on your trek. If you are relying on a credit or debit card for emergency funds, make sure you tell your card issuer that you will be using it abroad, or you may find that it won't work when you really need it.

In Cuzco, the cost of public transport is around 22p (33 cents) for a one-way ticket. If you prefer to travel by taxi, starting price is about £1.10 (US\$1.40) for a 1km ride. When eating out, a meal in a budget restaurant for 2 people is around £5 (US\$7) or a mid range restaurant (for 2 people) will cost around £22 (US\$28). For souvenirs to take home, we recommend budgeting around £40 (US\$50) which should get you plenty of little gifts. If you wish to buy a big blanket or poncho then budgeting a little more would be worthwhile.

Our recommended guidance for spending budget in Peru would be between £80-100 (\$100-125) on top of your tips, to give you ample souvenir and meals out spending money.

TIPS

We realize that tipping may not be a common practice in all countries but for Peru it is a standard practice that all operators support. The decision on how much to tip should be determined by how well the team served you while you were on the trek. Tips are always discretionary and if you are not happy with the service you have received you do not have to pay tips. Tips can be made in US dollars or Peruvian Sols. It is very important that US bills be new (less than 10 years old), crisp and unturned.

These are the recommended tips **per trekker per day**. You will be provided with tip recommendations for your specific trip 3 weeks prior to departure that will give an accurate representation of how much you will need for tips based on the size of your group.

Lead guide: \$20

Assistant Guide: \$12

Cook: \$12

Assistant Cook: \$9

Porter (amount per porter): \$6

Tent helper (amount per tent helper): \$6

Horseman (amount per horseman): \$10

Different crew members will be with you for different stages of your trip to Peru:

- Your guide/s will be with you every day in Peru.
- Your cook/s, porters, tent helpers and horsemen will be with you while you are on the trek itself (The number of porters, tent helpers and horsemen will differ depending on group size. You will be given this information three weeks before departure)
- An assistant guide and cook will only be necessary for larger groups (You will be given this information three weeks before departure)

FORMALITIES & HEALTH

PASSPORT

Unlike many other countries where Kandoo operates, there is no requirement that your passport be valid for 6 months longer than your expected stay. As long as it is valid through your departure date, you are fine.

If you are coming into Peru from Ecuador, get your passport stamped for entry at the local immigration office nearest your border crossing. Most enter this way through Aguas Verdes in the Tumbes region. Make sure you find your way to the immigration office there, as if your passport is not stamped you will have to go back to the Ecuador border if your papers are inspected. You may also have trouble if you do not have a valid exit stamp from the country you left before coming to Peru.

Those entering overland from Columbia generally enter through Leticia. You will need to get your passport stamped in Santa Rosa, on the Columbia/Brazil/Peru border. Please keep in mind that Santa Rosa is rather under-policed, and tourists should avoid isolated places, and travel only in groups.

Lastly, if you are crossing into Peru from Bolivia by road, you will need to visit the immigration office for the Puno region, in Desaguadero.

VISA

British and EU nationals do not need a visa to come to Peru as a tourist. You can get permission to visit upon arrival at the airport, and the duration is usually up to six months. American citizens and nationals do not need a visa either so long as they have a valid US passport, but will generally only get permission to stay as a tourist for 90 days. Still, this is usually plenty of time.

VACCINATIONS

You must though consult your own GP or medical adviser. Your GP will understand your overall fitness levels and any health issues you may have, and will be able to give you much more specific advice about what vaccinations or other medications you need, and which you should not have. When in doubt, ask your doctor!

That having been said, the following is a list of common vaccinations that are useful to many travellers in Peru and surrounding countries, and some specifics about each.

Hepatitis A and B

Kandoo recommends all travellers to the Andes region are vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B.

Typhoid

Typhoid is also present in the region, and it is a good idea for all travellers to be immunised against it.

Yellow Fever

Yellow fever is a problem in the area, especially in regions like the Amazon, the areas around Cuzco (but not the city itself), Loreto, Madre de Dios, north-eastern Ancash, northern Apurimac, northern and north-eastern Ayacucho, northern and eastern Cajamarca, the far north of Huancavelica, most of Huanuco, the north and east of Junin, the east of La Libertad, most of Pasco eastern Piura and northern Puno, as well as San Martin and Ucayali. Anyone travelling to these areas should be vaccinated against yellow fever, unless given specific medical advice otherwise.

Lambayeque, Tumbes, and certain parts of Cajamarca and Piura are less at risk, and only those who can expect to be bitten by large numbers of mosquitoes specifically need to be vaccinated.

Lastly, you will not need yellow fever vaccination if you will be above 2300 metres of elevation for your whole stay, or if you will only be visiting Cuzco, Lima, Machu Picchu and/or the Inca Trail.

Rabies

Trekkers who will be spending a great deal of time out of doors, who will for some reason be dealing with bats, or who are otherwise at risk of being bitten by animals, should be vaccinated against rabies.

MMR (measles, mumps and rubella)

If you have not already had the MMR vaccine and were born after 1956, you should have two doses.

Tetanus-diphtheria

This vaccine should be taken if you have not had the tetanus-diphtheria jab in the last ten years.

INSURANCE

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully and adequately insured for the duration of your trip. Please ensure that all activities, excursions and destinations in your itinerary are included in your travel insurance policy, in addition to your regular cover for cancellation and medical expenses. Most of our treks in Peru do not exceed 4700m with the exception of the Ausangate Trek which will reach 5200m. If you are only doing the Short Inca trail your trek will not exceed 3500m. Please ensure that your insurance policy covers you for trekking at these altitudes.

We ask that you keep a copy of your policy summary (containing policy number and the emergency contact number for your insurer) in your day sack at all times, so that we can access this information should we need to contact the insurer on your behalf.

HEALTH

Altitude Sickness

Altitude sickness, called soroche in Peru and also known as Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) or hypobaropathy, is an illness caused by exposure to low air pressure, especially low partial pressure of oxygen, which many climbers experience at high altitudes. AMS is caused by exerting yourself at high altitudes, especially if you have not been properly acclimatised. It is most common at altitudes above 2400 metres. Our routes have been designed to aid your acclimatisation wherever possible, but the following will also help your body adjust:

Slow and steady. You need to keep your respiration rate low enough to maintain a normal conversation. If you are panting or breathing hard, you must slow down. There is no pressure on you to keep up with other members of your group.

Drink much more water than you think you need. Proper hydration helps acclimatisation dramatically. You need to drink at least three litres each day.

Diamox

There has been a lot of research on Diamox that shows it has been reasonably well proven to be helpful in avoiding AMS by speeding up the acclimatisation process. In the UK it is a prescription drug which must be prescribed by a doctor, but some doctors are reluctant to prescribe it. The concern is that by taking Diamox, people believe that they are immune from AMS and can ignore the symptoms. In reality, although Diamox can help prevent the symptoms, should symptoms still develop it means that you are not acclimatising and you have to take notice. Diamox is taken before you start the trek to prevent altitude sickness, not once symptoms have developed.

Malaria

There is no risk of malaria in Cuzco or on our treks due to the altitude. However, there is a risk of malaria in rural areas of Peru below 2,000m. This would include Tambopata National Park, so if you are planning an extension to the Amazon Rainforest, you need to plan anti-malarial medication for this part of your trip. In addition to taking medication, we would recommend you take every precaution to prevent mosquito bites by wearing long-sleeved trousers and shirts at dusk and dawn when the mosquitos are active, and by using a DEET based mosquito repellent.

Dehydration

You can easily become dehydrated at high altitudes. The lower air pressure forces you to breathe more quickly and deeply, and you lose a lot of water through your lungs. You will also be exerting yourself, and sweating, and may even suffer from diarrhoea. As a result, you will have to drink much more water than you normally would and you should drink at least 3 litres of fluids every day while climbing. Even when you do not feel thirsty you have to drink this amount as a minimum ??? preferably more. Stay on the look-out for signs of dehydration in yourself and your fellow climbers. The most common symptoms include thirst, dry lips, nose or mouth, headache and feeling fatigued or lethargic.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED BY KANDOO ADVENTURES

High quality mess and sleeping tents with a comfortable insulated sleeping mat.

RENTAL GEAR

If you've decided to rent gear, then below is a list of equipment available. Just let our team know what you'd like to hire at your Pre-Trek Briefing.

All payments are made locally in US Dollars (cash only):

- North Face 0° Sleeping Bags \$15 per trek
- Trekking Poles \$10 per trek
- Duffle Bag \$5 per trek

All items must be packed in your main equipment bag.

They should not be attached to the outside, as we are not responsible if items fall off when the bags are being carried on the trek. The sleeping bags weigh approximately 2kg each

CLOTHING TO BRING

HEADGEAR

- Warm beanie style hat – knitted or fleece
- Neck gaiter or scarf - comes in useful for keeping dust out and can double as a warm layer for your neck / face!
- Sun hat – preferably wide-brimmed for protection
- Sunglasses – high UV protection
- Headlamp (plus extra batteries)

UPPER BODY

- Thermal or fleece base layer (x1)
- Long sleeve shirt/tshirt – light or medium weight, moisture wicking (x 1)
- Short sleeved shirt/tshirt – lightweight, moisture wicking (x2)
- Fleece or soft shell jacket (x1)
- Insulated jacket – down or primaloft
- Lightweight water/windproof hard shell outer jacket
- Poncho – a cheap plastic poncho is the best way to cope with a sudden downpour
- Gloves – lightweight, fleece or quick drying fabric

LEGS

- Trekking shorts (x1)
- Trekking trousers – light or medium weight (x1) – convertible trousers work well
- Waterproof hard shell trousers – ski pants work fine

FEET

- Trekking boots – mid weight with good ankle support
- Training shoe or similar – to wear around camp
- Mid-weight trekking socks (x3 pairs)
- Breathable, high-wicking liner socks (x2 pairs)

EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- Small Rucksack or Daypack (25-30 litres) to carry water and personal items
- Lightweight duffle bag (approx 50 litres) – max weight when full should be 10kg. This weight restriction includes your sleeping bag, whether you brought one with you or rented one from us. Your duffle will be carried by a mule
- Sleeping bag (3 season or 0 Deg C) and compression sack
- Trekking poles
- Water bottle or hydration bag – must be able to carry 1.5-2L of water

OTHER ACCESSORIES

- Sunscreen high SPF
- Toiletries, **including toilet paper**, wet wipes and hand sanitiser – please carry all rubbish back off the trek
- Camera and spare batteries
- Personal medication and first aid kit
- Insect repellent – ideally contains DEET
- Personal snacks and energy bars – dried fruit and nuts are also a good source of energy
- Isotonic drink powder / energy drink powder to mix in with your water. This improves flavour and helps replace electrolytes
- Microfibre towel for wiping hands and face each day
- Ear plugs, if you are a light sleeper
- Pee bottle, if you prefer not leaving the tent at night
- Dry bag (only required if your main duffle bag is not waterproof)

HOW TO BOOK THIS TRIP

1

CHOOSE YOUR DATE AND CHECK AVAILABILITY

A full list of available dates can be found on our website.

2

CONTACT US

Contact us by phone, email or through our website. We will answer any questions you may have and send you a personalized itinerary and quote.

3

COMPLETE BOOKING AND PAYMENT

When you are ready to book, we will send you a link to our online booking forms and participation agreements. We accept all major credit and debit cards and require a low 20% deposit to secure your place.

