



ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION of SMITH COLLEGE

MACHU PICCHU EXPLORER: HIKE THE INCA TRAIL OR TAKE THE TRAIN

July 10 – 19, 2008

DETAILED ITINERARY
(subject to amendment)

Thursday July 10:

Arrive in Peru, Explore Cusco, Optional City Tour

Today, we will arrive into Cusco (3,400 meters; 11,150 feet).

Cusco was the southern capital of the Inca Empire and is one of the most beautiful towns in Peru. At its peak this empire stretched north to the south of Colombia, south to northern Chile and Argentina, and west across the Andes to the Amazon Basin. We may notice the skill and exquisiteness of the intricate Inca stonemasonry work on the many walls that serve as foundations to colonial buildings. The crisp air, surrounding mountains and Andean sky provide the perfect backdrop to Cusco's cobbled narrow streets, lovely buildings and plazas and its many hidden treasures and churches. Cusco is not only culturally fascinating and beautiful to look at, it is also an extremely pleasant city to wander around and enjoy.

We may choose to spend the afternoon exploring Cusco on our own or taking an optional guided tour of the main sites of Cusco and the surrounding area. We will spend the night at our Cusco hotel.

Friday July 11:

Sacred Valley of the Incas

Today we will visit the Sacred Valley of the Incas (2,900 meters; 9,500 feet), a lovely fertile valley that lies north of Cusco. The Sacred Valley is lined with picturesque Andean markets, impressive churches and remarkable Inca ruins. Our day will begin with a visit to Awanacancha to learn about the four types of Andean camelids and to observe artisans demonstrating traditional Andean weaving. Next, we will explore the town of Pisac including its famous market. Villagers from miles around gather to barter and sell

their produce, and a wide variety of local handicrafts entice the eye as well. After a buffet lunch, we will visit the studio of local ceramic artist Pablo Seminario and learn about ancient Peruvian ceramic techniques. In the late afternoon we will transfer to the charming town of Ollantaytambo which retains the same street plan of the original Inca town, making it the only surviving example of Inca urban planning. We will spend the evening at our hotel set at the foot of the Ollantaytambo ruins. (B, L)

Saturday July 12:

Sacred Valley of the Incas . Ollantaytambo, Optional Horseback Riding and Other Inca Sites

In the morning, we will tour the archaeological site of Ollantaytambo. Here there are several structures of importance to the Inca. At the top of the sixteen massive terraces are the impressive ruins of Ollantaytambo Fortress where the Inca fought some of their strongest battles. Huge and precisely carved stones were somehow transported by hundreds of men down one mountain range to Ollantaytambo and fitted perfectly to support this strategic fortress that has stood the test of time. There are silos or grain mills directly across from the fortress that housed thousands of pounds of grain for the Incas.

We will have lunch on our own today in a local Ollantaytambo restaurant or back at our hotel. We will then spend the afternoon relaxing at our hotel or further exploring the Sacred Valley by horseback or visiting the historical Inca sites of Moray and Maras. We will spend the evening at our Ollantaytambo hotel. (B)

Sunday July 13:

Inca Trail Trek to Machu Picchu (see Train Alternative below)

This morning we begin the famous 4-day pilgrimage trek to Machu Picchu. We will hike 6-8 hours each day across mountain passes and through verdant valleys. In the early morning, we will be picked up from our hotel and transferred by private motor coach 1 ½ hours to Km. 82. Once we arrive, we will meet our porters and begin our trek along the left bank of the Urubamba River. After a couple hours of gentle hiking we visit the Inca ruins of Llactapata. We continue hiking away from the Urubamba River ascending and following the Qusichaca River towards the village of Huayllabamba, a small agricultural settlement, stopping along the way for a picnic lunch. After lunch, we will continue on to our private campsite near Huayllabamba (9,800 feet, 3,000 meters), enjoying our first night of camping in the Andes. City life will be left behind as we marvel at the sparkling night sky of the Southern Hemisphere. Today we will walk approximately 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) or 6 hours. (B, L, D)

Monday July 14:

Inca Trail Trek to Machu Picchu

An early nourishing breakfast will bolster our energy for our short, but strenuous hike to the Machu Picchu Sanctuary control station, just above the village of Huayllabamba as we return to the main trail. Once we register at the control station, we will continue on a

tough, ascending trail to the first pass. This is a challenging morning hike with fantastic views and a very clear change of vegetation as we gain altitude. We will pass through an interesting protected cloud forest of native trees before reaching our lunch spot at 3,700 meters (12,150 feet), right below the first pass. After lunch, we will continue the tough ascent toward the highest pass on the trail Warmiwañusqa or Dead Woman's Pass. (4,200 meters, 13,800 feet). Our efforts will be rewarded with unparalleled views of the snow covered peaks of the Cordillera Urubamba and the lush valley vegetation. From here we will begin to encounter Inca pavement. The trail descends to the Pacamayo River to our campsite at Pacaymayo (3,600 meters, 11,900 feet). Today we will walk approximately 17 kilometers (10.5 miles) or 8 hours. (B, L, D)

Tuesday July 15:

Inca Trail Trek to Machu Picchu

Today is a long, but very interesting and rewarding day since there will be many magnificent archaeological sites on the way. On a clear day, our efforts are rewarded with unparalleled views of the snow covered peaks of the Cordillera Vilcabamba and the lush valley vegetation. After breakfast, we will start our slow climb over the second pass of Runkuraqay (3,950 meters, 13,000 feet). Masterful Inca engineering is visible along the trail and at the Inca site Sayacmarca (3,640 meters, 12,000 feet) which is a true highlight along the trail. At the end of the day, we will reach a dry lake at Phuyupatamarca (3,650 meters, 12,000 feet) also known as The Place Among the Clouds. where we will camp overnight while soaking up some of the magical charm of this marvelous site. Today we will walk approximately 22 kilometers (13.6 miles) or 8 hours. (B, L, D)

Wednesday July 16:

Inca Trail Trek to Machu Picchu

Sunrise at Phuyupatamarca is considered one of the highlights of the trek. After breakfast, we will pass the Phuyupatamarca ruins and follow the flagstone trail and Inca stairs down into the cloud forest, meeting our cooks for one last delicious lunch along the trail. After lunch, we will visit the beautiful ruins of Wiñay Wayna. The final part of the trail has some incredible stairways, some carved in stone, and several viewing terraces. In a short time we will arrive into Machu Picchu through the Inti Punku (.Gate of the Sun.) and then follow the trail downhill to the lost citadel located right above the Urubamba River. When we arrive, we will stare in amazement, mouths agape, at this wonder of the ancient world. Our leisurely walk into Machu Picchu (2,400 meters, 8,000 feet) is 8 kilometers (5.0 miles) and will take approximately 7 hours. "I suddenly found myself in a maze of beautiful granite houses! They were covered with trees and mosses and the growth of centuries, but in the dense shadow, hiding in bamboo thickets and tangled vines, could be seen, here and there, walls of white granite ashlars most carefully cut and exquisitely fitted together." Hiram Bingham, upon his discovery of Machu Picchu, 24 July 1911

Machu Picchu is a perfectly preserved Inca city that was lost in the dense jungle for hundreds of years. Machu Picchu, whose name means "ancient peak," is perhaps the most famous and awe-inspiring of all of the ruins discovered during the 20th century. Machu

Picchu was so well-hidden by the towering jungle-covered ramparts of the Cordillera Vilcabamba that it was never discovered by the Spaniards. Constructed on a high mountain overlooking the Urubamba River, Machu Picchu and Wayna Picchu were lost in time and the dense forest until they were brought to the attention of the outside world in July 1911 by the American historian and explorer Hiram Bingham. There are many speculations about the site's use, but its origins and purpose remain lost in time. After a brief visit to the ruins, we will transfer to our hotel in the village of Aguas Calientes, carefully set in a high, tropical cloud forest. (B, L, D)

Thursday July 17:

Machu Picchu

Today, we will start early and watch the sun rise over Machu Picchu. Our guide will escort us through the ruins, discussing the construction and probable usage of the buildings, reflecting on life in this spectacular setting. For those who are interested, we can also take a morning hike to the top of Wayna Picchu, walk through the lush cloud forest to the Temple of the Moon or take more photographs of the area. After lunch, we will transfer by bus to Aguas Calientes at the base of Machu Picchu. We will enjoy one last night at our Aguas Calientes hotel. (B, D)

Friday July 18:

Morning Train to Cusco, Free Afternoon in Cusco

In the morning we will retrace our route through the Urubamba Valley and return to Cusco on the morning train. Upon arrival back in Cusco, we will check into our Cusco hotel. We will spend the afternoon exploring and shopping in Cusco. We will enjoy a farewell dinner and one last night at our Cusco hotel. (B, D)

Saturday July 19:

Free Morning in Cusco, Optional Lima City Tour, Depart for Home

We will enjoy one last free morning in Cusco before departing for Lima and our international flights home in the late afternoon. If you would like to visit Lima, please book your flights from Cusco to Lima in the morning, and we can arrange for a guided city tour of Lima in the afternoon before your international flights home. (B)

Train Travel Alternative

Those who prefer not to hike the Inca Trail will have the chance to spend several days visiting additional sights in the Sacred Valley, before taking the train to Machu Picchu. We will reunite with the trekkers at Machu Picchu. Please indicate at the time of booking if you would like to travel to Machu Picchu by train or by trekking the Inca Trail.

Sunday July 13:

Sacred Valley of the Incas

Today we will spend the morning visiting the ruins and town of Chinchero. En route, we

will see the magnificent snow capped peaks of the Cordillera Vilcabamba. This is by far the most scenically impressive route in all of the Sacred Valley. After lunch, we will visit the agricultural terraces of Moray that were used by the Incas as open-air crop laboratories or greenhouses. Each terrace level is believed to have a different microclimate, enabling the growth of a wide variety of plants in the same area. We will finish our tour with a visit to the pre-Columbian salt mines of Maras that are still active today. These white salt terraces on overhanging cliffs are a true paradise and a must for photography. As the day draws to a close we will return to Ollantaytambo for one more night in the Sacred Valley. We will spend the night at our Sacred Valley hotel. (B, L)

Monday July 14:

Whitewater Rafting on the Urubamba River

Today we will spend a full day whitewater rafting on the Urubamba River. The best rafting route is in southeastern Cusco (en route to Raqchi or Puno) in an area called Chuqicahuana. We will be picked up at 9:00am by our English-speaking guide and will travel by motor coach 1 ½ hours to the river where we will be outfitted in safety helmets and life jackets, taught how to paddle and given a rafting safety and procedures briefing. We will spend 3 hours navigating the exhilarating rapids of the Urubamba River. The rapids will start slowly in the beginning enabling us to get used to rafting and will become more difficult as the day continues on. After rafting, we will have a picnic lunch overlooking the scenic Andes before returning to our hotel between 4:00pm and 5:00pm. We will spend the night at our Sacred Valley hotel. (B, L)

Tuesday July 15:

Train and Optional Hike to Machu Picchu

In the morning, we will transfer to the Ollantaytambo train station where we will board the 8:00am train for the 1 ½ hour train ride to Machu Picchu. As soon as our train journey starts, the valley becomes a canyon; the cloud forest begins to appear with a strong vegetation change as we reach the Machu Picchu Sanctuary. The tracks follow the mighty Urubamba River through spectacular scenery called "the eyebrow of the rainforest". The train passes through several small villages where local Indian farmers tend their crops and reside as they have for hundreds of years.

At kilometer 104, approximately 1 hour after our departure, we will get off the train and begin our optional hike into Machu Picchu. For those not interested in this day hike, train travel all the way to the Machu Picchu ruins can be arranged. Our hiking group will cross a hanging bridge, and then approach the small, but interesting Inca archaeological complex of Cachabamba. After a brief visit to this site we will begin a 3-4 hour ascent to the ruins of Wiñay Wayna, an important Inca spiritual site and one of the loveliest of all Inca ruins. At this point the trail joins with the main Inca Trail. From here you will be walking on Inca pavement. Here the Inca Trail cuts across the ridge above Machu Picchu (2,576 meters or 8,500 feet). We will enter the Machu Picchu archaeological complex through the Inti Punku (Gate of the Sun) and then follow the trail downhill to the lost citadel located right above the Urubamba River. When we arrive, we will stare in amazement, mouths agape, at this wonder of the ancient world.

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