THE SACRED VALLEY RIDE

2024

Trip overview

Our signature and most popular ride starts from our riding operation in the heart of the Sacred Valley at about 8,500 feet (2,800m). The Sacred Valley Ride follows a route across the Urubamba River, up through mountain pasture where smiling Quechua children herd sheep and cattle, to highland terraces and small mountain villages, where the horse's hooves echo on ancient cobblestone roads. Oxen pull wooden ploughs through the fields, travel is by foot, and the native people speak Quechua, the language of the Incas. The trip includes visiting the legendary Inca citadel of Machu Picchu and one overnight in the ancient Inca capital of Cusco. Set departure dates run from April until mid-October.

Horseback riding in Peru through the Sacred Valley of the Incas high in the mighty Andes is an incredible experience you will not soon forget. This valley was the heart of the highly developed Incan civilisation that once controlled a vast area stretching from Ecuador well down the coast of Chile. The monolithic remains of this great empire are everywhere to be seen. The surrounding landscape, with the towering peaks of the Andes, is breathtaking. This area within the Peruvian Andes offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the world, with endless riding trails along ancient Inca roads.

The Peruvian horses are much-loved, reliable and fun to ride and, with the help of your knowledgeable guides, allow you to explore remote parts of the Sacred Valley not seen by most tourists. On this journey, you will appreciate how well-suited these horses are to the terrain and how comfortable they are to ride for many hours.
Accommodations are in charming hotels in the Sacred Valley. The cuisine is a happy blend of Peruvian and Spanish Colonial, offering an impressive variety of delicious fresh local produce.

Riding in Peru is at a high altitude with low oxygen levels in the atmosphere. The well-tailored itineraries include some time to acclimatise - gentle first days allow you to rest and adjust. On the rides, you will notice how difficult it is to exert yourself and run somewhere. Because of this reason, together with the terrain, the riding does not include lots of galloping. The horses are incredibly fit and well adapted to the altitude but require oxygen when put to work. The rides are spectacular, and the fantastic 'Paso Llano' - a smooth 4-beat lateral gait - is a delight. Short canters and gallops may be possible, but these are, by definition, not fast rides. The scenery will take your breath away anyway!

Accommodation & Food

Hotels can vary depending on availability. We will confirm the exact hotels near your time of departure, but they may include the following hotels:

Hotel Sonesta Posada del Inca in Yucay. This hotel is only 5 miles from the stables and has comfortable heated rooms with private bathrooms and plenty of local colours. The hotel is a former 18th-century colonial-style monastery surrounded by beautiful gardens - it has the feel of a small village, with plazas, Gardens and even a chapel. The 69 rooms have tiled floors, wood ceilings, hand-carved headboards and balconies overlooking the gardens or terraced hillsides.

Hotel Costa del Sol in Cusco was once an old mansion of the Spanish nobleman Marquis of Picoaga, now transformed into a comfortable hotel. The intimate and public areas are beautifully decorated in colonial style, framed by stone archways on two levels, stone columns and a Spanish patio.
Breakfasts are always at your hotels. Lunches are usually a delicious picnic out on the trail. The backup team, using the support vehicle, set out lunch before you arrive. Dinners are either in local restaurants or at the ranch.

Meals represent the tasty regional cuisine of the area and include fresh vegetables, dairy products, fresh trout and good meats. Vegetarian and other special diets can be accommodated with advance notice.

Getting there

The collection point for the ride is Cusco, Perú.

There are no direct international flights to/from Cusco, so you will likely have to travel via Lima.

Airport transfers are included on the first and last days of the Sacred Valley Ride itinerary. If you arrive in Cusco one or more days before the start day of the ride, then you will need to make your own way from the airport to your hotel. On the first day of the ride, the earliest possible collection time from Cusco airport is 09:00am (any earlier than this and you will need to take a taxi to your hotel at your own expense). Check-in at your hotel is from 12:00, so we recommend a flight arriving mid-morning. If you arrive earlier than this, you will be able to make use of the hotel's main facilities until your room is ready.

On departure day, check-out is after breakfast and then you are transferred to Cusco airport, (a journey of c. 1.5 hours). Flights should ideally leave Cusco between 11:00 and 14:00. If your route is via Lima, then we recommend that you do not book a flight to Lima departing any later than 14:00. Your onward flight should then depart from Lima after 17.00.

Itinerary (11 days/10 nights)

Day 1.
Upon arrival at the Cusco airport, our representative will welcome you to Cusco. He (or she) will have a sign with your name on it and ensure a safe and easy transfer to your comfortable hotel near the centre of this historical and beautiful city.
We strongly recommend that you relax, rest and get acclimatised to a higher altitude before starting your exciting riding expedition high in the Andes. We made reservations for you at the beautiful Hotel Costa del Sol, a 4-star establishment with a hotel room in the colonial constructed area of the hotel, and only two blocks from the famous Plaza de Armas. The earliest check-in at the hotel is 11.30 AM. If you arrive in Cusco early in the morning, a dayroom may be necessary (an out-of-pocket expense).
Please, be sure you rest well because tomorrow, you will meet and ride the Peruvian Paso horses and learn all about the classic Peruvian riding style. Lunch and dinner are on your own tonight.

Day 2.
After a delicious breakfast, pick up by our driver at 9.15 AM outside your hotel to bring you to your accommodation in the Sacred Valley (a 1.5-hour drive). During the next eight nights, you will stay in comfortable rooms at the Hotel Sonesta Posada del Inca, in the heart of the Sacred Valley of the Incas, just a short drive from the stables.
After you have unpacked and refreshed yourself, you will be picked up and transferred to the ranch.
Today you will become familiar with the beautiful Peruvian Paso horses and traditional Peruvian riding gear.
Enjoy a delicious barbecue lunch at the ranch, some good wine and, of course, Maria’s famous Pisco Sours. After lunch, there will be a demonstration of classic

Peruvian equitation, followed by riding instruction and an evaluation of riding abilities. We will then match you with a mount by your riding ability, preference, personality and weight class. All our horses are forward going, well-trained and a pleasure to ride.
Dinner will either be at the ranch or a local restaurant.

Day 3.
Pick up at your hotel is at 9.15 AM. Today, the ride will take you along beautiful trails through the Sacred Valley. You will get a glimpse into the local life of the villagers as well as into the rich flora of the Peruvian Andes. You can observe the rich flora of the Peruvian Andes, such as the Molle Tree (a.k.a. the Pepper Tree), which the Incas used to embalm mummies with; the Sauco tree, which produces a small but tasty purplish-black fruit; the Capuli fruit tree (its fruit is almost the size of a cherry and its colour when ripe), the Quena tree (the trunk has a twisted form, and the reddish bark flakes and peels like paper), the Tamarilla tree (tree tomato), Cantuta (the flower of the Inca), Aguaymanto (Peruvian cherry or cape gooseberry, Muna (a mint like Peruvian herb) and many other botanical specimens native to the area.
Around mid-day, we arrive at a lush valley called 'Pumahuanca' where Maria and our staff will be waiting to surprise you with a delicious lunch of fresh trout and some refreshing drinks before heading back to the ranch arriving at around 4 PM. An easy day in the saddle to get to know your horse, experience it's exquisite and smooth lateral get and acclimatise to the altitude.
Dinner as the previous night. Riding time: approx. 4 hours. Altitude 2,800 m/ 9,190 ft.

Day 4.
After a hearty breakfast at your hotel, you will be transported to the ranch where the ride will set off. We cross the Urubamba River via a bridge and pass the village of Pichingote. From this point, we climb with our horses to Salinas up a narrow track. Along the way, you will see the salt pans from Inca times. They are still being used to extract salt from the mountain spring water by the local owners. The salt pans consist of a series of platforms where the salty water is channelled through an impressive irrigation system and left to evaporate in the sun.
Today you climb approx. 800 meters, to reach the Andean altiplano. This climb takes about two hours. We ride or try to ride, at a slow pace because the change of altitude does not only affect the horses. Once at 3,550 m (over 11,400 ft.), you will be impressed by the stunning scenery and the snow-capped mountains of Chicon, Veronica and Pitusuray.
Continue your ride to Maras, a typical Andean village with a beautiful 400-year-old colonial church, where a picnic lunch will be waiting for you nearby. The church at Maras was built just after the Conquest and is one of the ten oldest churches in South America.
From Maras, you will visit the ruins of Cheqoq. Here the Incas constructed fascinating cold-storage areas (pre-Hispanic refrigerators) to conserve the agricultural produce of this region. The cooling of the products was achieved through a system of wind tunnels to circulate the cold air coming from the glaciers and a network of water channels to circulate the cold water from a nearby mountain spring. Continue riding until approximately 4:30 pm. The horses will stay with the grooms at a campsite, and you will return to your hotel by private car.
After some rest and a hot shower, we will take you for dinner at one of Urubamba's local restaurants or the ranch. Overnight at the Hotel Sonesta Posada del Inca in the Sacred Valley. (B,L,D).
Riding time: 4 to 4,5 hours. Altitude: 2,800 - 3,550 m/9,190 - 11,650 ft.

Day 5.
After a sound and restful sleep, you will be picked up at 09h15 for your transfer back to where we left the horses. Today is a day for following primitive trails across the altiplano, enjoying spectacular scenery along the way with snow-capped mountains, wildflowers and beautiful mountain lakes. Meet smiling Quechua children with their herds of sheep or cattle and see campesinos traditionally ploughing their fields, oxen hitched to a wooden plough. You may even share a chicha (a traditional maize drink) with them. Just before Chinchero our backup team awaits you with a delicious picnic lunch. On a clear day, the views from Chinchero are tremendous; to the west and northwest stretches a

vista of rolling altiplano, ringed in the distance by the dramatic snow-capped peaks of the Cordilleras Vilcabamba and Urubamba.
After lunch, we ride to Lake Piuray. From this lake we continue north in the direction of Cusco along beautiful trails. At a small village, we will meet a local family who will offer their hospitality. We will leave our horses with grooms at a campsite for the next two nights. If time allows, we have a short trip by car to visit Chinchero to visit a textiles workshop and see a demonstration of ancient techniques of spinning, dying and weaving wool.
The beautiful fabrics are still made in a traditional way, as they would have been in Inca times. Bring some money as you may want to purchase souvenirs, though don't feel obligated to buy anything. Transfer to the historical city of Cusco, the oldest continuously inhabited city in South America and former capital of the great Inca Empire. For the next two nights you stay in a very comfortable hotel in the heart of Cusco's archaeological centre. Enjoy dinner in Cusco (on your own account) - your guide can recommend a restauran for you. Riding time: 4 to 5 hours. Altitude: 3,550-3,800 m / 11,650-12,470 ft.

Day 6.
Today is a rest day for the horses and a free day for you to explore Cusco with its numerous ruins, cathedrals and museums - or you may prefer to relax in one of the many coffee shops or bars.
According to Inca legend, Cusco was founded around 1200AD by Manco Capac and Mama Occlo. Manco Capac selected the site after the golden staff given to him by his father, the Sun, sank into the earth and disappeared. Each Inca emperor built his own palace during his reign and you can still see the original walls throughout Cusco. All meals, except breakfast, are to your own account today.

Day 7.
After breakfast, the riding expedition continues. Pick up is at 9.15 AM from your hotel in the Sacred Valley and the horses are waiting where you left them on Day 5. Today's ride will take you to incredible landscapes (and the highest point of the ride) with spectacular views. Dress well because at these elevations the weather can be more harsh and unpredictable. Ascend a steep and narrow valley to reach a pass at 4,150 m (13,600ft), and enjoy the view of Lake Q'oricocha. Many herds of Llamas, and Alpacas can be seen around here grazing among the farmland. The people living at this high altitude are friendly, hardworking farmers who grow mainly potatoes. After we explore the area around the lake, we ride eastward to a small lake called Quellacocha where we meet our back up team and stop for a delicious lunch. After lunch the ride heads northeast in the direction of the Sacred Valley. Descend from the altiplano into the valley of Umaspampa on a zig-zag trail for about two hours. Close to the village of Umasbamba leave the horses in the caring hands of the

grooms and transfer back to your hotel in the Sacred Valley and dinner at a local restaurant or at the ranch. Riding time: 5 to 6 hours. Altitude: between 3,800 – 4,290 m / 12,470 – 14,000 ft.

Day 8.
Today is another stunningly scenic day and you will have plenty of breaks and photo-stops. From the village of Umaspampa ride to the villages of Cuper Alto and Cuper Bajo, arriving in the early afternoon at a beautiful small lake near the village of Chinchero where you have lunch. Much of the riding today is along trails that are part of the great Incan Empire's road system, the Capac Ñan. The Incan road network was one the greatest engineering feats ever undertaken in the New World, rivalling the Roman road system in the Old World. The 25,000 km network linked Cusco, the Inca capital, to the empire's far-flung domains. The road system reached almost all of the Andean territories, including Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Chile and was formed by four clearly recognisable main roads, and many secondary roads. After lunch ride to a small village not far from Maras where the horses will stay with the grooms for the night. Transfer to your hotel in the Sacred Valley before dining at the hotel's restaurant and overnight at the comfortable Hotel Posada del Inca. (B L D)
Riding time: approx. 5 to 6 hours. Altitude: 3,800 – 3,600 m/12,470 – 11,850 ft.

Day 9.
After breakfast get ready for your last riding day. Before you meet the horses at Huaynacolca stop at the local market where Maria will show you all the local produce that is available. After the short visit to the market drive back to where

the horses spent the night and continue the ride along the old Inca road high above the Sacred Valley. Pass farmland and the small village of Santana before returning to the village of Maras. Arrive at a beautiful courtyard of an old abandoned house for lunch where the back up team will be waiting with drinks as well. After a delicious lunch follow a trail with great views of the Urquillos Valley, arriving once more at the village of Maras. From there continue the descent into the Sacred Valley, arriving at the ranch around 4:30 PM. Celebrate your return with a traditional Pisco Sour.
Riding time: 4 hours approx.. Altitude: 3,600 – 2,850 m /11,850 – 9,350 ft.
Dinner at the ranch or at a local restaurant.

Day 10.
Today you visit Machu Picchu by train. Pick up from your hotel around 6-6.30 am. Since its discovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911, Machu Picchu has captivated the hearts and minds of the modern world. The experience of visiting Machu Picchu is not limited to the ruins themselves; the train journey is one of the most spectacular in the world. Before it was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1983, the existence of the Inca citadel was almost unknown to the world. Since the 80s, visits to Machu Picchu have increased so much that it is now one of the favourite destinations for travellers. As of July 2017, the Peruvian government has established new regulations to preserve the facilities of this Wonder of the World. There are different entrance times: morning from 6 am to 12 am and afternoon from 12 pm to 5 am. The capacity of the Citadel is limited to 2,500 visitors per day, distributed in the two shifts mentioned. Because of the increase in tourism in Peru, your ticket to Machu Picchu must be booked and reserved in advance. Tickets are booked for the afternoon shift and with the most convenient train schedule. Depending on availability at the time of booking, you will be travelling with the luxurious Vistadome train service leaving from the train station in Ollantaytambo in the morning (a 30-minute drive from your hotel) and returning to the same station around 7 or 8 pm where you will be picked up again by our driver. You will stop at the ranch for dinner on the way to the hotel. Lunch is an out-of-pocket expense today.

Day 11.

Early morning transfer to the airport in Cusco for your onward travel. The driving time is 1.25 hr; if continuing to Lima for international flights, book flights departing Lima 5pm or after.

Itinerary Addendum

This itinerary is flexible and may be modified at the guide's discretion due to unforeseen circumstances.

Pricing & departure dates 2024

Minimum group size: 4
Maximum group size: 6

Ability description: You need to be at least an intermediate rider who is comfortable, secure and in control over varied terrain in open countryside. The pace of the ride is not fast due to the altitude and difficult terrain. There are some technical sections where good balance is vital, You will experience the fabulous Paso lLano pace where the terrain allows.
Total riding time: 6 days riding plus 1 introduction/riding instruction day.

Departure dates 2024:
7 Apr - 17 Apr
28 Apr - 08 May
19 May - 29 May
14 Jul - 24 Jul
04 Aug - 14 Aug
25 Aug - 04 Sep
15 Sep - 25 Sep
6 Oct - 16 Oct

Pricing:
US$ 6.250 per person - sharing
US$ 890 single supplement (if applicable)

Price includes

- Price includes meals as reflected in the itinerary, professional English speaking trail guide, support team including grooms, 4x4 back up vehicle, all land transfers, train, bus and entrance fee to Machu Picchu and all accommodation (10 overnights in comfortable hotels).
- All drinks (including alcoholic beverage) during the ride and at the ranch, except during meals at restaurants.

Price does not include

- Alcoholic beverages during meals at restaurants, gratuities, optional activities, personal expenditures and travel insurance.
- Single supplement. The price for each ride is based on shared occupancy. If you are traveling solo and wish to share accommodation, we will make every effort to find a roommate (always of the same gender). If you are willing to share and no roommate materialises, then the customary single supplement will apply. A single supplement is

always applicable for participants who specifically request single accommodation.

Trip Details

Meeting Point
Meeting point for this ride is Cusco.

Riders Requirements
To take part in these rides you need to be a reasonably experienced rider, intermediate or above. You should be comfortable, secure and in control on a well schooled horse at all paces and used to riding in open country and over varied terrain. You should have a reasonably good level of general and riding fitness.

Beginner:
A rider who has limited experience, is unable to apply basic aids and does not have a firm and balanced seat
Novice:
A rider who is capable of mounting and dismounting unassisted, capable of applying basic aids, comfortable and in control at the walk.

Intermediate:
A rider who has a firm and balanced seat, who is capable of mounting and dismounting unassisted, comfortable and in control at all paces but does not ride regularly.

Strong Intermediate:
An intermediate rider who is currently riding regularly and is comfortable in the saddle for at least 6 hours per day.

Advanced:
All of the above, plus an independent seat, soft hands, and capable of handling a spirited horse in open country.
Age Limit: 16 or older.

Weight limit:
There is a strict rider weight limit of 85 kgs / 13.5 stone / 190 lbs (dressed for riding). There are scales at the stables and riders may be required to step on

the scales. Anyone exceeding the weight limit may be excluded from the riding and no refund will be made.

Horses and Tack

The horses are locally bred Peruvian Pasos. This breed dates back to the colonial era of Peru and originates from the Spanish Andalusians. Peruvian Paso horses are bred for their grace, spirit, and intelligence and are a symbol of their historic and noble past. These horses like to amble, moving fore and hind limbs on the same side at the same time, unlike other equine races that typically move diagonal limbs at the same time. During the ride you will experience traveling on horseback at the smooth Paso Llano gait (4-beat lateral gait, between 8 to 10 Km. per hour). The horses are well cared for, strong, and even-tempered.

The tack utilised is very traditional and demonstrates refined Peruvian craftsmanship. The hardwood hex stirrup and the '*guarnicion'*, or tailpiece, are unique elements of the Peruvian tack. The saddle is a box saddle and has a deep seat.

Pace of the ride

Due to the very high altitude and rough, rocky terrain, this is not a fast-paced ride. The horses are asked to work at altitudes of between 2,800m and 4,350m, and we should remember that with the altitude and reduced oxygen this high up makes their job of carrying us much more difficult!!

The decreased oxygen reduces not only the maximal oxygen consumption but also the absolute workload. High altitude has an effect on the horse's cardiovascular, haematological, respiratory and metabolic functions.

From experience we learned that our well-trained horses need approximately two days to get acclimatised to higher altitudes. During the first days of the ride we don't ask too much from our horses and keep the pace relatively slow. As the ride develops you will experience a more exciting pace, such as the fabulous and smooth 'paso llano' gait, some canters and even some gallops, but please bear in mind this is not a fast paced ride by definition.

Meals

While on the Sacred Valley of the Incas Ride, guests are treated to wonderful meals representing tasty regional cuisine. Dishes are made from fresh vegetables, dairy products, and fresh trout. Vegetarian or other dietary requirements will be accommodated with advanced notice.

Responsibilities of ride participants

All care will be taken, but we assume no responsibility for injury, loss or damage in any way. Guests are responsible for having an adequate, valid

insurance policy including coverage for all the sporting activities that they are likely to participate in. Appropriate medical insurance is obligatory.
It is understood by Maria Zans that guests are in a suitable condition to partake in a riding tour, are not riding against any medical advice, and that guests know of no reason why they should not be participating in such a tour. Guests will be required to sign a waiver of liability at the start of the tour.

Ride participants have a certain responsibility to Maria Zans and to the other members of the ride. Participants are responsible for understanding the requirements of the ride, and for selecting a ride appropriate to their ability. Participants with medical problems or special dietary needs are responsible for informing Maria Zans of these issues well in advance.
For the protection of all participants, the ride leader reserves the right to prevent anyone from riding who displays insufficient ability, or whose behaviour endangers the safety of other riders, themselves, or the horses. No refund will be made to a participant who is rejected for any such reason, or who is unwilling or unable to complete a tour.
Participants are responsible for arranging travel to and from the ride's meeting point, for carrying valid travel documents, and for obtaining immunisations appropriate to the destination. Participants are responsible for understanding what is and is not included in the price as outlined in the detailed ride itineraries.

Anyone who does not want pictures of themselves to be used in promotional materials should notify Maria Zans accordingly.

Suggested Packing List
Since you will be riding at elevations between 2.800 and 4.290 meters (9,185 and 14,000 ft), lightweight, warm clothing worn in layers is highly recommended.

- Comfortable riding trousers (two pairs)
- T- shirts
- Long sleeved cotton shirts. These are without doubt the best things to ride in. Sleeves can be rolled up or down for protection from the sun and the collar helps to protect your neck too.
- Thick socks
- Wind-bloc Fleece or warm jacket for cold evenings especially at these high altitudes.
- Waterproofs. Ideally a Gore-Tex or similar wind and rain proof jacket. Waterproof leggings are also a good idea. You will be provided with warm wool/alpaca ponchos, but it is often useful to have another waterproof jacket

underneath your poncho for added protection. It may not rain, but better to be prepared.

- Riding boots with rubber sole, also suitable for walking (around Inca ruins etc). Polo boots with front zip are wonderful as they are easy to put on and off.
- Protection for the lower leg, preferably half-chaps.
- Hat. We recommend a hard hat for riding and something with a wide brim is advisable as protection against the sun (baseball caps work well). Your hard hat must be secure on your head.
- Riding gloves
- Light pair of shoes for après-riding (espadrilles are great)
- Good sunglasses with a neck cord. Your eyes will become bloodshot if you do not wear sunglasses.
- Sunscreen and Lip Balm are essential because of the altitude and dry air. We suggest at least Factor 30, if not total block.
- Insect repellent (Machu Picchu and the surrounding area can be prone to mosquitos).
- Spanish Phrasebook/dictionary
- Casual clothes - for when you are not riding.
- Small medical kit with antiseptic cream, good supply of ibuprofen, aspirin and plasters, antihistamine tablets, any medication you regularly take.
- Scarf/bandana, useful for protection against the sun.
- Additional passport photos
- Copy of passport/visa and debit cards
- Wash bag. A supply of baby wipes will be invaluable. We also recommend biodegradable personal washing products. Hair-dryers are available at all hotels on the trail.
- Ziplock bags/supply of plastic carrier bags - always useful for wet/dry kit.

Recommendation: when riding wear clothes in neutral/earthy colours that blend in well with the natural landscape. It looks better on photos.

Leather saddlebags are provided for you. Each person has a set of saddlebags and carries what they need for the day. Jackets and ponchos can be tied behind the saddle so it is easy to put them on and take them off. To keep your saddlebag contents clean, a good idea is to put all your things in a plastic carrier bag/Ziplock bag first and then into the saddlebags. We provide each rider with a warm Alpaca/wool poncho during the ride.

The Sacred Valley Ride

MARIA ZANS

HORSE RIDING HOLIDAYS