

Tambopata Rainforest Reserve in Madre de Dios, Perú

Tropical rainforests are among the most outstanding natural ecosystems on the planet, an awe inspiring tangle of life to some, an unfathomable puzzle with more questions than answers to others. They represent the pinnacle of life on Earth. Vegetative production (2 kg/m²/yr) is more than double that found in the most productive temperate forests, species diversity hits the roof and the whole system is considered the most important natural regulator of the Earth's climate, for which we are forever indebted. Tropical rainforests, among which the Amazon is the largest single tract on Earth, span the globe between the tropics where rainfall exceeds an average of 1500 mm per year (6 feet) and where temperatures do not drop below an average of 17°C throughout the year. The ecosystem is entirely self-sufficient, requiring only the steady input of sunlight to maintain the plants, which in turn maintain the rest through the many interconnecting webs of interactions, checks and balances that are a constant feature of this twilight world.

Plants form the basic structure of the forest on which everything else depends. The vegetation is broadly arranged into strata (see diagram opposite), which though not readily observed or defined, certainly exist. The most distinct division observable is between the canopy - a strata exposed to the full effects of the sun and the wind, and the undergrowth, which is poorly illuminated in comparison, although it is more stable with respect to the environmental conditions of temperature, humidity, wind and so forth. The contrast between these microclimates can be striking and goes some way towards explaining the complexity of life forms, each adapting to a unique array of microclimates and the micro ecosystems within them.

Animals also have been affected by the forest's structure. In the various strata the availability of food, the opportunities for concealment and possible modes of locomotion are very different. For example, an animal living in the treetops can readily obtain large quantities of vegetative foods (flowers, leaves, fruit, etc.) but must have limbs adapted to climbing, swinging, jumping, gliding or flying from tree to tree. In contrast, the ground dwellers have little or no climbing ability and depend largely on food falling down from above. Only recently has the treetop community of plants and animals been a focus of interest to biologists and it is proving to be exceedingly rich in life. More than half of all the forest's animals are now believed to be arboreal (living in the trees) of which the majority complete their entire lifecycles without even approaching the ground.

The sheer number of species that live in tropical rainforests exceeds the imagination. Over the last decade the number of insect species thought to inhabit the planet has risen from a mere 2 million to 30 million or more due to the intensive research now being aimed in the direction of the tropics. The explanations for such species richness are numerous and are not mutually exclusive. General theories hypothesize that the tropics themselves have experienced a fairly constant climate over the millennia, so that the flora and fauna have not been adaptively restricted as much by physical conditions, enabling them to compete more vigorously with each other. This competition over a protracted length of time has resulted in more specialized adaptations to reduce or overcome the competition resulting in slight physical and/or temporal changes in plant and animal populations, culminating ultimately in the creation of separate species. A high degree of specialization by organisms in these environments has been found to be common. The more constant environment may

also have resulted in less extinction compared to the harsher conditions at greater latitudes where the weak or poorly-adapted are quickly weeded out.

It is one of the paradoxes of tropical ecology that however luxuriant the rainforest vegetation may appear, its presence is not an indication of great soil fertility; on the contrary such soils are some of the poorest of all. This fact however can be explained when one considers the timescale during which plants have been actively competing for nutrients in this environment. Rainforests have been around for approximately 125 million years. The length of time that current tracts of forests have been present can be measured therefore in millions of years, during which time the plants have been experiencing greater and greater competition for soil nutrients, so that their adaptations for obtaining these nutrients have been steadily honed to such an extent that today the nutrients locked up in a dead leaf on the forest floor can be recycled directly into the plant without ever becoming part of the mineral soil. 95% of nutrients as a whole are locked up in the living matter. Recycling of nutrients from the dead is fast and extremely efficient.

This lack of nutrient and poor soil structure, endemic in the tropics, is extremely debilitating once the forest cover has been removed and explains why farming on most tropical forest soils is non-sustainable and leaves permanent scars on land which cannot be colonized effectively by the forest again, ultimately due to its own efficiency!

Dossier Note

This Dossier was last updated as per the version date above. The itinerary and other details may change over time so they may differ slightly from the brochure or may change between the date of dossier printing and the start date of your trip. Any further amendments will be advised to you at the start of your tour.

Arrival Instructions

Jorge Chavez International Airport in Callao Lima is approximately a 45-minute drive from the Miraflores district, where most of the main hotels are located. The easiest way to get there is via taxi. Immediately passing after the customs and immigration area, as you head to the exits, you will find a taxi stand; is not recommendable to take a taxi, under any circumstances, out of the passenger's restricted area. You can pay for the car at set rates (about \$20 USD) and won't need to worry about sorting out a ride outside the airport facilities, where the situation tends to get more chaotic, with many drivers vying for few clients. There is money exchange facilities open 24 hours in the Arrivals area. If you are arriving from abroad and have paid in advance for an arrival transfer, an Inca Xpress Peru representative will meet you at the airport. If no one is there, wait for a prudential time, we always are there but the chaos may us seem lost; do not take a public taxi, just go downward your steps and take an official taxi in the restricted area; we will reimburse you. If you have not paid for an arrival transfer, the best way to get into town is by public taxi. If your taxi driver does not speak English and you do not speak Spanish, simply show driver the hotel address to simplify communications.

Please note that Day 1, in some tours, is an arrival day and no activities are planned for that day so you may arrive at any time. However, we strongly recommend that you arrive in Lima early on Day 1, as this will give you the opportunity to rest and see a little of Lima before heading south Cusco. The last day is a departure

day in which no activities have been planned.

Your leader will contact you at the hotel on Day 1 and make sure you are settled comfortably. If you arrive late, s/he will leave you a message detailing what time and where you should meet the next morning. Your Tour Leader will also organize a short meeting soon after arrival, during which you will meet other tour participants and receive information about general and specific aspects of the trip.

Local Emergency Contact

Contact in Lima: - Avenida José Pardo 610 Oficina 4 Miraflores – Lima, Perú. Tel: 511-4455889

Emergency Contact

Should you need to contact Inca Xpress Peru during a situation of dire need, we have 2 mobile lines which will connect you directly with our on duty manager during the 24 hours. If for any reason you do not receive an immediate answer, please leave a detailed message and contact information, so we may return your call and assist you as soon as possible.

Our 2 mobile lines are: 996992336 and 989003024

Itinerary

LIBERTADOR TAMBOPATA LODGE

Tour Length: 04 days / 03 nights

Activities: Outdoor, Ecological, Moderate Trekking

Spots to visit: Tambopata National Reserve

PROGRAM LTP04 TAPIR (4 DAYS 3 NIGHT)

Day 1: Flight to Puerto Maldonado, and journey to the lodge. Following your early morning flight to Puerto Maldonado from Lima or Cusco, you will be met at the airport by your naturalist guide and transferred to a dugout canoe for the trip up the Tambopata River to the lodge. On the journey the vegetation changes from colonized deforested areas to virgin rain forest. A box-lunch is provided on board. On arrival you'll have a welcome drink and meet the rest of the staff. In the late afternoon you set off for an introductory walk into the "terra firme" forest behind the lodge (Trail 2), dominated by giant Brazil-nut and Dipteryx trees. Frequently seen mammals on this trail are Saddle-back Tamarinds, Brown Capuchins, Agoutis, Pacas, Blue-Morpho butterflies, Trogons, Toucans and many other species of birds. After dinner a night walk to find nocturnal animals or insects by the eye-shine a specialization for increasing the light and see better, about 50% of the animals are nocturnal in the rainforest. (L,D)

Day 2: Hike to Lake Condenado. After an early breakfast you and your nature guide will board the motorized canoe once again for the short journey to the trail head to begin a morning's exploration by foot and paddle canoe of the lake system of Condenado, rich in bird and aquatic life. A family of Giant Otters live in the vicinity of the lake and are often observed. Birds abound especially Rufescent Tiger-herons, Great Egrets, Wattled

Jacanas, Hoatzin, the noisy Donacobius and many others. Remember to bring your hat and sun cream for there is no shade out on the water. You will return to the lodge in time for lunch. The afternoon is for exploring the forest close to the lodge (with or without your guide), relaxing and bathing in the Gallucunca, a cool clear stream beside the lodge or visit our tree platforms, going up with ropes and harnesses for a bird's eye view of the forest and for close-ups of arboreal orchids and the many other species of plants and animals that are never seen near the ground (extra cost). After dark you will go searching for caiman (alligators) and other nocturnal animals by motorized canoe along the Tambopata River. (B,L,D)

Day 3: Hike to Lake Sachavacayoc (Tapir Lake). After an early breakfast you will take a short boat ride down river to the trail head. Here you embark on a longer trail which leads to a spectacular hidden lake, requiring the crossing of streams and swampy ground, past the giant Lupuna trees (kings of the jungle) which abound in this part of the forest. On the walk you are introduced to more aspects of the forest and its animals. At the lake itself it is possible to spot the elusive Black Caiman and Giant Otters. We return for lunch. The afternoon is free for relaxation and bathing (B,L,D)

Day 4: Departure. A dawn start is required for the canoe trip back to Puerto Maldonado giving memorable views of the sun rise over the river. Lookout for the early morning wildlife which is particularly active at this time, howler monkeys are frequently heard, as they stakeout their territories. Your guide will take care of you on arrival in Puerto Maldonado and will deal with all the necessities at the airport prior to your departure. (B)

Additional days

Extra days at the lodge, in addition to the above mentioned program, are possible. These can be guided or unguided according to your preference and interests. During these days you can either, explore the trail system in more depth, going further afield along trails not visited before; repeat the lake visits accompanying other groups, giving you more time to wonder/paddle in your favorite areas; visit our tree platforms, going up with ropes and harnesses for a bird's eye view of the forest and for close-ups of arboreal orchids and the many other species of plants and animals that are never seen near the ground or at dawn when the main activity of the forest begin with a sun rise.

Inclusions

- *All meals and accommodation from lunch on Day 1 to Breakfast on your final day (inclusive)
- *All transport from your arrival at Puerto Maldonado to your return to the airport (inclusive).
- *All guided excursions describes in the itinerary (including on additional days, if you wish).
- *One night excursion on the river looking for Caiman.

Not included

- *Flights to and from Puerto Maldonado
- *The entrance Fee to the TNR (Aprox US\$10)
- *Airport taxes

*Tree climbing (with harnesses and ropes)

*Any drinks you may purchase from the bar

*Tips

Rates 2011 / 2012

The Tambopata National Reserve (TNR)

The entrance fee to Tambopata National Reserve (TNR) is not included (\$ 10.00 aprox.)

Transfers in Cusco Apt/Htl/Apt are not included.

For additional programs and tours please mail to: [mailto:info@tourperu.net?subject=More information required](mailto:info@tourperu.net?subject=More%20information%20required)

General Conditions and Policy

Rates and Tour prices

All rates are quoted in US Dollars and are based on tariffs,

Deposits and Payments

Is not required any payment at time of booking, however we will require the full payment prior arrival, unless agree in other conditions.

Money transfer cost will be at passengers account.

Cancellations

Refunds will be made for written cancellations received up to 30 days prior to departure.

30 days-15 days prior to departure 30 %

14 days-1 day prior to departure 50 %

On departure day and No-Show, no refund will be made under any concept.

Amendments

A fee of US \$ 15 for extra handling is charge if passengers amend arrangements, held or cancel and rebook for another departure.

Refunds Due the high cost of handling and processing, no refunds are paid for any unused portions of the tour if passengers amend or delete any arrangements during the operation of any tour. If any refunds may be due because of circumstances beyond the control of the tour operator or the passenger, application must be lodged within 30 days of return. No refunds will be made for occasional missed meals or sightseeing tours.

Refunds are made on the basis of cost of services not used and not on per day basis. There are not refunds, under any concept, for missed bus tickets. Air ticketing refunds are under the airline policy. Hotels have they own refund policy and refunds will be under this policy.

Inclusions

In case of tour packages are included all land transport

cost and rates of exchange known in December 2005 and expected to be in effect at time of departure. Accordingly they are subject to increase without notice if such rates change prior to departure. Circuits tours price include costs of planning, communications, administration and documentation. An additional handling of US 10.00 charge will apply when the reservation only involve airline ticketing. All rates are per person except in Hotels Rates section where rates are per room.

Reservations

An e-mail to info@perutavel.org is required to make any reservation; you must specify names and last names and passport number, nationality and age. For trips booking during high season (From June through end of November) is highly recommended to made reservations with a minimum of 5-15 days prior to departure. For groups during high season bookings must be done with a minimum of 45 days. For individual travelers during low season reservations may be done with 24 hrs in advance at our on_duty@perutavel.org office.

where explicitly specified, bilingual guides, entrance fees, sightseeing and transfers where specified. Twin - bedded accommodations with private bath and shower will be provided at hotels listed. If a change becomes necessary for any reason, hotels substitute will be the equivalent of those selected. The prices for single room are listed with the prices of each itinerary as the item SWB. Note, however, that single rooms may occasionally be less comfortable than twins. Single rooms are not available with adventure tours. All hotels listed on the tours are including standard hotel Breakfast. Meals are included as specified in each itinerary. Hotels services charges and Tax are included. Outdoor trips are including all gear camp, all meals, porters, transport, first aid kit.

Not included

Air ticketing, airport departure taxes, tips to local guides, any liquor or wines or beverages stocked in hotel minibars, laundry, phones calls, excess baggage charges, optional excursions or other item of personal nature, personal insurance of any kind.

Inca Xpress Peru - Liability

Inca Xpress Peru and / or their agents and / or supplier of services pursuant to or in connection with these itineraries shall act only as agents for the passengers in making arrangements for hotels, transportation, restaurants or airlines. Inca Xpress Peru shall not assume any liability for any injure, damage, death, loss or delay to any passenger or its property due to an act of God or default of any hotel, airline or land transportation company or person rendering the services included in the purchased tour. Inca Xpress Peru will not assume any expenses due to flight cancellation, strikes, or amends due to passengers will. Inca Xpress Peru shall be not responsible for any lost or damage to the passengers or their properties caused by supernatural forces,

fires, shortcomings of machineries or equipments, government actions or authorities; wars- are they or not declared- hostilities, civil disturbances, strikes, robbery, looting, deceits, swindles, epidemics, quarantines, delays or cancellations, change of itineraries or schedules. Inca Xpress Peru or anyone of their subsidiary or affiliated companies shall be not become responsible for any additional expense or responsibility in which the passenger incurs as consequence of anyone of the mentioned causes. Inca Xpress Peru declares expressly that it only acts as an agent among the travelers and the entities and the people in charge to render the services; consequently it declines all responsibility for the following deficiencies that may will present in anyone of the rendered services, or any kind of irregularities that may take place during the execution of the services such as: flights delays, connection impossibility, over- bookings in airlines or hotels, neither for any accident, damage, wound or death. When the trip is carried out in vehicles belonging to thirds, in the event of accident the passengers will undergo expressly to the legislation as regards accidents of the country where it occurs and where is registered the vehicle. The airlines, cruises or terrestrial companies intervening in the execution of the programs are the only ones responsible for such events that may occur while the passengers are on board of their respective vehicles. When the passengers appreciates in site the non - execution or the bad execution of the purchased services must notify it in writing immediately in the term of 48 hours to Inca Xpress Peru, otherwise it will suppose that the passenger is who should prove the non fulfillment of the contract to a competent Tribunal. In the event of strike on the part of one or more of the suppliers Inca Xpress Peru commits to carry out all the efforts in benefit to the affected passengers, being the economic incidences that could be to the sole account of the passengers. The sole fact of a booking and / or the issuance of tickets, travel vouchers or / and coupons imply the total observance of the passenger in all respects of these terms and conditions.

Fitness & Mobility

Inca Xpress Peru small group tours bring together people of all ages. It is very important you are aware that, as a minimum, an 'average level of fitness and mobility' is required to undertake our easiest programs. Passengers must be able to walk without the aid of another person, climb 3-4 flights of stairs, step on and off small boats, and carry their own luggage. Travelers over the age of 60 are required to complete a short medical questionnaire, which must be signed by their physician. This is to ensure that senior travelers have the necessary fitness and mobility to comfortably complete their chosen program. Our tour leaders work hard to ensure that all our travelers are catered for equally; please note that it is not their responsibility to help individuals who cannot complete the day's activities unaided.

TRIP PREPARATION

Please contact your physician, or travel clinic for the most up-to-date health requirements. All countries require a valid passport (with minimum 6 months validity). Contact your local embassy, or consulate for the most up-to-date visa requirements, or see your travel agent. **IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO HAVE THE CORRECT TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION.**

Health

We recommend you contact your family physician, or your local travel clinic for the most up-to-date health information at least one month before departure. Travelers should also carry a basic first-aid kit. Proof of Yellow Fever inoculation will be required before you depart for the Amazon. You should be aware that there is a 10 to 15 day period before the inoculation becomes fully effective.

Safety and Security

Travelers must exercise common sense and caution at all times. Tourists should stick to set travel arrangements and avoid unknown areas. Always keep a photocopy of your passport, airline tickets and a record of your travelers' checks and credit card numbers separate from where you keep the originals.

What to Take

You will be on the move a lot, so our advice is to pack as lightly as possible. Your baggage should be clearly labeled and restricted to one soft compact suitcase, or sports bag, maximum 15kg, plus a daypack. Luggage limits on airlines are strictly enforced and space on vehicles is limited. Porters are not often available, so be prepared to carry your own bags. Most people automatically assume that the weather is hot in South America, but because of the higher altitude in the Andes, the temperature can feel quite cold, especially at night. We recommend the use of a duffel bag or backpack, whichever is easiest for you to carry. A good size daypack is also essential.

Suggested Items:

- Fleece top
- Windproof/waterproof jacket
- Small towel and swim wear
- 4 shirts and t-shirts
- Sun hat
- 1 pair of shorts
- 2 pairs of long trousers
- 1 pair hiking pants/track pants
- Hiking boots/ sturdy walking shoes
- Sport sandals

- Sun block
- Sunglasses
- Toiletries (biodegradable)
- Watch or alarm clock
- Water bottle
- Purification tablets or filters
- Flashlight
- Money Belt

- First-aid kit (should contain lip salve, Aspirin, Band Aids, anti-histamine, Imodium or similar tablets for mild cases of diarrhea, re-hydration powder, extra prescription drugs you may be taking).

Also recommended for this trip:

- Inner sheet (for sleeping bag)
- Wool hat, mitts or gloves (preferably waterproof)
- Rain poncho
- Strong plastic bags to help keep gear dry
- Sleeping bag (this can also be hired locally for approx. \$10 USD)
- Mattress (a foam mattress is included as part of the hike; self inflating type mattresses are available for hire)
- Anti-inflammatory tablets (e.g. Ibuprofen)
- Thermal underwear

All other camping equipment for the Inca Trail hike is provided and included in the cost of the excursion. Porters carry the gear, so you will only be responsible for carrying your daypack. But please be aware there are weight limits on what the porters can carry, thus every passenger is limited to 7 kg, including sleeping bags.

Optional Items:

Camera and film, reading/writing material, binoculars, cover for backpacks, pocket knife

Documents:

- Passport (with photocopies)
- Travel insurance (with photocopies)
- Airline tickets (with photocopies)
- USD cash and travelers cheques
- Credit or debit card (see personal spending money)
- INXS vouchers, pre-departure information and dossier
- Any entry visas or vaccination certificates required

SPENDING MONEY

How much money you take is obviously a personal matter. If you intend to purchase many souvenirs, or if you enjoy dining out, we would recommend that you take much more than the suggested daily average.

Credit cards and debit cards are very useful for cash advances. Visa cards are the most widely accepted cards. While ATMs are widely available, there are no guarantees that your credit or debit cards will actually work in Latin America. Check with your bank. You should be aware that to purchase products or services on a credit card a fee of 5%-10% usually applies.

Do not rely on credit or debit cards as your only source of money, a combination of US dollar cash, travelers' cheques and cards is best. Always take more rather than less, as you don't want to spoil the trip by constantly feeling short of funds.

Paying Locally

Some of our adventure tours involve a local payment. Paying locally allows us to keep the overall cost of our

competitive and pass the savings on to you. These funds are put towards local expenses. In some developing countries the transferring of funds is at times problematic so this is a way to help us serve you whilst saving you money. Payment is to be made to your leader upon arrival.

Tipping

Tipping is an expected - though not compulsory - component of your tour program and an expression of satisfaction with the persons who have assisted you on your tour. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. There are several times during the trip where there is opportunity to tip the local guides or drivers. You may do this individually, or your Tour Leader will offer to collect the money and tip as a group. Also at the end of each trip, if you felt your Inca Xpress Peru Tour Leader did an outstanding job, tipping is always appreciated.

Budget

Departure Tax - \$28 USD, local flights airport tax USD \$ 5

Optional Activities

Optional activity prices are subject to change and can fluctuate in relation to the high/low season and the number of people on a specific excursion. Not all excursions listed here may be available, due to season, or weather conditions. As generally not a lot of time is spent in start/end cities, you may want to arrange to arrive early, or stay longer after the trip in order to allow sufficient time to participate in optional activities there.

All prices are per person in US dollar amounts.

SOME HISTORY AND TRIP NOTES

Founded by Francisco Pizarro, on the Day of the Three Kings (Epiphany) in 1535, Lima is known as the City of Kings. It is Peru's capital city and as such, deserves a visit. The Plaza de Armas is the heart of old Lima and there you'll find the Cathedral, Government Palace and Archbishop's Palace. The Cathedral dates back to the 1700s and houses the remains of the conquistador Pizarro. To get a feel for colonial Lima, take a cab to the Plaza de Armas and watch the changing of the Palace Guard in the afternoon. Walk around the streets surrounding the Jirón de la Union, for great examples of Spanish-colonial architecture and to experience life in a large South American city.

There are many fine museums in and around the city, including the Museo Rafael Larco Herrera, which houses an equally impressive collection of pottery, mummies and textiles from the Paracas and Nazca cultures. An optional city tour visits many of the city's highlights.

The more affluent coastal districts of Miraflores, Barranco and San Isidro offer good night life and cafés. The Limeños are friendly and the city's many interesting museums, churches, markets, restaurants and night life will surely entice you. Seafood lovers should be sure and try a ceviche, for which Lima is well known. NOTE: Care should be taken when wandering around on your own in central Lima as some areas can be dangerous and pickpockets are daring.

Pisco is just a few hours south from Lima, along the Pan American Highway. It gives its name to the white grape brandy produced in the region and is a fairly important port town. If you haven't tried the national drink, Pisco Sour, then this is the place to do it. While the town itself is of considerable historical and archaeological interest, we also use it as a starting point for an optional visit to the Ballestas Islands, where you may observe the sea lion colonies, penguins and a variety of other birds.

The pleasant colonial town of Ica enjoys a dry sunny climate and is known for its huge sand dunes, which we visit on the way to Nazca. Apart from the dunes, the town is well known for its wines and there are several wineries and distilleries in the area.

The entire coastal desert area was also once the home for the Paracas and the Nazca cultures, which preceded the Incas by more than half a millennia. Remains of the Nazca culture are still visible during an optional tour of an ancient desert cemetery site, which also includes a visit to a pottery workshop. Further along, the road climbs slightly and we rise above the coastal mist to find one of the world's greatest archaeological mysteries, the lines of Nazca, an area of flat desert crisscrossed by lines, patterns, and pictures drawn in the sand. Some of these are as long as 10 km. Others depict birds and animals that are only recognizable from the air. Who drew the lines, and why, is something that modern archaeologists can only guess at. Current theories suggest that they may be part of a complex agricultural calendar. The best way to view the lines

is from a light aircraft, with an optional flight. Flights are easily arranged and generally depart early in the morning, when the contrast in color on the desert is most striking.

Peru's second most important city is Arequipa, which maintains a traditional colonial style and more laid back pace in comparison to the capital. Built from a very light colored volcanic rock called sillar, the older buildings dazzle in the sun, thus the nickname, "the White City." The main plaza, with its cafés and nearby cathedral, is a top draw for visitors. Those with an interest in history and architecture can take an optional visit to the Convent of Santa Catalina. The Convent offers a brief respite from the outside world and a unique view into a by-gone way of life. Spectacular mountains surround Arequipa, the most famous of which is El Misti Volcano, at 5822 m (19096 ft) and with a beautiful snow-capped peak. The surrounding villages also deserve a visit where we can see first hand the traditions of the people of this region.

En route to see the Colca Canyon, we relax in the town of Chivay for two nights and have time to visit the local thermal baths (optional). The drive to Chivay is remarkable because of the extensive Inca and pre-Inca terracing that go on for kilometers. Once at the Canyon, with a little luck, we will be able to see condors and possibly 3 different species of camels, including alpacas, llamas and vicuñas. . The viewing area is a natural "Mirador" (scenic lookout), where we look out over the river flowing 1200m (3936 ft) below. A scenic journey over the Andes, takes us to Puno. When we arrive in Puno, you may be affected by the altitude which is 3830m (12562 ft)). It may take a little time to acclimatize to this, but before long you probably will not even notice it. Just take it easy for the first day or two, and cut back on alcohol and cigarette consumption to minimize the symptoms. You may also find that your appetite is reduced. This is no cause for alarm; it is just a reaction to the altitude. Be sure to drink plenty of water and do not attempt too much in any given day.

Puno is the place, at the highest altitude of any that we visit. As a result the weather can also be extreme with very cold nights, and dry hot days. There is not a lot to see in Puno itself, however there are several good spots offering scenic views of Lake Titicaca and the town. Puno is also known for its wealth of traditional dances. There are up to 100 different varieties, usually performed in the street processions celebrating Catholic feast days. You may see these celebrations if you're fortunate enough to be visiting at the appropriate time. A popular optional activity in Puno is a visit to the spectacular chullpas (funerary towers) of Sillustani, a pre-Inca archeological site.

Lake Titicaca, at 3820m (12529 ft), is often touted as the highest navigable lake in the world. However this is not entirely true. It is simply the best known. Nevertheless, measuring 170 km (106 miles) in length, it is the largest lake in South America and is also the largest lake in the world, above 2000m (6560 ft).

The views from both Amantani and Taquile Islands are stunning. Our first stop on Lake Titicaca is the floating islands of the Uros people. The Uros began their unusual floating existence centuries ago in an effort to isolate themselves from the Collas and the Incas.

Sadly the Uros language has died out and today they speak Aymara due to the intermarriage with Aymara-speakers. Today about 300 people live on the islands, however their numbers are slowly declining. The Totoras reeds, which grow in the shallows of the lake, are used for making everything from the islands themselves to the model boats that the islanders sell. The islands are made up of layers upon layers of reeds. As the layer closest to the water starts to rot, they are replaced with fresh reeds on top. They also use the reeds to build their boats, which if constructed well, will last up to 6 months. Taquile is rich in culture. The peoples' unique style of dress and lifestyle will definitely make for a memorable visit. You'll see the men of the community doing all the knitting, as this is strictly a male domain, while the women do the spinning. High quality, locally knitted goods are available for purchase at various cooperatives on the island. Despite the short distance that separates the two islands, Amantani is quite distinct. Its soil is a rich terra cotta red, due to the high iron deposits, which contrasts brightly with the deep azure blue of the lake and sky, and greenery of the local crops. For the night we split into smaller groups and billeted into family homes to learn about their style of living. From Puno we will take either a local bus or train around Lake Titicaca and through the Altiplano to the Inca capital of Cusco. Cusco is the hub of the South American travel network. The city attracts thousands of travelers who come not just to visit a unique destination but also to experience an age-old culture that is very different from their 21st century way of life. One could easily spend a week just in and around this area. Cusco is the continent's oldest continuously inhabited city. Inca built stone walls line most of the central streets and you don't have to go far to see other Inca ruins, as it is a city

steeped in history, tradition, and legend. Cusco's numerous colonial churches are one of the most common sights, the main one being the Cathedral. It was started in 1559 and took 100 years to build. It is also one of the city's greatest repositories of colonial art. Immediately in front of the entrance is a vault containing the remains of the famous Inca historian, Garcilazo de la Vega. Also worth visiting, are the churches of La Compañía, La Merced and San Francisco.

While most ruins are just outside of the city, the main ruin within, is that of the Koricancha, once the Inca Empire's richest temple. This ruin forms the base of the colonial church of Santo Domingo. During Inca times, this temple was literally covered with gold, but within months of the arrival of the first conquistadors, this incredible wealth had all been melted down. It is left to the individual imagination to envision the magnificence of the original structure. There are several good museums in Cusco, including the Archaeological Museum, which also houses a small art museum, the Regional History Museum, and the Religious Art Museum. The best advice in exploring Cusco is to wear a comfortable pair of shoes, armed with a city map, and set off to explore! Among the more adventurous optional activities available in Cusco include; horseback riding around archeological sites such as Sacsayhuaman, Tambo Machay, Puca Pucara, whitewater rafting on the Urubamba, and mountain biking down to the Sacred Valley, and perhaps visiting an Inca ruin along the way. For those interested in a challenging but worthwhile hike, the Inca Trail is exceptional; however you must be prepared for it! It is a 40-km (25 mile) hike, which takes 3 full days to complete. There are 3 high passes to be crossed, one of which reaches an elevation of 4200m (13776 ft). The trail is often steep, and it may rain even during the dry season. The temperatures at night may fall below zero, so it is important to come prepared. The scenery in this part of the Andes is breathtaking and you will enjoy the views from every corner you turn. There is no way to describe the feeling of the first views of Choquequirao, as the mist rises off the mountains early in the morning and the famous ruin appears in front of you. We usually begin the hike at km82. Porters will carry a lot of the gear for the hike, so those passengers doing the hike will only have to carry a small

daypack with water, rain gear, snacks, a camera, etc. As you begin the hike you will be passing smaller ruin sites the first of which is Llactapata. The second day you will climb the long steep path to Warmiwasi, or Dead Woman's Pass. At 4198 m (13769 ft) above sea level, this pass is the highest point of the trek. The second pass (Runkuracay) of the hike is at 3998 m (13113 ft), where on clear days, we enjoy superb views of the snow-capped Cordillera Vilcabamba. The trail goes through some beautiful cloud forest on the gentle climb to the third pass, where you will walk through a causeway and a tunnel, both original Inca constructions. The highest point of the third pass is at 3700m (12136 ft). You'll be rewarded by devastatingly beautiful views of the Urubamba Valley below (on clear days). Soon you will reach the serene looking ruins of Phuyupatamarca, or the 'town above the clouds', at about 3650 m (11972 ft) above sea level. We camp for the final night close to Wiñay Wayna (Forever Young) ruins, a grandiose terraced hillside site, with panoramic views of the valley below and just a short hike from Choquequirao. Choquequirao is both the best and the least known of the Inca ruins. It is not mentioned in any of the chronicles of the Spanish conquistadors and archaeologists today can do no more than speculate on its function. Choquequirao was a known ruin for centuries by the local Quechua farmers in the area. It was not until the American historian Hiram Bingham, in search of Vilcabamba, was led to the site by an 11 year old boy, on July 24, 1911, that the rest of the world became aware of its existence. At that time it was covered in thick vegetation. Bingham and his team returned in 1912 and 1915 to clear the growth. Over the years, a lot of work has been done on excavating and studying the site. Despite these efforts, many unanswered questions remain. You have the better part of the day to explore the site before returning by train to Cusco, for the night. Discover and try to solve some of the mystery of Choquequirao! The next leg of the tour takes us from the heights of Choquequirao and Cusco, to the Amazon lowlands of Puerto Maldonado. About half of Peru is located within the Amazon basin. However, due to its isolation, it is not generally available to the casual travelers. The Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone is a 1.50 million hectare area in southeastern Amazonian Peru, created in 1990 by the national government working in partnership with local grassroots and international conservation organizations. The reserve protects the biological diversity of the entire watersheds of the Tivara and the Candamo Rivers and most of the watershed of the Tambopata River. The zone protects habitats ranging from the Andean highlands around the rivers' headwaters through some of the last remaining intact cloud forests to the lowland rainforests of the Amazon basin. Over 1,300 bird species (including 32 parrot species - 10% of the world's total), 200 mammal species, 90 frog species, 1,200 butterfly species, and 10,000 species of higher plants are protected within this reserve. One of the main towns is Puerto Maldonado which is serviced by air from Cusco. It is

situated at the confluence of the Madre de Dios and Tambopata Rivers and is a bustling, booming tropical frontier town. Its principal activities are gold mining, Brazil nut collecting, timber extraction, agriculture and ecotourism. It is here that we fly, before we proceed by boat deeper into the jungle of the Tambopata Forest Reserve. The lodge we stay at is located on the Tambopata River, two hours by boat from Puerto Maldonado. There are plenty of nature trails around the lodge and you can spend as much time as you wish bird watching and exploring the jungle. Moreover, local naturalist guides are on hand to help identify and explain the flora and fauna of the area. Accommodation is in simple, comfortable bungalows, with private cold showers. Don't expect electricity. A Word on Sustainable Travel...We hope that one of the joys of traveling with Inca Xpress Peru will be in meeting the local people and traveling to more remote areas. Unfortunately, tourism can radically alter what it was that inspired the industry in the first place. It is for this reason that we as travelers have a responsibility to minimize our impact on the people and environments we enjoy.

Through our examples and attitudes we can ensure that our visits have minimal impact on the environment and that we foster positive cultural exchanges between ourselves and our local hosts. We thank you for your efforts in helping us act responsibly in our travels and hope that these guidelines assist you in having a wonderful trip!

Final Note

The information compiled and related to places and sightseeing in this dossier is provided in good faith. Due to the nature of travel, this information can and will change. The information supplied therefore must be taken as an indication only and not as a contractual obligation on the part of the company.