

## 5. CUSCO REGION

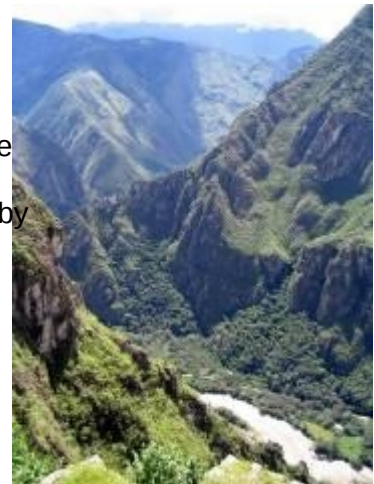
### Cusco



The “Navel of the Earth” is another name for Cusco, since during the height of the Inca civilization nearly all pathways led to this capital of the empire. Today, almost every visitor to Peru eventually comes to this city located 11,150 feet above sea level (3,400 meters) and one of the best places to experience the vestiges of different epochs. You will not only find Incan walls and temples, but also colonial mansions and catholic churches. In combination with the flair of modern Cusco, it is one of the most fascinating cities in the country.

### Urubamba Valley

The Urubamba Valley, or Sacred Valley, runs through the Peruvian Andes, not far from the Inca capital of Cusco and the ancient sacred city of Machu Picchu, encompassing the heartland of the Inca Empire. The valley was formed by the Urubamba River, also known as Vilcanota River or Wilcamayu. In Quechua, the latter means the “Sacred River.” It is fed by many rivers which descend through adjoining valleys and gorges, and contains numerous archaeological remains and villages. The valley was favored by the Incas due to its special geographical and climatic qualities. It was one of the empire's main points for the extraction of natural wealth, and one of the most important areas for maize production in Peru. In colonial documents, it is referred to as the “Valley of Yucay.”



### Machu Picchu



The “Lost City of the Incas” is not only one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, but also an immeasurable treasure of the ancient empire of the Incas and Peru's past. Undiscovered by the Spaniards and forgotten over centuries, it was in 1911 that American lecturer Hiram Bingham came upon it accidentally. Still today, the ruins leave archaeologists with questions as to how it was built and for what purpose. Theories vary but one thing is sure: Machu Picchu is one of the most impressive and exciting places in the world, sublime and majestic in its mountaintop setting.

## Cusco, Urubamba Valley & Machu Picchu - Excursions

The map below shows the locations of points of interest to visit. The distance between Cusco and the Urubamba Valley is about 2 hours; the distance between the Urubamba Valley and Machu Picchu is about 2 hours as well. Depending on where you start the below mentioned tours, the durations change accordingly. For example, starting a tour to Ollantaytambo from Cusco, it takes 2 hours more than starting it from a hotel in the Urubamba Valley. Despite the difference in duration, there is no difference in rates.



### Walking City Tour through Cusco (2h 30min)

Start your walking tour at the "Plaza de Armas" and visit the impressive renaissance-style Cathedral. Make your way through small alleys edged with Incan walls until you reach Koricancha, the temple dedicated to the sun, "Inti". Believed to be the most important temple for the Incas, it was destroyed by the Spanish conquerors in the 16th century. Its foundations were used to build the Catholic Church Santo Domingo, marking an evident clash of cultures.

**\*\*Remark:** All museums are closed on Sundays.

On Sundays Santo Domingo can only be visited from 14:00-17:00h.

### Excursion to the ruins of Cusco (3h 30min)

Journey into the past as you explore the different Inca ruins around Cusco. Start at Sacsayhuamán, the Inca ceremonial fortress dedicated to the sun. Admire the gigantic rocks used to build the site and the way they were perfectly fitted together: some are as high as 8.5m (28ft.) and weigh up to 200 tons. Nearby, head to Qenqo, a temple carved in a gigantic monolith. Admire the tunnels and chambers that were hand carved by men thousands of years ago. Visit the Puca Pucara fort. Its strategic location, large walls, terraces and stairs was a military checkpoint for Inca Empire. End your tour at the Inca Baths known as Tambomachay and learn about the aqueducts and channels that allow the water to flow naturally.

**\*\*Remark:** The ruins can also be visited enroute from the Sacred Valley to Cusco or v.v. without extra duration. Details upon request.

### City Tour and excursion to the ruins of Cusco (4h)

Start your Cusco City Tour in the "Plaza de Armas" and visit the impressive renaissance-style Cathedral. Make your way through small alleys edged with Incan walls until you reach Koricancha, the temple dedicated to the sun "Inti". Believed to be the most important temple

for the Incas, it was destroyed by the Spanish conquerors in the 16th century. Then, head approximately 3km above the city to the impressive ruins of Sacsayhuaman and the sacred place Qenqo. Enjoy a panoramic view of the city as you get a first introduction to the Inca culture and its secrets.

**\*\*Remark:** All museums are closed on Sundays.

*On Sundays Santo Domingo can only be visited from 14:00-17:00h.*

### **San Pedro Market (1h)**

Visit the typical San Pedro market and take in the lively bustle of the workers and their colorful stands filled with fruits, vegetables, spices, and other local products.

### **San Blas (2h)**

Visit the San Blas district and wander the cobble stone streets as you browse the beautiful handicrafts and unique antique stores. Although the San Blas church's adobe exterior is simple, take a peak inside you and admire the altar: it is the finest example of colonial wood carving in the Americas.

### **Walking City Tour through Cusco and visit San Pedro Market (3h 30min)**

Start your walking tour at the "Plaza de Armas" and visit the impressive renaissance-style Cathedral. Make your way through small alleys edged with Incan walls until you reach Koricancha, the temple dedicated to the sun, "Inti". Believed to be the most important temple for the Incas, it was destroyed by the Spanish conquerors in the 16th century. Its foundations were used to build the Catholic Church Santo Domingo, marking an evident clash of cultures. End your tour at the typical San Pedro market and take in the lively bustle of the workers and their colorful stands filled with fruits, vegetables, spices, and other local products.

**\*\*Remark:** All museums are closed on Sundays.

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### **Excursion to the sun festival Inti Raymi (8h)**

Journey into the past as you witness the Incas' most important celebration dedicated to the sun during the winter solstice: Inti Raymi. Every year, on June 24th, the streets fill with colorful costumes, music, and dancing as a procession starts from Koricancha, the temple of the sun, makes its way to the "Plaza de Armas" and ends in Sacsayhuamán. Here, the final part of the re-enactment ends with a ritual animal sacrifice to ensure abundant crops for the year, and the streets fill with music and free concerts.

### **Excursion to the market of Pisac (4h)**

Drive through the Sacred Valley's winding roads until you reach Pisac. Well-known amongst locals and tourists, the bazaar-like open market offers a wide selection of Peruvian handicrafts: ceramics, paintings, weavings, and jewelry.

**\*\*Remark:** In Pisac, the main market days are Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. There is a smaller market on other days.

### **Excursion to the ruins of Pisac (4h)**

Discover the small town of Pisac. Resting on a narrow hilltop, explore the Inca citadel's temples, ceremonial center, and other remaining buildings and agricultural terraces.

### **Excursion to the ruins and market of Pisac (4h 30min)**

Drive through the Sacred Valley's winding roads until you reach Pisac. Resting on a narrow hilltop, explore the Inca citadel's temples, ceremonial center, and other remaining buildings and agricultural terraces. Well-known amongst locals and tourists, the bazaar-like open market offers a wide selection of Peruvian handicrafts: ceramics, paintings, weavings, and jewelry.

**\*\*Remark:** In Pisac, the main market days are Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. There is a smaller market on other days.

**Excursion to Chinchero (4h)**

Drive through the Sacred Valley and reach Chinchero, located 30km (17mi.) from Cusco. The small village blends history together with its Andean mountain views, Inca walls, and colonial architecture. Chinchero is the weaving center of the country and is renowned for its colorful Sunday market.

**\*\*Remark:** *The Chinchero market is on Sundays only.*

**Excursion to Chinchero, to Moray and Maras (8h)**

Located 30km (17mi.) from Cusco, the small village of Chinchero blends history together with its Andean mountain views, Inca walls, and colonial architecture. Chinchero is the weaving center of the country and is renowned for its colorful Sunday market. Afterwards, continue to Moray and its unique circular agricultural terraces. The pre-Inca platforms have underground irrigation channels, different soils, and changing temperatures, which made it ideal for a plant nursery and research center. Walk down 30m (98ft) and appreciate its ingenuity and splendor. About 12km (7mi.) away, go to Maras and admire over 3,000 salt ponds with a stunning view of the Andes Mountains in the background. To this day, a network of water canals fills the ponds, the water evaporates, and the salt is harvested by hand.

**\*\*Remark:** *The Chinchero market is on Sundays only.*

**Excursion to the market of Pisac and to the ruins of Ollantaytambo (6h)**

Start your tour in the small town of Pisac. Well-known amongst locals and tourists, the bazaar-like open market offers a wide selection of Peruvian handicrafts: ceramics, paintings, weavings, and jewelry. About 58km (36mi.) away, explore the impressive ruins of Ollantaytambo, one of the few places where the Incas won a battle against the Spaniards. Climb up the platforms and enjoy the view above the village and onto the valley. Near the ruins, visit a typical home and learn about the unique way their family has lived for generations in the Sacred Valley.

**\*\*Remark:** *In Pisac, the main market days are Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. There is a smaller market on other days.*

**Excursion to the market and ruins of Pisac and to the ruins of Ollantaytambo (8h)**

Start your tour in the small town of Pisac. Resting on a narrow hilltop in Pisac, explore the Inca citadel's temples, ceremonial center, and other remaining buildings and agricultural terraces. Well-known amongst locals and tourists, the bazaar-like open market offers a wide selection of Peruvian handicrafts: ceramics, paintings, weavings, and jewelry. About 58km (36mi.) away, explore the impressive ruins of Ollantaytambo, one of the few places where the Incas won a battle against the Spaniards. Climb up the platforms and enjoy the view above the village and onto the valley. Near the ruins, visit a typical home and learn about the unique way their family has lived for generations in the Sacred Valley.

**\*\*Remark:** *In Pisac, the main market days are Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. There is a smaller market on other days.*

**Excursion to Machu Picchu (10h)**

You will be picked up at the hotel and brought to the train station in order to board the train with destination Aguas Calientes, the village at the feet of Machu Picchu. You make your way through the Sacred Valley, the train passing little villages, in the background snow-capped mountains. Vegetation suddenly changes, you reach Aguas Calientes and board the shuttle bus to the ruins. Here, you learn more about its discovery and the different theories on how and why it was built. After the visit, the bus will bring you down to Aguas Calientes, from where you take the train back. A transfer is waiting to bring you to your hotel after an exciting day.

**\*\*Remark:** *Actual visiting time in the ruins is about 2h 30min to 3h. The length of the excursion depends on the confirmed arrival and departure time of the train from/to Aguas Calientes and the time to get to the train station, therefore may vary.*

*When doing this tour in SIC, there is no guide included for the transfers and train ride, a local guide will expect you in Aguas Calientes.*

*When doing this tour privately, your guide will join you during the train ride from Cusco and back.*

#### **Excursion to Racchi (6h)**

Explore the archeological site known as the Raqchi ruins. Located approximately 100km (62mi.) south of Cusco, the site is amazingly well preserved. They are the only adobe ruins that rest on an Inca rock base and that date back to the 14th century.

#### **Excursion to Pikillacta and the church of Andahuaylillas (4h)**

Discover Pikillacta, the capital of the Wari culture (550 to 1100AD) that was used mainly for ceremonies. Hike around the whole complex that spreads out across 2km<sup>2</sup> (0.4mi<sup>2</sup>) and that contains approximately 700 buildings. Not far from here, visit the Andahuaylillas Church, considered the Sistine Chapel of the Americas because of its decorations and the artworks that were found inside.

#### **Excursion to Tipon, Pikillacta and the church of Andahuaylillas (6h)**

Journey into the past as you learn about cultures from three different epochs: pre-Incan, Incan and Colonial time. Built in the early 15th century, Tipón is a perfect example of the Incas' ingenuity: the irrigation networks and water channels come from a natural spring and still flow today. Then, explore Pikillacta, the capital of the Wari culture (550 to 1100AD) that was used mainly for ceremonies. Hike around the whole complex that spreads out across 2km<sup>2</sup> (0.4mi<sup>2</sup>) and that contains approximately 700 buildings. Not far from here, visit the Andahuaylillas Church, considered the Sistine Chapel of the Americas because of its decorations and the artworks that were found inside.

#### **Excursion to Tipon, Pikillacta, the church of Andahuaylillas and Racchi (8h)**

Journey into the past as you learn about cultures from three different epochs: pre-Incan, Incan and Colonial time. Built in the early 15th century, Tipón is a perfect example of the Incas' ingenuity: the irrigation networks and water channels come from a natural spring and still flow today. Then, explore Pikillacta, the capital of the Wari culture (550 to 1100AD) that was used mainly for ceremonies. Hike around the whole complex that spreads out across 2km<sup>2</sup> (0.4mi<sup>2</sup>) and that contains approximately 700 buildings. Not far from here, visit the Andahuaylillas Church, considered the Sistine Chapel of the Americas because of its decorations and the artworks that were found inside. End your tour at the amazingly well preserved Raqchi ruins. They are the only adobe ruins that rest on an Inca rock base and that date back to the 14th century.

#### **Transfer from Cusco to Puno (or v.v.) incl. lunch (10h from/to Cusco – exact duration depends on the bus size and number of passengers!)**

On your bus ride from Cusco to Puno, you will stop at several interesting sights, reaching the highest point at "La Raya", (4319m/14,170ft). Visit the Andahuaylillas Church, considered the Sistine Chapel of the Americas because of the artworks that were found inside. Explore the Raqchi ruins; the best-preserved and only adobe ruins that rest on an Inca rock base. Stop in the town of Pucará that is renowned for its pottery and the "Toritos de Pucará": colorful hand-painted bulls. Visit the "Museo Lítico de Pucará" (Pucará Stone Museum), and appreciate objects from this pre-Inca civilization. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant (included) and end your journey at your hotel in Puno.

**\*\* Remark:** *Rate in SIC does not include the transfers to/from the train station in Cusco and Puno so please add the corresponding transfers.*

*Rates on private basis includes pick up and drop off at the hotel.*