



RIDE WORLD WIDE

PERU

SACRED VALLEY OF THE INCAS 2024

RIDE INFORMATION

These rides explore Peru's Sacred Valley of the Incas, the famous route between Cusco and the fabled ruins of the 'lost city' of Machu Picchu. They use pure-bred Peruvian Paso horses, a remarkable breed developed by the Spanish Conquistadors in the 16th C and known for its velvet-smooth gait. Routes venture up to altitudes of about 4,290 metres (14,150 feet) passing through the spectacular landscape of the high Peruvian Andes and its remote mountain villages. Local Quechua Indian children herd flocks of sheep and goats in the mountains, 'campesinos' plough terraced fields in the traditional way and there is an array of impressive ruins dating back to the Inca Empire and culminating in magical Machu Picchu, every bit as magnificent as you imagine. Rides are organised with Eduard van Brunschot a Dutch-Peruvian who has been running rides in the area for nearly 25 years. A great believer in the use of gentle and empathic horsemanship, Eduard gave up his life as a businessman in Holland to indulge his love of Peru and passion for the Peruvian Paso. His European background, combined with his local knowledge, years of experience and relaxed good-humour, make him an excellent companion and guide. Eduard is also keenly aware of the responsibility of tourist organisations to exert a minimum impact on fragile environments whilst promoting local cultures and traditions. He has carefully developed his rides with this in mind and ensures guests a wonderful insight into the culture and history of Peru, alongside adventure, good food and comfortable accommodation.



DATES

The 10 night Sacred Valley Ride is run between April and October from set dates. Rides can also be arranged on request for private groups. Please see dates below and contact us to check availability.

HORSES

The horses used are pure-bred Peruvian Pasos all owned and several bred by Eduard. The Paso breed originates from the Andalucians that were brought to South America by the Spanish in the 16th C. With blood-lines preserved and isolated for over 400 years it is now one of the purest breeds in the world. Pasos are 'gaited' horses with a natural 4 beat lateral gait - a unique characteristic that was developed and has been preserved through selective breeding. This makes them about the smoothest and most comfortable riding horse in the world (the isolation and preservation of the characteristic Paso gait has been referred to as "the greatest triumph of managed genetic selection ever achieved"). Typical Peruvian Pasos are between about 14.2hh and 15.3hh. They are deep-chested with strong hindquarters and a medium build, similar to a stocky Arab (in contrast to Paso Fino horses, a different, much lighter breed, developed in and around the Caribbean and Central South America). Peruvian Pasos are also renowned for their terrific 'brio' meaning 'energy, spirit and desire to please'! Eduard normally keeps about 10 horses on his ranch in the Sacred Valley, all stallions or geldings (the breeding mares are usually kept at another farm). They are all in excellent condition, fit, happy and a responsive, athletic and extremely well-schooled ride - about as far removed from many people's preconceptions of thin, overloaded mountain horses as you can get!

TACK

The horses are ridden in traditional and elaborate Peruvian tack, its shape and style developed for comfort when riding long distances and over difficult terrain. Tack is all hand-made and the bridles, which have Pelham bits with a single rein, are made from a double layer of hand-woven rawhide. The saddles feel like a comfortable cross between a deep-seated dressage saddle and a Western saddle and have traditional Peruvian wooden box stirrups. Leather saddle-bags are provided.



RIDING

The Sacred Valley Ride includes 6 days riding, with between 3 to 6 hours in the saddle each riding day. There is also an introduction to the horses and riding technique on the first day. Riding is broken up with rests for lunch and occasionally, if the going is rough or difficult, you may be asked to get off and lead your horse. Rides are run for a minimum of 4 and usually a maximum of 6 riders plus guide(s).

WEIGHT LIMIT

There is a strict weight limit of 85 kgs / 13st 5lbs (please be honest about your weight! With altitude a strain on the horses, Eduard reserves the right to weigh riders on arrival and not to allow anyone exceeding the weight limit to ride (without refund)).

PACE

Quite a bit of riding is at high altitude and most is at a walk or the unique Paso gait. Where used, the Paso gait gives a wonderfully, energetic and comfortable ride, with horses covering the ground easily and very smoothly. There are two gaited 'speeds': 'paso Llano' is faster than a normal walk (about 10 to 12 kms an hour) and there is a faster, accelerated gait called 'sobreandando' ('very fast').

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PACE cont.

As a rough guide, Eduard aims to ride for about a third of the time at 'paso Llano', the most comfortable speed and one horses can maintain for hours, but this always depends on the conditions (weather, ground) as well as group ability and experience. If riders have never ridden a gaited horse before, it is not always possible. The first few days are always slower, but as the ride develops and there are some opportunities for short canters during the route, but cantering is not really the 'forte' of the Paso horse! There will be detailed demonstration of how to ride at the Paso gait at the beginning of the trip.

RIDING EXPERIENCE

Rides are aimed at riders of a good intermediate level and above, who are comfortable, secure and well balanced at all paces. Although the riding is not fast, some of the horses are quite spirited and to ride at the Paso gait you need a good understanding of how to collect your horse and how to use your seat. You should therefore be a reasonably experienced, sympathetic rider who is relaxed and well balanced in the saddle. You should also be used to riding up and down hills, over rugged, varied terrain and fit enough to cope with several hours a day in the saddle. A good level of general fitness is also important. Much of the going is at a high altitude which is a strain initially for most people and you must inform us of any medical issues well in advance. Although the itinerary is carefully planned, starting slowly to help acclimatisation and with riding days broken up with a rest day, general fitness really helps.



TERRAIN

The ranch in the Sacred Valley where the horses are based is at an altitude of about 2,800 metres (8,860 feet), Cusco is at about 3,338 metres (10,900 feet) and the highest point of the ride is approx 4,350 metres (14,300 feet). The going itself varies from ancient, partially paved or cobblestone roads (Inca roads also called 'Capac Ñan') through small mountain villages, dirt tracks and narrow, steep mountain paths that can be rocky and rough, to wide open grass covered 'altiplano' and sandy plains close to the lake shores.



ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is in carefully selected, comfortable hotels (equivalent to 3-4* and 4-5* standard) chosen for their local or colonial character or special setting. Seven nights are at a hotel in the Sacred Valley, usually the Posada Del Inca in Yucay, a 'boutique' hotel with around 70 rooms that is a former 18th C monastery. It has lovely gardens, plazas and even a private chapel giving it the feeling of a small village. The three nights in Cusco are usually at the centrally located Hotel Costa Del Sol, part of which was the 17th C mansion of the Marquis of Picoaga, with lovely arched patio on two levels and courtyard with stone columns. Bedrooms are twin or double bedded and have private en-suite bathroom, usually with loo and shower (rather than bath). Single rooms are possible at a supplement.

MEALS

A great effort is made with meals so you can sample the tasty regional cuisine. Breakfast is eaten at your hotel and is usually buffet style. Lunch is normally a picnic out riding, either carried in saddle bags or (more usually) brought to meet you by the back-up team. It might be a selection of sandwiches or a dish of locally caught trout, or chicken with salads, followed by fruit or a sweet pudding. Dinners are either at the ranch, your hotel or in local restaurants where there is normally a choice of at least 3 main dishes, selected by Eduard. All meals are included except lunch on the day in Machu Picchu and lunch and dinner Cusco, when there are many restaurants to explore. Soft drinks are provided with lunch but your bar bill / drinks at hotels are extra. Vegetarian and other special diets will be catered for as far as possible with prior notice - please let us know of any specific requirements on your booking form.



SAFETY

Eduard guides the rides personally, accompanied by a back-up rider if the group is quite big. He carries a satellite telephone for emergencies and generally takes an extra horse as a spare in case one goes lame along the way. A 4WD vehicle is available for support if required with other 4WD vehicles available at the ranch if necessary.

WEATHER

Peru's climate varies widely, ranging from tropical in the foothills and rain forest, to arctic in the highest mountains of the Andes. In the Sierra area of Cusco and Machu Picchu, the temperature ranges seasonally from about 5 to 21 degrees C (40 to 70 °F). Rainfall is usually scanty, but heavy rains are expected in the mountains between December and mid March. Rides are generally not run during these months as the going in the Sacred Valley can be wet and slippery. In Cusco, which is in the south-eastern Sierra, annual rainfall averages about 81.5 cm (32 in).

WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.



ITINERARY

The following is an example of the Sacred Valley Ride itinerary although please note it is only an example and day-by-day arrangements may be altered by your guide in his absolute discretion if riding ability of the group, weather or other local conditions require.

Day 1 - Met on arrival at Cusco airport any time after 09.00 and transferred to a hotel (usually Hotel Costa del Sol) near the centre of this historical city, the oldest continuously inhabited city in South America and former capital of the great Inca Empire (check-in is usually 12 noon). Today is for rest and relaxation and it is important to take things slowly to help acclimatize. Own arrangements for lunch & dinner. Night Hotel Costa del Sol (or similar).

Day 2 - Collected after breakfast at 09.15 and driven about 1 ½ hours to a hotel in the heart of the Sacred Valley, which will be base for the next three nights. Perfectly located between Cusco and Machu Picchu, the hotel is at lower altitude than Cusco which helps with acclimatization, and only 5 km from the stables. Unpack and settle into your rooms, then a short drive to the ranch where the horses are based. Meet your host, Eduard van Brunshot Vega, over a relaxing BBQ lunch and in the afternoon, an informal briefing about the ride ahead, a demonstration of classical Peruvian riding, perhaps a short lesson and chance to familiarise yourself with the traditional Peruvian riding gear and meet your horse. Return to the hotel in the late afternoon before meeting for dinner at the ranch or a local restaurant. Night Hotel Posada del Inca (or similar) in the Sacred Valley. (B,L,D)

Day 3 - Breakfast at the hotel before meeting at 09.15 for a short drive to the stables for the first riding day. An easy day today so you can get to know your horse, heading along paths through the Sacred Valley. This is a chance for a glimpse into the local lives of the villagers and also to see the rich flora of the Peruvian Andes - the Molle (or Pepper) tree (the Incas once used the resin to embalm mummies), the Sauco Tree (which produces small and very tasty purplish-black fruits), the Capuli fruit tree (similar to a cherry) and many other intriguing species. At around midday, arrive at the lush Pumahuanca valley, where Maria and the back-up will meet you with a delicious lunch. In the afternoon head back by a different route to the ranch arriving at around 4pm. Short transfer back to the hotel for showers, before dinner at a local restaurant or at the ranch. (Approx. 4 hours riding; altitude: 2,800 m) (B,L,D)





Day 4 - Breakfast, transfer to the ranch and mount up again for a full riding day. After crossing the Urubamba bridge and passing Pichingote, an old Andean hamlet built next to the river, ride up a narrow track to Salinas where salt pans dating back to Inca times are still being used by the locals. The pans consist of a series of platforms where salty water is channelled through an impressive distribution system and left to evaporate in the sun. Today the horses will climb nearly 850m to reach the Andean altiplano - the climb takes about 2 hours and is done slowly so both riders and horses have time to adjust to the altitude. Once at 3,550m you will be surrounded by stunning scenery including the snow-capped mountains of Chicon, Veronica and Pitusuray. Continue riding to Maras, a typical Andean village with a 400yr old colonial church that is one of the oldest in South America, where there is a stop for a picnic lunch. From Maras visit the ruins of Cheqoq where the Incas constructed fascinating cold storage areas, achieved by wind tunnels and water channels, to preserve their produce. Continue riding to the churchyard of Tiobamba where the horses spend the night and riders are met by vehicle and driven back to the hotel in the Sacred Valley. Dinner at a local restaurant or at the ranch. (Approx. 4 - 4.5 hours riding; altitude: 2,800-3,550 m) (B,L,D)



Day 5 - After breakfast, transfer back to the horses at Tiobamba. Set off riding along primitive trails across the altiplano with spectacular scenery all around - snow-capped mountains, wildflowers and mountain lakes. You may see local Quechua children with their herds of sheep or cattle, or campesinos ploughing their fields using oxen hitched to a wooden plough. Stop for a picnic lunch just before Chinchero, where on a clear day the views are tremendous - a vista of rolling altiplano ringed by the snow-capped peaks of the cordilleras Vilcabamba and Urubamba. After lunch, ride a short distance to Lake Piuray and continue in the direction of Cusco to a local family farm where you leave the horses for the next 2 nights. Time allowing, a short car journey to Chinchero to visit a textiles workshop and see a demonstration of local techniques for spinning, dyeing and weaving wool (fabrics available to buy if you wish) then transfer to Cusco. The next two nights are in Cusco at the comfortable Hotel Costa del Sol (or similar) located near the Plaza de Armas, the heart of the city. Dinner is not included tonight but your guide can recommend restaurants to try. (Approx 4 to 5 hours riding; altitude: 3,550-3,800 m) (B,L)



ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 - A rest day for the horses and time to relax and explore Cusco, visiting the numerous ruins, cathedrals and museums, shopping or just taking it easy and absorbing the atmosphere in a bar or café. According to Inca legend, Cusco was founded around 1200AD by Mama Occlo and Manco Capac who 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 and there is still evidence of the original walls throughout Cusco – having initially tried to raise the Inca buildings to the ground, the Spanish soon realised the quality of their construction meant it was easier to re-use the Inca foundations for their own buildings. Despite being a major tourist destination, both for its own treasures and as a jump-off point for Machu Picchu, Cusco has managed to hold onto its own distinct flavour. Own arrangements for lunch & dinner. Night Cusco (B)



Day 7 - After breakfast transfer back to Lake Piuray and the horses. 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 you explore the area around the lake and ride eastward to a small lake called Quellacocha where you meet the back up team for a delicious picnic. 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. (Approx 5 - 6 hours riding; altitude: 3,800-4,290 m) (B,L,D)



ITINERARY cont.

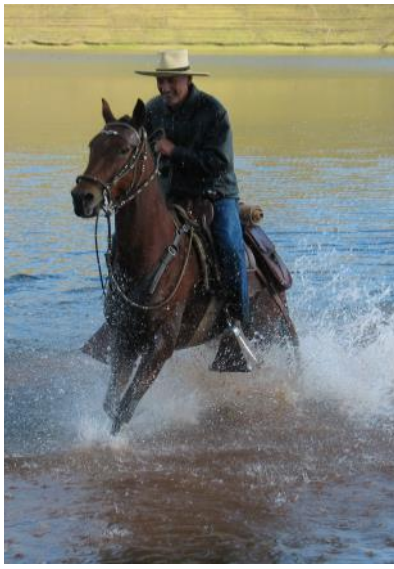
Day 8 - Another beautiful riding day with plenty of breaks for photographs! From Umasbamba the route leads to the villages of Cuper Alto and Cuper Bajo, arriving for a lunch stop in the early afternoon at a beautiful small lake near the village of Chinchero. The route was once a paved Inca road and parts are still intact, with water channels for irrigation and drainage and paved grades leading to higher levels. The incredible Inca road system - the Capac Nan - was one of the greatest engineering feats undertaken in the New World, rivalling the Roman road system of the Old World and a 25,000km network linked the capital Cusco with the empire's far-flung domains in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Chile. Continue riding until you reach a small village not far from Maras. Leave the horses and grooms here and transfer back to the hotel for dinner and the night (Approx 5 - 6 hours riding; altitude: 3,800-3,600 m) (B,L,D)



Day 9 - Today is the last riding day, but before meeting the horses at Huaynacolca, there may be time to visit the local market where Maria can show you all the local produce. After the visit, head on to the horses and set off riding along the old Inca roads high above the Sacred Valley, passing farmland and the small village of Santana before returning to Maras village. Continue inland stopping for lunch in the beautiful courtyard of an old house, which the locals believe is bewitched. After lunch follow a trail with great views of the Urquillos Valley arriving once more at Maras. From here continue the descent into the Sacred Valley, to arrive back at the ranch around 4.30pm in time for a celebratory Pisco Sour. Dinner at the ranch or in a local restaurant. Night at the Hotel Posada del Inca in Yucay. (Approx 4 hours riding; altitude: 3,600-2,850 m) (B,L,D)

Day 10 - Today you take the train from Urubamba to Machu Picchu - a site which has captivated hearts and minds since its discovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911. The experience of visiting Machu Picchu is not limited to the ruins themselves however, as the train journey is one of the most spectacular in the world. In July 2017, the Peruvian government established new visit regulations to preserve this Wonder of the World and there are now two entrance times - Morning (06:00-12:00) and Afternoon (12:00-17:30) with capacity limited to 2,500 visitors, split between both entrance times. Your entry will be booked in advance, with the afternoon session prioritised, but not always guaranteed and, depending on availability, travel booked on the luxurious Vistadome train from Ollantaytambo in the morning (30 mins drive from your hotel) and back to the same station in the evening arriving about 7 or 8pm. Dinner at the ranch and transfer to Hotel Posada del Inca for the night (B, D)

Day 11 - Early morning transfer (about 1 ¼ hours) to Cusco airport. Onward flights to Lima should ideally be between 11.00 and 14.00. It's approx 1 hr 15mins flight time to Lima - so earliest possible departure time for international flights from Lima is 17.00). (B)



DATES & RATES 2024

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are quoted in US dollars. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Sacred Valley Ride (10 nights) - USD 6250 per person sharing

Single supplement USD 890

7th to 17th April

28th April to 8th May

19th to 29th May

Other dates on request for groups

Prices are based on a minimum of 4 riders.

14th to 24th July

4th to 14th August

25th August to 4th September

15th to 25th September

6th to 16th October

Rate INCLUDES all riding, guiding and equipment, 10 nights twin hotel accommodation, meals from breakfast day 2 to breakfast day 11 (except lunches & dinners in Cusco on day 1, 5 & 6, and lunch in Machu Picchu day 10), drinks at the ranch and during picnics, transport and entrance fees to Machu Picchu and other sites visited as part of the set itinerary and group transfers from / to Cusco during itinerary.

Rate EXCLUDES international flights to Cusco and taxes, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), visa fees, your bar bill at restaurants, lunch & dinner in Cusco on day 1, 5 & 6 and lunch in Machu Picchu day 10), personal items such as laundry, telephone calls etc, any optional activities and any tips you wish to leave.

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DATES & RATES cont.

Single rooms - If you book alone, you will need to pay the supplement for a single room. This is charged on ALL single bookings - however if you are prepared to share a twin room with another rider (of the same sex) please let us know and we will do our best to find you a sharer. If we do, we will refund the supplement - but note that we cannot guarantee a sharer as it depends on another guest who books wishing to share a room.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS & TRAVEL

The meeting place is Cusco airport on the morning of the first day. As the first night is in Cusco, arrival time is flexible (hotel check in is not usually before 12 noon). On the final day you are driven back to Cusco in the morning - if you are returning to Lima that day your flight should ideally be between 11.00 and 14.00. Your onward international flight on this day should NOT depart Lima before 17.00 at the earliest to allow time for the domestic flight to arrive (and note that flights from Cusco can often be delayed due to weather).

There are several different options for flights from London to Lima usually via Europe (eg with Iberia via Madrid or KLM via Amsterdam), Sao Paulo or another South American city. From Lima there are regular internal flights to Cusco and these should generally be booked along with the international flight. Airfares London to Cusco vary but budget around about £900-£1200 per person economy return (increasing in peak season). Please contact us if you would like further information on flights or a quote (our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213).

Extensions to your trip If you would like to spend extra time in Peru before or after riding please let us know. We can organize one day / one night sightseeing extensions in Lima with accommodation and a guide, and longer visits to other areas such as the Peruvian jungle.

GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking

Visas If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Peru for a holiday only and staying less than 60 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

Health The TravelHealthPro website (NaTHNaC) recommends most travellers are vaccinated against Tetanus, Typhoid and Hepatitis A. Rabies and Hepatitis B may also be recommended in some cases. A Yellow Fever certificate may be required on entering Peru if you are coming from a tropical African / South American country. If you are travelling on in Peru, eg. to the jungle, after the ride you might need additional inoculations or to take Malaria tablets - you should in any case consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.

DRAFT 10/10/2023)

