



RIDE WORLD WIDE PERU

SACRED VALLEY OF THE INCAS 2025

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 8 night Sacred Valley Ride is run between April and October. There are a couple of set dates but rides can also be arranged on request during the season for groups of 2 to 6 people. Please contact us to check availability.

HORSES

The horses used are locally bred Peruvian Pasos, owned by Eduard. The Paso breed originates from the Andalusians 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 15.2hh. 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'! The horses 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 a short familiarisation on the first day and between 4 to 6 hours in the saddle on the subsequent days. 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 2 and a maximum of 6 riders plus guide(s).

WEIGHT LIMIT

There is a strict weight limit of 85 kgs / 13st 5lbs (in riding gear). 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 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 a carefully selected, comfortable hotel (equivalent to 3-4* and 4-5* standard) chosen for location and character. The 8 nights are spent 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. 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 your hotel or in local restaurants where there is normally a choice of at least 3 main dishes, selected by Eduard. On some days lunch and or dinner are not included and you will be free to try local restaurants. Some soft drinks are provided with lunch but your bar bill / all 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 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

Example 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.

[You will need to spend the night before the ride in Cusco for acclimatisation purposes].

Day 1 - Met from your hotel in Cusco at 09.00 and driven about 1 ½ hours to a hotel in the heart of the Sacred Valley. Perfectly located between Cusco and Machu Picchu, the hotel is at lower altitude than Cusco which helps with acclimatization. Unpack and settle into your rooms, then a short drive to meet your host, Eduard van Brunschot Vega. There will be an informal briefing about the ride ahead over lunch, and perhaps demonstration of classical Peruvian riding, and then riders will be matched to their horses. In the afternoon set off on a short circuit ride to familiarise yourself with your horse. 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. Dinner at a local restaurant. Night Hotel Sonesta Posada del Inca (or similar) in the Sacred Valley where the next 8 nights are spent.
(Approx. 4 hours riding; altitude: 2,800m) (L,D)



Day 2 - Breakfast at the hotel before meeting at 09.15 for a short drive to the stables 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 around 800m 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. From Maras, you will visit the ruins of Cheqoq. Here the Incas constructed fascinating coldstorage areas (pre-Hispanic refrigerators) to conserve the agricultural produce of this region.

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Day 2 cont. 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 to the hotel in the Sacred Valley. Time for some rest and a hot shower then you will be taken for dinner at a local restaurant. (Approx. 4 - 4.5 hours riding; altitude: 2,800-3,550 m) (B,L,D)



Day 3 - After a sound and restful sleep, you will be picked up at 09.15 for your transfer back to where you 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 meet the backup team for 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 you ride to Lake Piuray. From this lake you continue north in the direction of Cusco along beautiful trails. At a small village, you meet a local family who will offer their hospitality. Leave the horses with grooms at a camp here for the next two nights. If time allows there may be a short trip to 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 obliged to buy anything). Dinner is not included tonight (the hotel has a good restaurant). (Approx 4 to 5 hours riding; altitude: 3,550-3,800 m) (B,L)



ITINERARY cont.

Day 4 - Today is a rest day for the horses and a day for you to relax and explore the Sacred Valley at your own pace and convenience. Strolling through the local market is a fabulous experience of colour, smell and sound. Visit the legendary town of Ollantaytambo, a masterpiece of Inca architecture, with its amazing Inca fortress. There are plenty of options to spend and enjoy a wonderful and unforgettable day in the Sacred Valley. Your guide will be happy to set up an itinerary for you today that suits your interests and a driver will be at your disposal and will take care of your needs, safety and transfers. All meals, except breakfast, are at your own expense today. (B)



Day 5 - After breakfast, the riding expedition continues. Pick up is at 09.15 from your hotel in the Sacred Valley. The horses are waiting where you left them on Day 4. 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 amongst the patchwork of fields. The people living at this high altitude are friendly, hardworking farmers who grow mainly potatoes. After exploring the area around the lake, ride eastward to a small lake called Quellacocha where you meet the back up team and 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 you leave the horses in the caring hands of the grooms and transfer back to your hotel in the Sacred Valley. Dinner at a local restaurant. (Approx 5 - 6 hours riding; altitude: 3,800-4,290 m) (B,L,D)



ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 - 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 7 - Today is the last riding day and you drive to Huaynacolca where you meet the grooms and horses. Mount up and set off riding 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 where the back up team will be waiting with drinks and lunch. After 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 stables around 16.30. Celebrate your return with a traditional Pisco Sour. Dinner at 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 8 - 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 a local restaurant and transfer to Hotel Posada del Inca for the night (B,D)

Day 9 - Early morning transfer (about 1 ½ 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 2025

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 (8 nights) - USD 5765 per person sharing

Single supplement USD 795

Prices are based on a minimum of 2 & max 6 riders.

Scheduled dates:

25th September to 3rd October

11th to 19th October

Other dates on request for groups of 2 to 6 riders, between July and October

Rate INCLUDES all riding, guiding and equipment, 8 nights twin hotel accommodation, meals from lunch day 1 to breakfast day 9 (except lunches & dinners on day 4, dinner on day 3 and lunch in Machu Picchu on day 8), drinks 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 on day 4, dinner on day 3 and lunch in Machu Picchu day 8), personal items such as laundry, telephone calls etc, any optional activities and any tips you wish to leave.

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 on the morning of the first day and you will need to spend at least one night in Cusco before the ride - there are many hotel options in Cusco. Meeting is usually at the Costa del Sol Hotel (or another central location). 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 £1000-£1200 per person economy return (increasing in peak season). Please contact us if you would like further information on flights (our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213).

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 09/05/2025)

