

Die Route

Itinerary:

Arrival in **Lima** (2NBB).

Flight to **Cusco** (3NBB).

Train to **Aguas Calientes** (1NBB) and visit of **Machu Picchu**.

Train to **Ollantaytambo** (2NBB).

Full day tour/transfer to **Cusco** (1NBB).

Bustour (full day tour with several interesting stops on the way) to **Puno** (1NBB).

Bus to **Copacabana** (2NBB) with optional visit of **Isla del Sol**.

Bus to **La Paz** (3NBB).

Optional tour to **Tiwanaku** from La Paz.

Flight to **Uyuni** (early morning) and start the tour (3D/ 2N) with **Salar der Uyuni**, **Laguna Colorada**, **Laguna Verde** and the **Sol de Mañana Geysers** to **San Pedro de Atacama** (3N). Pick a rental car (hotel delivery) to explore the surroundings and drop the car in **Calama** (1NBB), optional visit of the Chuquibambilla mine. Flight to Santiago and bus to **Valparaíso** (2NBB). Bus to **Santiago** (1NBB). Return flight from Santiago.

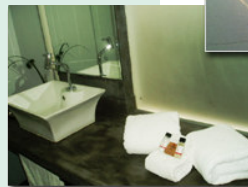
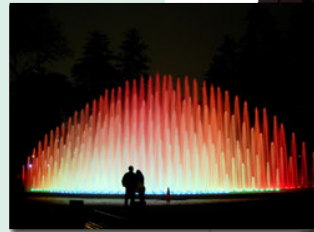
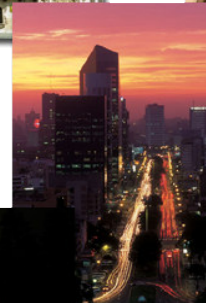


Stop 1

Lima

Located on the Pacific coast, the metropolitan area of 10 million is affected by the coastal fog called garúa during the winter months (Nov.-April). Francisco Pizarro founded the city in 1535 as Ciudad de los Reyes. Along with Mexico, it became the most important metropolis of the Spanish viceroys. Lima, like all metropolises of the "Third World", is a city with many faces. The historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Precious archaeological collections are housed in the National Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology, the Larco-Herrera Museum and the Gold Museum. The modern districts of Miraflores and San Isidro are considered to be the preferred business, shopping and nightlife areas, where one can also get to know the new Peruvian cuisine that has caused a furor in recent years. The Barranco district enjoys a reputation as a trendy neighborhood.

Hotel: Modern B&B in Barranco, double room with private bathroom. (2NBB)



Stop 2 and 5

Cusco

The capital of the region and province of the same name in the center of the Peruvian Andean highlands lies at an altitude of 3,416 meters and has about 320,000 inhabitants. The word Cusco (Qusqu) derives from Quechua and means navel of the world. Cusco's layout is said to have been modeled on a reclining puma: The head of the puma was formed by the enormous fortress of Sacsayhuaman in the north, 255 meters above the city center; its tail (Pumac Chupan) is marked today by the converging El Sol and Tullumayo avenues. The body was formed by the huge ceremonial square Huacaypata, which the Spaniards later divided into several parts for the benefit of their own urban planning, including the Plaza de Armas and the Plaza San Francisco. To today's visitors, Cusco appears as a monument of the Spanish Conquista turned to stone. The mighty, elaborately hewn stones from the Koricancha of the Inca Empire have disappeared into the foundations of the churches and palaces of its conquerors, yet remain omnipresent. The best way to visit the city's many attractions is with a tourist ticket at an all-inclusive price, which is less expensive than the sum of the individual entrance fees.



Hotel: Located in the district of San Blas. Double room with private bathroom. (3+1 NBB)

Stop 3

Machu Picchu

The abandoned Inca city of Machu Picchu (Quechua: Machu Pikchu for "old peak") is the subject of various legends, some of which have been disproved, since there is hardly any written evidence. It is assumed that Machu Picchu was still under construction at the time of the Spanish conquest. However, since the construction work could not be continued due to the conquest of the Inca Empire by the Spanish, the site was abandoned and fell into oblivion. The only known document about the city is a document from 1782, which was discovered by the history professor Jose Uriel Garcia. From the document it appears that the name of the city was Machu Picchu. It was not until Bingham created - probably deliberately - the mystery of the true name of the city. Bingham was searching for the mysterious Inca city of Vilcabamba, where the Incas were said to have taken refuge after Pizarro captured Cusco in 1536. Bingham believed he had found Vilcabamba at Machu Picchu. Today it is known that Vilcabamba is 35 km further away in the jungle.

Hotel: B & B in good location to train and bus station to Machu Picchu (1NBB)



Stop 4

Ollantaytambo

Located in the so-called Sacred Valley of the Incas, Ollantaytambo is the only preserved example of a city from the Inca period. The buildings, terraces and narrow streets of the city are still in their original state. On the mountain-facing side of Ollantaytambo is the imposing Inca complex commonly called Fortaleza (bulwark or fortress). In fact, this was strategically located to dominate the Sacred Valley of the Incas. This is also where Manco Cápac II retreated to after the fall of Cusco to the conquistadors to gather his remaining soldiers.

Hotel: Located in the historic center of the village, friendly guesthouse with roof terrace. Double room with bathroom and balcony. (2NBB)



Stop 5 (see Stop 3)

Stop 5 to 6



Tour Cusco - Puno

The drive from Cusco to Puno starts early in the morning and takes a good 8 hours, including several stops and lunch. The first stop is the early 17th century church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas, often referred to as the Sistine Chapel of South America. Behind the simple exterior, a veritable Baroque elegy awaits the visitor, as well as a beautifully painted Artesonado wooden ceiling in the Mudejar style. Other stops are Raqchi with its two-story adobe "Temple of Wiracocha", the La Raya Pass (4338m) as the highest point of the route, as well as Pukara, known for its 'toritos' - painted ceramic bulls.

Stops 6 and 7

Lake Titicaca (Puno & Copacabana)

With 120,000 inhabitants, Puno is the largest city on Lake Titicaca and its tourist center in the Peruvian part of the lake. Visitors notice that many of the houses look unfinished. This is done to avoid taxes that are only payable on finished houses. Much of the local economy thrives on the black market, which is supplied with cheap contraband from nearby Bolivia. As a growing city that also many migrants and rural refugees consider a stepping stone to a better life, Puno is forced to grow uphill, with every reasonably suitable spot being built on. Since Puno is not very attractive, despite various improvements in recent years, boat trips to destinations in and around the lake are among the most popular local activities. Copacabana on the Bolivian lakeshore is much more attractive, as it is located above a wide curved bay on a peninsula. In the town itself, there is a Way of the Cross that leads up to a viewpoint over the town and bay. Copacabana's imposing sanctuary is a national Marian shrine. Also rewarding is a day hike on Isla del Sol, where the first Inca, Manco Capac, is said to have been sent into the world by God. The island can be reached in just under 1.5 hours by boat from Copacabana (public ferry that also picks up hikers in the late afternoon).

Hotel in Puno: modern, comfortable hotel in the center, rooms with bathroom and heating (1NBB).

Hotel in Copacabana: Original Bed&Breakfast above the lake shore with beautiful views and garden. (2NBB)



Stop 8



La Paz

Although Bolivia's seat of government is not a decidedly touristy city, it is well worth seeing. If you approach La Paz from Lake Titicaca or from the airport in El Alto on the Altiplano, the view of the sea of houses filling the valley basin is breathtaking. Recently, a modern cable car has connected El Alto with the business center of La Paz. Due to the altitude of up to 3800 meters, especially those visitors who are already acclimatized and do not arrive by plane from low altitudes can enjoy the attractions of the city.

La Paz has numerous colonial buildings, churches, markets and museums to offer, all of which are worth a visit. Among the city's many churches, the San Francisco Monastery is the most attractive, while among the markets, the Aymara "Witches' Market" has special curiosities to offer. Calle Jaen, lined with colonial facades, has been especially carefully restored.

For those who spend several days in La Paz or are interested in archaeological sites, a visit to Tiwanaku (Tihuanacos), the most important pre-Inca site in the country and a Unesco World Heritage Site, is recommended.

Hotel: Comfortable Bed&Breakfast in elaborately restored historic building in the center of the city. (3NBB)

Start to Stop 9

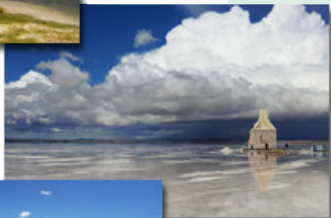
Uyuni

The world's largest salt pan covers more than 10000 km² in the southwest of the country at an altitude of 3600 meters. Originally, it was part of the huge Andean inland sea Lago Minchins, which dried up millions of years ago except for several drainless lakes in the Altiplano, including Lake Titicaca and also the Salar de Uyuni. Up to ten billion tons of salt are said to lie in it. About 25000 tons of it are mined by hand every year. Economically, however, the leach beneath the up to 30-meter-thick salt layer is far more interesting, as it is believed to contain more than half of the world's lithium reserves. At present, however, it is mainly tourism that brings money into the bitterly poor, seemingly hostile region, in whose extreme conditions only a few animal species such as the Andean flamingo can survive. Trips across the Salar, interrupted by shorter hikes on the small islands, whose cactus growth forms a rugged contrast to the snow-white salt pan, are an unforgettable experience.

Hotel: Since the town itself is rather uninteresting, we suggest to start the tour without staying in Uyuni overnight.



Stop 9



From Salar de Uyuni to San Pedro de Atacama

The tour starts early in the morning and makes a first stop at the popular photo motif of the Uyuni railroad graveyard, where the disused iron horses rust away. After a longer drive over the seemingly endless white of the salt, the next break follows, giving participants the opportunity to enjoy the seemingly unreal landscape. A special effect is offered to travelers during the ending rainy season, when a thin film of water on the ice crust causes impressive mirror effects. After this break, the next one follows at the so-called cactus island (Isla Incahuasi). During a walk you can see the salt desert from above from several viewpoints. On the way you will often see llamas and chinchillas. The first day ends at the hotel made of salt, where the participants spend the first night.

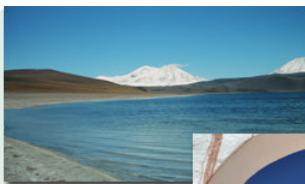
The following day you leave the salt desert and cross the equally surreal Altiplano. The journey is again interrupted by several breaks, including at several lagoons such as the Laguna Colorada, which often glows blood red, as well as the emblematic stone tree (Arbol de Piedra), before you reach the very rustic accommodation (no hot water, as there is electricity only a few hours a day) for the second night. The last day starts before sunrise with a visit to the geyser field "Sol de Mañana". Then you will cross the so-called "Dalí Desert" with bizarre stone formations before reaching the border with Chile near the turquoise Laguna Verde at the foot of the Licancabur volcano and change to the shuttle to San Pedro de Atacama, where you will arrive around 13h. (2 NFB during the tour)

Stop 10

San Pedro de Atacama

San Pedro de Atacama has grown over centuries as an oasis town to a community of just under 5,000 inhabitants today. In recent years, the number of tourists - and with them the local prices - have steadily increased, so that SPDA is now considered the most important tourist center of the Chilean Atacama Desert. Although the town has retained a pleasant atmosphere with its adobe houses and one of the oldest churches in Chile, it is mainly the attractions in the surrounding area that are attracting more and more travelers from all over the world. These include the Valle de Luna, the Salar de Atacama, the Miñiques and Miscanti lagoons, or the Tatio geysers. The incomparable starry nights over the Atacama Desert have a special charm and also archaeologically interested people get their money's worth: The "Museo Arqueológico R. P. Gustavo Le Paige", named after its founder, the Belgian Jesuit missionary, shows a collection of pre-Colombian artifacts unparalleled in Chile, covering a period of 11000 years and dedicated to the Likanantaí culture called Atacameño. In addition to the museum, the fortress complex of Pukará de Quitor, classified as a national monument, located a few kilometers from San Pedro, is also worth a visit.

Hotel: Small hostel near the center, double room with bathroom. (3N)

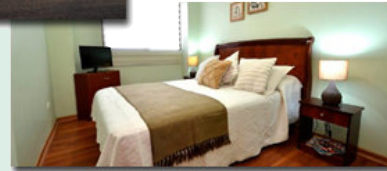


Stop 11

Calama

The desert town on a high plateau of the Atacama is considered one of the driest places in the world. It is home to the massive Chuquibambilla copper mine. The world's largest copper mine can be visited. The dimensions of the mine (4,5 km long, 3,5 km wide and 850 m deep) and also the vehicles for transporting the overburden, which are loaded with up to 400 t load, are impressive. Another worthwhile detour on the way from San Pedro de Atacama is the centuries-old adobe church of Chiu Chiu (1672), whose meter-thick adobe walls support a roof of cactus wood (for lack of trees in the surrounding desert).

Hotel: modern house with bioclimatic architecture, double room with private bathroom. (1NBB)



Stop 12

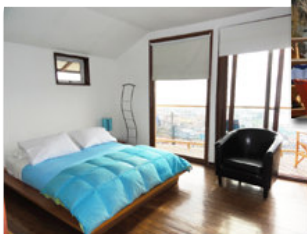
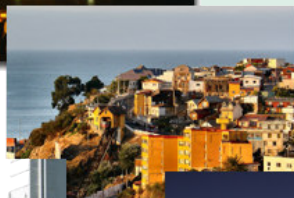
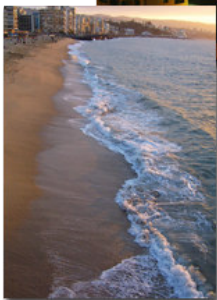
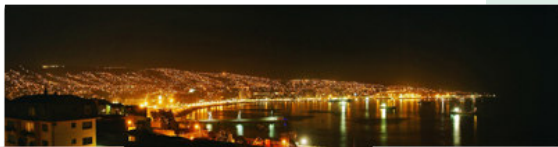
Valparaíso

Chile's legendary port city, from which the Spanish shipped the stolen Inca gold to Europe, and the fashionable seaside resort of Viña del Mar form a pair of sisters that are as interesting as they are unequal. Valparaíso's maze of houses is peppered with Gustave Eiffel's rusty but working elevators, which contributed to the historic center's World Heritage status. Valparaíso's port can be experienced on a tour starting from the most famous pier, the

Muelle Prat. Viña del Mar has the nickname "Garden City", which it owes to its numerous parks and green spaces. The showpiece among them is the Quinta Vergara, former residence of the city's founders, whose Venetian villa now houses the Museum of Fine Arts.

Adjacent to it is the amphitheater, also called Quinta Vergara, which regularly hosts major festivals and concerts. We also recommend a visit to the Francisco Fonck Museum, which is dedicated to the culture of the Easter Islands and has the only "Moai" outside the islands, besides the British Museum. Viña's beaches are lined up to the north of the city.

Hotel: Ideally located on Cerro Alegre, the small New Voga Guesthouse in a historic building with few, individually designed rooms and pretty terrace. Double room with private bathroom (2NBB)



Stop 13

Santiago de Chile

Two decades of constant growth have turned Chile's capital into a modern metropolis and urban center. Its valley location between Andean peaks (east) and the coastal mountains (west) at an altitude of 520 meters provide a

Mediterranean climate during the summer months, while a smog bell often hangs over the city in winter. Santiago is the undisputed political, cultural and economic center of the country. In the center of the city, founded in 1542, some historic buildings have survived, while the elegant Providencia is characterized by modern buildings and shopping streets. This is also where the best restaurants and hotels can be found. Santiago's metro allows visitors to move efficiently between points of interest in the city.

Hotel: Small, comfortable boutique hotel in Providencia. Double room with bathroom. (1NBB)

