



Magical Birding in Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley

Tentative Itinerary

May 24-29, 2025

May 24, 2025 -- Cusco to the Sacred Valley of the Incas

Upon arrival at the Inca Capital of Cusco, we will meet our transport and travel about 90 minutes to the Urubamba Valley, crossing the beautiful rolling plateau of Chinchero en route. The mountain scenery is striking with the high peaks of the Urubamba Mountains.

By late afternoon we'll arrive at the Posada del Inca Hotel in Yucay. This charming lodging is right in the heart of the Sacred Valley of the Incas and the community of Yucay, with beautiful gardens and a colorful chapel.

Lodging: Posada del Inca

Elevation at Yucay: 9,150 FT

Elevation across the Chinchero Plateau: 12,500 FT

May 25, 2025 – Hummingbird Garden and the sites of Maras and Moray

06:30 AM Departure. After a well-deserved sleep we set off to explore this gorgeous valley. Our first stop will be the very attractive community of Yanahuara where we hope to spend the first morning hours visiting Ensifera Camp (Local project that has recuperated the native flora as well as placing various hummer/bird feeders) in search of up to 10 species of hummingbirds and various species of seedeaters, if luck is with us we may spot some of the targets for the day such as the endemics Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch, Green-and-white Hummingbird, Creamy-crested Spinetail, others include the magnificent Sword-billed Hummingbird, the colorful Blue-and-yellow Tanager and more.

The Incas were expert farmers and built a series of agricultural complexes and Moray is one of those fascinating places. Consisting of a circular geologic depression that is reinforced by terraces, the Incas experimented with different plant species in the considerable temperature differences between these levels.

Maras is a small community on the Chinchero Plateau that has been in the business of salt for centuries. We will dedicate our time to carefully explore the over 3000 salt pans where salt has been extracted from pre-inca times.

We'll then enjoy a very special lunch hosted by Chef Tatiana Mendoza, who will open her home for this occasion. Tatiana will show us around her beautiful home and organic orchard where most of her ingredients are naturally grown to prepare her delicious and hearty meals.

Drive back to the hotel in the mid-afternoon. Night in the Urubamba Valley at Posada del Inca Yucay.

Maximum Elevation: 12,000'

Lodging: Posada del Inca

May 26, 2025 -- Malaga Pass and train to Aguascalientes the gateway to Machu Picchu

Morning departure at 6:15 am to bird the Cusco-Quillabamba road! We start at around 8,000 ft and climb all the way to 14,200 ft. to explore this interesting areas with patches of andean scrub and a combination of polylepis, gynoxys and escallonia woodlands! We'll search for endemics such as Creamy crested Spinetail, Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch, others like Giant Hummingbird, Andean Parakeets, the fantastic Great Shappphire-wing, Golden-billed Saltator, Red-crested Cotinga, White-tufted Sunbeam (endemic) and more.

Once over the very high Malaga Pass we will be in upper montane forest where we could bump into high elevation mixed flocks holding mountain tanagers, warblers, flycatchers, and we'll search for endemic Cusco Brush-Finch, and Marcapata Spinetail.

Afternoon drive back to Ollantaytambo in time to catch the train to Machupicchu. Enjoy the delightful hour and a half train ride along the Urubamba Valley and canyon where intermontane valleys will give way to moist and lush tropical cloud forest. Upon arrival there will be a short walk to the hotel.

Lodging: Aguascalientes (TBD)

Elevation at the pass: 14,200 FT

Elevation in Aguascalientes: 6,700 FT

May 27, 2025 -- Magical Machu Picchu

6:00 am departure...after a delicious breakfast we set off to explore the cloud forest in search of colorful tanagers, parakeets, hummingbirds, the gorgeous Andean Cock of the Rock and the intrepid Torrent Duck. After birding along the river we will return to town and take a short bus ride to the main gate of magical Machupicchu where we will spend the remaining morning hours exploring this amazing citadel in the company of your guide as she shares with you intimate details about its construction and use. We'll return to town by bus and have a late lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon train back to Cusco...then transfer to the hotel.

Elevation at Aguas Calientes: 6,700 FT

Elevation at the site of Machupicchu : 8,000 FT

Lodging in Cusco (TBD)

May 28, 2025 – Birding Huacarpay Wetlands and walking tour of Cusco the Capital of the Incas

06: 30 am Departure. Morning drive to the southern part of the Cusco Valley for around 45 minutes, we will explore the Ramsar site of Huacarpay, a local andean wetland with an astonishing number of local species as well as migrants, we will be in search of the colorful Many-colored Rush-tyrant, various species of teals and ducks, Yellow-winged Black-bird, Puna Ibis and others. At around mid-morning we will retrace our path back to Cusco, the capital city of the Incas, and walk throughout this lovely old town visiting the Temple of the Sun-Koricancha, the very happening San Pedro Market with its stalls of colorful potatoes, flowers, fruits and more. We have arranged a farewell lunch as a group in one of the many fine restaurants in Cusco then the rest of the day at leisure to do some shopping, exploration on your own or simply just take-in the magic and mystery of this old and charming city.

Lodging in Cusco (TBD)

Elevation at Cusco: 10,900 FT

May 29, 2025 -- Cusco the Inca Capital

After breakfast, transfer to the airport depending on your travel arrangements.