



# THE SACRED VALLEY RIDE

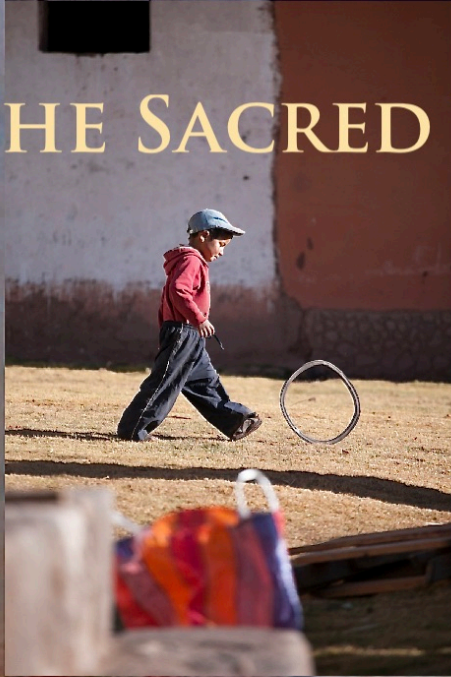
RIDING HIGH  
IN THE PERUVIAN ANDES



PERÚ



# THE SACRED VALLEY RIDE



## THE RIDE

Our signature and most popular ride starts from our riding operation in the heart of the Sacred Valley at about 8,500 feet (2,800m). The Sacred Valley Ride follows a route across the Urubamba River, up through mountain pasture where smiling Quechua children herd sheep and cattle, to highland terraces and small, mountain villages, where the horses' hooves echo on ancient cobblestone roads. Oxen pull wooden ploughs through the fields, travel is largely by foot and the native people speak Quechua, the language of the Incas. The trip includes a visit to the legendary Inca citadel of Machu Picchu and a 2 night stay (mid-trip) in the ancient Inca capital of Cusco. Set departure dates run from April until mid October.

Horseback riding in Peru through the Sacred Valley of the Incas high in the mighty Andes is a wonderful experience you will not soon forget. This valley was the heart of the highly developed Incan civilisation which once controlled a vast area stretching from Ecuador well down the coast of Chile. The monolithic remains of this powerful empire are everywhere to be seen and the surrounding landscape, with the towering peaks of the Andes, is breathtaking.

The Peruvian horses are much-loved, reliable and fun to ride and, with the help of your knowledgeable guides, allow you to explore remote parts of the Sacred Valley not seen by most tourists. Accommodations are in charming hotels in the Sacred Valley. The cuisine is a happy blend of Peruvian and Spanish Colonial offering a great variety of delicious, fresh local produce.

As you ride through the heart of the Inca Empire you quickly become aware of how advanced the civilisation became. The skilful way the Inca engineers moved huge stone slabs, sometimes weighing over a hundred tons, and positioned them snugly into place without the use of mortar is most impressive. These closely fitting slabs retained some flexibility and stood up far better against earthquakes than buildings using mortar. Ancient roads, agricultural research stations, and towns dot the landscape, even now, 1000 years after the fall of the Inca. It is hard to understand how less than 200 Spanish soldiers managed to gain the upper hand and historians are now coming to think that it was only possible because many native Peruvians were unhappy with Inca rule and helped the Spaniards to overthrow them. Of course the courage, ruthlessness and superior military technology of the Spaniards were important also and the awesome looking horse with a rider on his back was undoubtedly a huge advantage in frightening the Incas.

The enormous infusion of wealth Spain gained from the conquest of Peru vastly enriched them and changed the whole balance of power in Europe. For centuries the colony prospered with gold and silver mines and wide areas were cultivated with crops like sugarcane which required overseers to cover long distances on horseback. This gave rise to the breeding and refinement of the Peruvian horse which developed over the centuries. On this journey, you will appreciate how well suited these horses are to the terrain and how comfortable they are to ride for many hours each day.

Founded in 1996, Perol Chico's prestigious ranch and stables have been offering exceptional riding holidays for the more experienced riders. The ranch is nestled against a majestic mountain backdrop in the heart of the mythical Sacred Valley of the Incas, between Cusco and Machu Picchu. This area within the Peruvian Andes offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the world, with endless riding trails along ancient Inca roads.



As well as the fantastic riding trails you are given time to explore the stunning local scenery and Inca sites. Free days in both Cusco and Machu Picchu are included so you can explore at your leisure.

Riding in Peru is at high altitude and there is little oxygen in the air, and so itineraries are tailored to include some time to acclimatise - gentle first days allow you to rest and adjust. During the rides you will notice how difficult it is to exert yourself and run somewhere. It is for this reason, together with the terrain, that the rides do not include lots of galloping. The horses are incredibly fit and well adapted to the altitude, but they still require oxygen. The rides are spectacular and the fantastic "Paso Llano", a smooth 4-beat lateral gait, is a delight - short canters and gallops may be possible, but these are not fast rides by definition. The scenery will take your breath away anyway!

## **FOOD & ACCOMMODATION**

You stay in a number of different hotels along the trail - each with private bathrooms. The hotels are generally of a high standard and have many local features. Hotels can vary depending on availability and the exact hotels are confirmed near your time of departure, but they may include:



**Hotel Sonesta Posada del Inca** in Urubamba. This hotel is only 5 miles from the stables and has comfortable heated rooms with private bathrooms and plenty of local colour. The hotel is a former 18th century colonial style monastery surrounded by beautiful gardens - it has the feel of a small village, with plazas, gardens and even a chapel. The 69 rooms have tiled floors, wood ceilings, hand carved headboards and balconies overlooking the gardens or terraced hillsides.

**Hotel Costa del Sol** in Cusco was once an old mansion of the Spanish nobleman Marquis of Picoaga but has now been converted into a comfortable hotel. The intimate and public areas are beautifully decorated in a colonial style, framed by stone archways on two levels, stone columns and Spanish patio.

Breakfasts are always at your hotels. Lunches are usually a delicious picnic out on the trail - usually you are met by the back-up vehicle who sets out lunch before you arrive.



Dinners are either in local restaurants or at the ranch.

Meals represent the tasty regional cuisine of the area and include fresh vegetables, dairy products and fresh trout as well as good meats. Vegetarian and other special diets can be accommodated with advance notice.

Your hosts Pisco Sours are well known and refreshingly welcome on return to the ranch after riding.

Some meals are not included (on the free days in Cusco and Machu Picchu) so you can choose from the many restaurants available.

## **ITINERARY, 11D/10N**

Ride in the heart of the Sacred Valley, following a route from the Urubamba river through mountain pastures to highland terraces and small mountain villages. The trip includes a visit to the legendary Inca citadel of Machu Picchu and a free day in the ancient Inca capital of Cusco.

### **Day One:**

You will be met on arrival at Cusco airport and transferred to your hotel near the centre of this historical city. Today it is important that you rest and relax to help acclimatise to the altitude. There is no riding scheduled for today but you can walk around the city a little and spend your time resting. Lunch and dinner are to your own account today.

### **Day Two:**

After breakfast, at c. 9:15am, you will be collected from your hotel and transferred c. 1 hour 30mins to your accommodation in the Sacred Valley. You will spend the next three nights in this hotel which is just a short drive from the stables. After time to unpack and refresh you will be transferred to the ranch to meet the horses.

After a delicious barbecue lunch there is a demonstration of classical Peruvian equitation in which your guides will introduce you to the tack and style of riding. A short riding lesson follows, where you are matched with a horse according to your ability, weight, preference etc. Dinner is either at the ranch or at a local restaurant.



### **Day Three:**

After a hearty breakfast at your hotel you are transferred to the ranch for your first full day of riding. You set off along an old, forgotten path behind the ranch, which leads to a breathtaking spot on the top of the Cordillera Vilcanota. Follow hidden trails through unspoilt landscapes and truly off the beaten track - we keep the route secret so it remains exclusive!

The first part of the ride involves a serious climb following narrow but beautiful mountain trails through lots of vegetation. You can see the rich flora of the Peruvian Andes, such as the Molle tree, 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), the Quena Tree (with a twisted trunk and reddish bark which flakes and peels like paper), the Tamarillo Tree (tree tomato), Cantutas (the flower of the Incas), Aguaymanto (Peruvian cherry or cape gooseberry), Muna (mint-like Peruvian herb) and many other intriguing species.

At the top of the mountain, the horses rest whilst you appreciate the view - there are no words to describe the panorama. After snacks and drinks, you continue your ride downhill along lush and secret trails across privately owned land until reaching a property which belongs to friends of your guide, nestled in a gorgeous valley. Here you stop for a delicious lunch of fresh trout before heading back to the ranch around 4pm.

Dinner will be at a local restaurant or the ranch before returning to your hotel to rest.

### **Day Four:**

Today you take the train from Urubamba to Machu Picchu. The experience of visiting Machu Picchu is not limited to the ruins themselves as the train journey is one of the most spectacular in the world. Since its discovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911 the site has captivated the hearts and minds of the modern world.

Since July 2017, the Peruvian government has established new regulations to preserve this Wonder of the World. There are two entrance times - Morning (06:00-12:00) and Afternoon (12:00-17:30). Capacity at the site is limited to 2,500 visitors, split between both entrance times. Your entry to Machu Picchu

has to be booked in advance and your guides will endeavour to book the afternoon session with the most convenient train times, but this is not guaranteed.

Depending on availability, you will travel on the luxurious Vistadome train from Ollantaytambo in the morning (30mins drive from your hotel) and will return to the same station at about 7/8pm, where you will be transferred back to your hotel, via the ranch for dinner. (Lunch is to your own account today).



## Day Five

After breakfast you are transferred to the ranch for a full day of riding. After crossing the Urubamba bridge, you pass Pichingote which is an old Andean hamlet built alongside the river. Ride onto Salinas up a narrow track where you will see salt pans from Inca times which are still being used by locals to extract salt from the mountain spring water. The salt pans consist of a series of platforms where the salty water is channelled through an impressive irrigation system and left to evaporate in the sun.

Today you will climb nearly 850m on horseback 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 your ride to Maras, a typical Andean village with a 400yr old colonial church where you stop for a picnic lunch. This church was built just after the conquest and is one of the ten oldest churches in South America.



From Maras you visit the ruins of Cheqoq where the Inca's constructed fascinating cold storage areas to preserve their produce. Cooling is achieved by a series of wind tunnels and water channels. Continue riding to the beautiful churchyard of Tiobamba where you stop for the day - the horses remain here and you are transferred back to your hotel. Dinner will be at the ranch or a local restaurant.

Riding c. 4 hours. Altitude 2,800m - 3,550m









### **Day Six:**

After breakfast you are transferred back to the horses at Tiobamba. Set off along primitive trails across the altiplano with spectacular scenery all around you - snow-capped mountains, wild flowers 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. Time allowing, you'll then take a short car journey to Chinchero to visit a textiles workshop and view a demonstration of local techniques for spinning, dyeing and weaving wool - the beautiful fabrics are available to buy if you wish.

Transfer to the historical city of Cusco - the oldest continuously inhabited city in South America and former capital of the great Inca Empire. For the next two nights you stay in a very comfortable hotel in the heart of Cusco's archaeological centre. Enjoy dinner in Cusco (to your own account) - your guides can recommend a restaurant to you.

Riding c. 4-5 hours. Altitude 3,550m - 3,800m

### **Day Seven:**

Today is a rest day for the horses and a free day for you to explore Cusco with its numerous ruins, cathedrals and museums - or you may prefer to relax in one of the many coffee shops or bars.

According to Inca legend, Cusco was founded around 1200AD by Manco Capac and Mama Occlo. Manco Capac 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 during his reign and you can still see the original walls throughout Cusco.

All meals, except breakfast, are to your own account today.

### **Day Eight:**

After breakfast you are transferred back to Lake Piuray and your horses. Today is a beautiful riding day with breathtaking scenery (literally!) of impressive snow-capped mountains and the altiplano where herds of alpaca and llama are often seen grazing. You may have to ride along non-existent mountain trails where you have to improvise and find the best way along the side of the mountain - this is a remote area which is not easily accessible. You will be impressed by the skill of your horses and how they are able to handle the difficult terrain and steep climbs. At one point you will reach a pass of 4,350m, from where you can see Lake Quellacocha - this is the highest point of the ride.

Stop for a simple lunch at the lake and then continue riding to Lake Qqoricocha, passing vast potato fields which are all ploughed by hand. The trail starts to descend into the valley of Umasbamba along a zigzag route of about two hours - you may have to dismount and lead your horse for a short while (15mins) to cross some rocky sections. Close to the village of Umasbamba, you leave your horses and are transferred to your hotel by car. Dinner will be at a local restaurant or the ranch.

Riding: c. 5-6 hours. Altitude: 3,300-4,350m

### **Day Nine:**

Another stunningly beautiful day with plenty of breaks for photo opportunities! From the village of Umasbamba you ride to the villages of Cuper Alto and Cuper Bajo, arriving in the early afternoon at an abandoned church near the village of Chinchero, where you stop for lunch.

To reach this place you have to follow a trail which was once a beautiful paved Inca road - parts of the road are still intact with water channels for irrigation and drainage, with paved grades leading to higher levels. This great Inca road system - the Qhapaq Nan - was one of the greatest engineering feats undertaken in the New World, rivalling the Roman road system of the Old World. The 30,000km network linked Cusco, the Inca capital, with the empire's far-flung domains in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Chile. There are four major roads plus many secondary roads.



Continue riding through more stunning scenery to the village of Huaynacolca, high on the mountains that surround the Valley of the Incas. Here you leave the horses and transfer to your hotel in time to freshen up before dinner at the hotel's restaurant (your guides are unable to join you for dinner this evening).

Riding c. 5-6 hours. Altitude 3,800 - 3,550m

### **Day Ten:**

Today is your last riding day, but before you meet the horses at Huaynacolca, you stop at a pottery shop of the renowned artist and ceramicist Pablo Seminario. Pablo is a local legend and integrates abstract modern styles with traditional Incan and pre-Incan ceramic techniques and designs. After your visit, you transfer to the horses and continue riding along the old Inca roads high above the Sacred Valley. Ride past farmland and the small village of Santana before returning to the village of Maras. Continue inland to the beautiful courtyard of an old house, which according to locals is bewitched, where you stop for lunch.

After lunch follow a trail with great views of the Urquillos Valley and continue your descent into the Sacred Valley, passing the salt mines again and arriving back at the ranch around 4pm in time for a celebratory Pisco Sour. Dinner will be at the ranch or in a local restaurant.

Riding c. 4 hours. Altitude 3,550m - 2,800m

### **Day Eleven:**

Early morning transfer to Cusco airport for your flight to Lima. The driving time is around 1 hour 15 minutes. The earliest your flight can depart from Lima is 5pm.

Please note that the itinerary may vary due to local conditions such as weather or other unforeseen circumstances, but always with your best interests at heart.

## PRICING, DEPARTURE DATES AND TRIP DETAILS

Minimum group size: 2

Maximum group size: 7

Ability description: You need to be at least an intermediate rider who is comfortable, secure and in control over varied terrain in open countryside. The pace is not fast due to the altitude but there are some technical sections where good balance is vital, and you will experience the fabulous paso llano pace where the terrain allows.

Total riding time: 11 days / 10 nights / 6 days riding (3-6 hours per day)

### **Departure dates 2021:**

April 4 - April 14

April 20 - April 30

May 2 - May 12

May 23 - June 2

July 18 - July 28

August 15 - August 25

September 5 - September 15

September 19 - September 29

October 10 - October 20

### **Departure dates 2022:**

April 10 - April 20

May 1 - May 11

May 29 - June 8

July 10 - July 20

July 31 - August 10

August 21 - August 31

September 18 - September 28

October 9 - October 19

### **Pricing:**

US\$ 5.950 per person sharing

US\$ 790 single supplement (if applicable)

Small group supplement of US\$ 250 per person if less than four riders confirmed



### Price includes

- Price includes meals as reflected in the itinerary, professional English speaking trail guide, support team including grooms, 4x4 back up vehicle, all land transfers, train, bus and entrance fee to Machu Picchu and all accommodation (10 overnights in comfortable hotels).

### Price does not include

- Price does not include dinner on Day 6, meals in Cusco on Day 7 and lunch at Machu Picchu on Day 4.
- Alcoholic beverages during meals at restaurants, gratuities, optional activities, personal expenditures and travel insurance.
- Small group fee. We guarantee that all of our tours will run with a minimum of two people, but a "small group fee" will be applied to "groups" of only 2 to 3 people.
- Single supplement. The price for each ride is based on shared occupancy. If you are traveling solo and wish to share accommodation, we will make every effort to find a roommate (always of the same gender). If you are willing to share and no roommate materialises, then the customary single supplement will apply. A single supplement is always applicable for participants who specifically request single accommodation.

## TRIP DETAILS

### Meeting Point

Meeting point for this ride is Cusco.

### Riders Requirements

To take part in these rides you need to be a reasonably experienced rider, intermediate or above. You should be comfortable, secure and in control on a well schooled horse at all paces and used to riding in open country and over varied terrain. You should have a reasonably good level of general and riding fitness.

#### Beginner:

A rider who has limited experience, is unable to apply basic aids and does not have a firm and balanced seat

Novice:

A rider who is capable of mounting and dismounting unassisted, capable of applying basic aids, comfortable and in control at the walk.

Intermediate:

A rider who has a firm and balanced seat, who is capable of mounting and dismounting unassisted, comfortable and in control at all paces but does not ride regularly.

Strong Intermediate:

An intermediate rider who is currently riding regularly and is comfortable in the saddle for at least 6 hours per day.

Advanced:

All of the above, plus an independent seat, soft hands, and capable of handling a spirited horse in open country.

Weight limit: 13,5 stones (85 kgs, 190 pounds)

Age Limit: 16 or older.

Weight limit:

85 kgs / 13.5 stone / 190 lbs (dressed for riding). You may be weighed prior to riding so please be honest.

Horses and Tack

The horses are locally bred Peruvian Pasos. This breed dates back to the colonial era of Peru and originates from the Spanish Andalusians. Peruvian Paso horses are bred for their grace, spirit, and intelligence and are a symbol of their historic and noble past. These horses like to amble, moving fore and hind limbs on the same side at the same time, unlike other equine races that typically move diagonal limbs at the same time. During the ride you will experience traveling on horseback at the smooth Paso Llano gait (4-beat lateral gait, between 8 to 10 Km. per hour). The horses are well cared for, strong, and even-tempered.

The tack utilised is very traditional and demonstrates refined Peruvian craftsmanship. The hardwood hex stirrup and the *guarnicion*, or tailpiece, are unique elements of the Peruvian tack. The saddle is a box saddle and has a deep seat.

### Pace of the ride

Due to the very high altitude and rough, rocky terrain, this is not a fast-paced ride. The horses are asked to work at altitudes of between 2,800m and 4,350m, and we should remember that with the altitude and reduced oxygen this high up makes their job of carrying us much more difficult!!

The decreased oxygen reduces not only the maximal oxygen consumption but also the absolute workload. High altitude has an effect on the horse's cardiovascular, haematological, respiratory and metabolic functions.

From experience we learned that our well-trained horses need approximately two days to get acclimatised to higher altitudes. During the first days of the ride we don't ask too much from our horses and keep the pace relatively slow. As the ride develops you will experience a more exciting pace, such as the fabulous and smooth 'paso llano' gait, some canters and even some gallops, but please bear in mind this is not a fast paced ride by definition.

### Meals

While on the Sacred Valley of the Incas Ride, guests are treated to wonderful meals representing tasty regional cuisine. Dishes are made from fresh vegetables, dairy products, and fresh trout. Vegetarian or other dietary requirements will be accommodated with advanced notice.

### Responsibilities of ride participants

All care will be taken, but we assume no responsibility for injury, loss or damage in any way. Guests are responsible for having an adequate, valid insurance policy including coverage for all the sporting activities that they are likely to participate in. Appropriate medical insurance is obligatory.

It is understood by Perol Chico / Maria Zans Gia EIRL that guests are in a suitable condition to partake in a riding tour, are not riding against any medical advice, and that guests know of no reason why they should not be participating in such a tour. Guests will be required to sign a waiver of liability at the start of the tour.

Ride participants have a certain responsibility to Perol Chico and to the other members of the ride. Participants are responsible for understanding the requirements of the ride, and for selecting a ride appropriate to their ability. Participants with medical problems or special dietary needs are responsible for informing Perol Chico of these issues well in advance.



For the protection of all participants, the ride leader reserves the right to prevent anyone from riding who displays insufficient ability, or whose behaviour endangers the safety of other riders, themselves, or the horses. No refund will be made to a participant who is rejected for any such reason, or who is unwilling or unable to complete a tour.

Participants are responsible for arranging travel to and from the ride's meeting point, for carrying valid travel documents, and for obtaining immunisations appropriate to the destination. Participants are responsible for understanding what is and is not included in the price as outlined in the detailed ride itineraries.

Anyone who does not want pictures of themselves to be used in promotional materials should notify Perol Chico accordingly.

### Suggested Packing List

Since you will be riding at elevations between 2.800 and 4.350 meters (9,185 and 14,275 ft), lightweight, warm clothing worn in layers is highly recommended. Dinners are casual; there is no need to bring special attire.

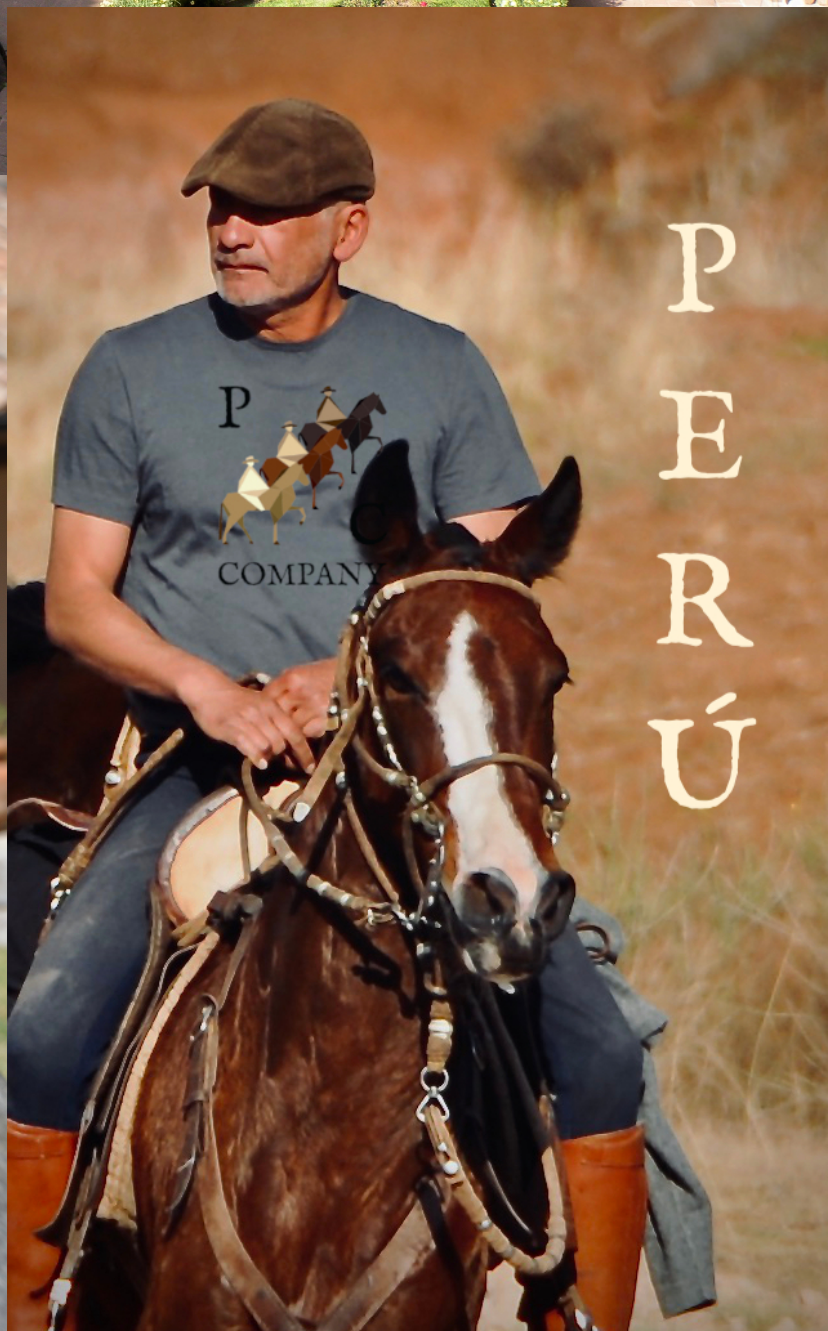
- Comfortable riding trousers (two pairs)
- T- shirts
- Long sleeved cotton shirts. These are without doubt the best things to ride in. Sleeves can be rolled up or down for protection from the sun and the collar helps to protect your neck too.
- Thick socks
- Wind-bloc Fleece or warm jacket for cold evenings especially at these high altitudes.
- Waterproofs. Ideally a Gore-Tex or similar wind and rain proof jacket. Waterproof leggings are also a good idea. You will be provided with woolen and waterproof ponchos, but it is often useful to have another waterproof jacket underneath your waterproof poncho for added protection. It may not rain, but better to be prepared.
- Riding boots with rubber sole, also suitable for walking (around Inca ruins etc). The best would be a pair of the dual purpose Ariat or Mountain Horse riding/leisure boots.
- Protection for the lower leg, either full or half-chaps.

- Hat. We recommend a hard hat for riding and something with a wide brim is advisable as protection against the sun (baseball caps work well). Your hard hat must be secure on your head.
- Riding gloves
- Light pair of shoes for après-riding.
- Good sunglasses with a neck cord. Your eyes will become bloodshot if you do not wear sunglasses.
- Sunscreen and Lip Balm are essential because of the altitude and dry air. We suggest at least Factor 30, if not total block.
- Insect repellent (Machu Picchu and the surrounding area can be prone to mosquitos).
- Spanish Phrasebook/dictionary
- Casual clothes - for when you are not riding.
- Small medical kit with antiseptic cream, good supply of ibuprofen, aspirin and plasters, antihistamine tablets, any medication you regularly take.
- Scarf/bandana, useful for protection against the sun.
- Additional passport photos
- Copy of passport/visa and debit cards
- Wash bag. A supply of baby wipes will be invaluable. We also recommend biodegradable personal washing products. Hair-dryers are available at all hotels on the trail.
- Ziploc bags/supply of plastic carrier bags - always useful for wet/dry kit.
- Camera

Leather saddlebags are provided for you. Each person has a set of saddlebags and carries what they need for the day. Jackets and ponchos can be tied behind the saddle so it is easy to put them on and take them off. To keep your saddlebag contents clean, a good idea is to put all your things in a plastic carrier bag/Ziploc bag first and then into the saddlebags. We provide each rider with a warm Alpaca poncho and rain poncho during the ride.

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