Discovering Our Planet Together

Machu Picchu & Sacred Valley Photo Expedition

A Photographer's Journey into the Ancient Wonders of the Inca Civilization

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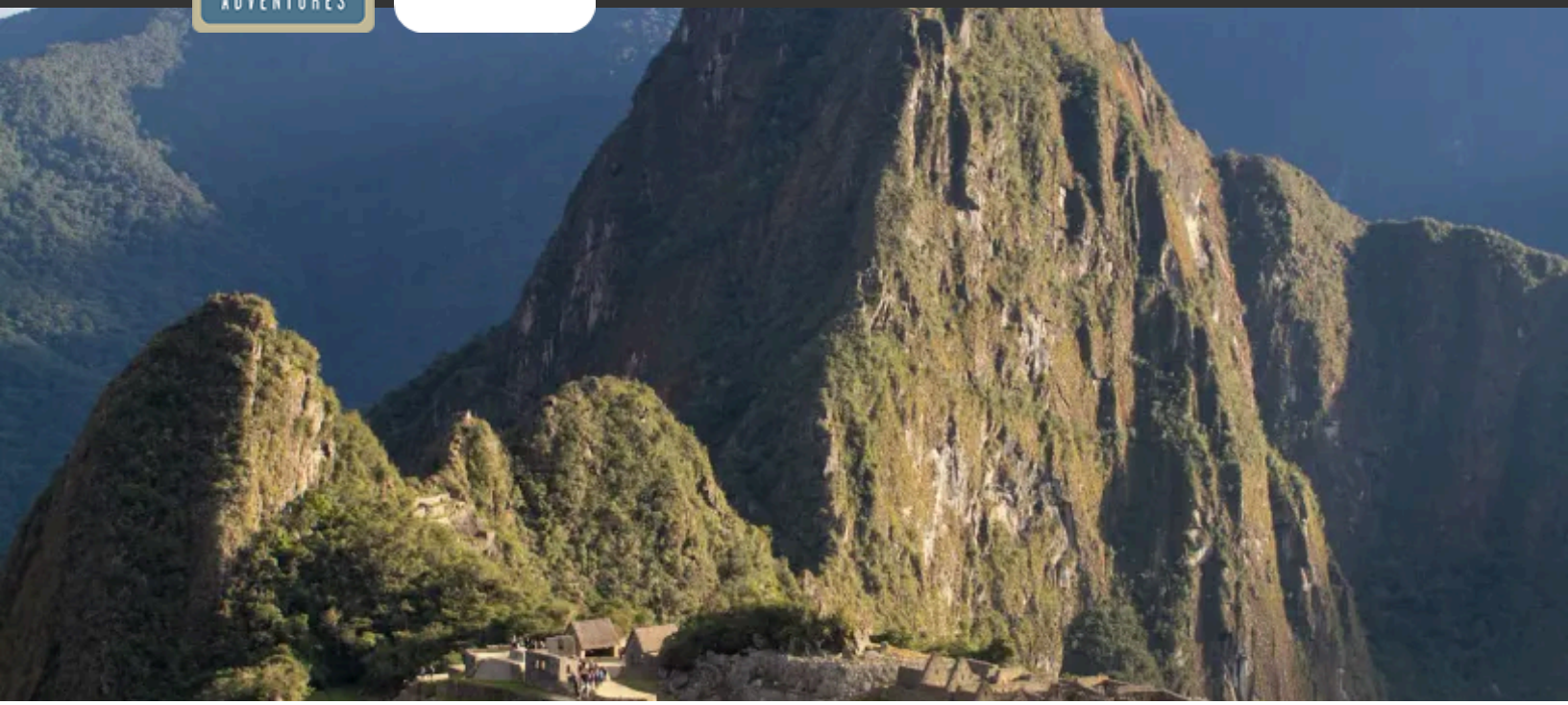

Trip Details:

Days
7 Days / Aug, Oct–Nov

Machu Picchu & Sacred Valley Photo Expedition

A Photographer's Journey into the Ancient Wonders of the Inca Civilization

Photographers have long been captivated by the mystical ruins of Machu Picchu. High in the Peruvian Andes, the stone city sits among vertical peaks draped in emerald jungle. Built on a granite mountaintop close to the sun, its intricate architecture reveals the ingenuity of its 15th-century Inca designers. Massive blocks of stone were cut to fit together so precisely that no mortar was necessary. The site also reflects the Incas' extraordinary knowledge of astronomy, with many elements aligning with heavenly events such as the solstice sunrise. On two separate visits, shoot Machu Picchu in varied light, capturing iconic wide shots with llamas in the foreground, and detailed studies of fine stonework. Cultural photography rounds out your portfolio, with village visits, traditional market scenes and tableaus of agricultural life in the Sacred Valley.

Trip Highlights

No hurried jostling for shots among hordes of visitors—we spend extended time on two trips to the ruins, for varied contexts and a range of light and sky conditions

Explore timeless landscapes as we work with changing light, texture and scenes of local life in traditional Andean villages and agricultural settings

At the market in Urubamba and in other cultural encounters, shoot portraits and document daily rhythms, vibrant colors and local artisans at work

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1
Lima, Peru

Day 2
Fly to Cusco / Sacred Valley—Awana Kancha / Pisac / Huayllabamba

Day 3
Maras Salt Pans / Urubamba Market / Enisfera Hummingbird Garden

Day 4
Ollantaytambo / Vistadome Train to Aguas Calientes / Machu Picchu

Day 5
Photographing Machu Picchu & Wayna Picchu

Day 6
Garden Photography / Train to Cusco / City Photography Walk

Day 7
Cusco / Sacsayhuaman / Fly to Lima / Depart

Machu Picchu & Sacred Valley Photo Expedition Itinerary

A Photographer's Journey into the Ancient Wonders of the Inca Civilization

Day 1: Lima, Peru

Welcome to Peru! Arrive in the capital of Lima where you'll meet your Nat Hab representative right outside baggage claim to assist you with your transfer to our hotel, just steps away from the terminal. Rest and prepare for the journey ahead, as tomorrow, the real adventure begins as we fly to the Andes and center of the ancient Inca Empire.

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Day 2: Fly to Cusco / Sacred Valley—Awana Kancha / Pisac / Huayllabamba

Fly to Cusco, heart of the once-grand Inca Empire, and meet your Photo Expedition Leader on arrival. From the Indigenous Quechua word *qosq'o*, Cusco means the "navel of the earth." Set in a high Andean valley, Cusco was founded in the 12th century and thrived until Spanish conquistadors destroyed the Inca civilization in their 16th-century colonial quest. From the Cusco airport, board our new all-electric van, which will convey us around Cusco and the Sacred Valley during our trip—it's the first electric van to be used for tourism in Peru, and we're proud that our travelers are part of our pioneering sustainability initiative. Enjoy the smooth, quiet ride as we descend into the heart of the valley, following a winding route through the Andes foothills. Right away, photogenic views of farmland, village life and imposing peaks are unveiled.

At Awana Kancha, a living museum showcasing Indigenous cultural traditions, local weavers work with alpaca and llama wool while herds graze nearby. This is a perfect place to photograph Andean faces, colorful textiles and soft animal textures. Continue to Pisac, where ancient stone agricultural terraces curve along the steep mountainsides above the town. Capture wide-angle landscapes, stone temple, and the intricate patterns of Inca ruins. In the afternoon, explore quiet Andean villages surrounded by fields and mountains as we photograph daily rural life—adobe homes, farmers at work and children playing—bathed in the golden light of late day. This evening, gather at our hacienda inn near Huayllabamba for a Photo Techniques & Composition Presentation led by your Expedition Leader. This relaxed session focuses on framing, storytelling through light, and using perspective to enhance depth in mountain landscapes and village portraits. You'll review key approaches for capturing the architecture and atmosphere of the Sacred Valley, along with nature in the Andes foothills.

Day 3: Maras Salt Pans / Urubamba Market / Enisfera Hummingbird Garden

Slowly, the morning sun crests the mountain ridges around us to illumine the Sacred Valley, and we photograph first light as it spills across the fields around our lodge. More treasures of the valley unfold today as we follow the Urubamba River past tawny hillsides dotted with traditional villages, small farms and Incan architectural ruins. The original vast empire of the Incas was connected by a network of 10,000 miles of stone roads woven through the imposing terrain of the Andes. Suspension bridges spanned rivers and aqueducts carried water from mountain streams to irrigate terraced fields of crops, vestiges of which we see on our journey today, backdropped by knife-edged peaks.

A highlight is a visit to Maras, the pre-Incan salt flats where salt has been harvested for over a thousand years. Mineral-rich water from subterranean streams flows into the intricate network of shallow pools, filling the pans and eventually evaporating, leaving behind crystalline layers of fine salt. The landscape is a stunning geometric patchwork, with the contrast of white salt, red earth and afternoon shadows inspiring abstract compositions. Then we visit the Urubamba farmers market, full of color and character. Capture portraits of vendors, vibrant produce, and the energy of local life. Continue to Ensifera Hummingbird Garden, where we practice high-speed shots to freeze hummingbirds hovering midair. Then, as the light softens toward sunset, we pause to photograph the layered peaks glowing in golden hues.

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Day 4: Ollantaytambo / Vistadome Train to Aguas Calientes / Machu Picchu

This morning, photograph the narrow cobbled streets, stone waterways and impressive fortress ruins of Ollantaytambo, one of the last living Inca towns. Strategically built in the 15th century as a military stronghold, ceremonial center and locus for agriculture, Ollantaytambo showcases advanced Inca engineering and irrigation systems. With massive terraces and walls, it was a force in defending the Sacred Valley, and the site of a significant victory over the Spanish conquistadores in 1537.

Then board the train for the 1.5-hour journey to Aguas Calientes, our base for photographing Machu Picchu. The clear glass vantage of our Vistadome car frames the rushing Urubamba River, steep mountainsides, and the transition from Andean grasslands to lush cloud forest. On arrival, we disembark and ride the bus up to the lost citadel. Little prepares one for the spectacle that awaits. As we ascend into the ruins, there's a sense of wandering through a mystical city in the sky, surrounded by green mountain ramparts that soar into the clouds. The site was hidden from Western explorers until 1911, when a Quechua guide led Yale historian Hiram Bingham to the ruins, buried beneath a dense tangle of jungle.

Our Expedition Leader interprets all we see as we explore the labyrinth of granite houses, temples, walls and cisterns. Spend a full afternoon photographing the ruins in shifting light, from iconic wide shots with the imposing profile of Huayna Picchu in the distance, to detailed studies of fine stonework. Llamas wander among the terraced steps that once grew maize and potatoes for 1,200 inhabitants, adding character to your compositions. Archaeologists believe Machu Picchu may have been a royal estate and religious retreat, based on its sacred geography and astronomical orientation. Important ceremonies were conducted here, including a winter solstice rite at which a priest would "tie the sun" to a hitching post stone to prevent it from disappearing altogether.

We spend the next two nights at Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel in private casitas built of stone, tile and cedar, surrounded by the thick greenery of the cloud forest and impressive gardens surrounding the resort. More than 300 varieties of orchids grace the grounds of this secluded luxury retreat on the river, and a network of trails on the grounds invites a stroll in search of botanical shots.

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Day 5: Photographing Machu Picchu & Wayna Picchu

Return early to Machu Picchu for a quieter, more intimate morning shoot. Explore the Royalty Route, where light filters across temples, staircases and terraces. Among the evocative ruins, take the opportunity to ponder, in Hiram Bingham's words, the "bewildering romance" of a place that "appears to have been expressly designed by nature as a sanctuary for the oppressed." Those who are up for a challenge may climb Wayna Picchu for spectacular aerial views of the citadel below. The imposing mountain provides the famous backdrop for the Lost City in classic photos. The Incas constructed the original trail to the top, where they built temples and farming terraces. Local myth holds that the summit of Wayna Picchu was the residence for the high priest of the ancient city. This challenging hike takes 2–3 hours and climbs approximately 1,200 feet from the base at Machu Picchu, ascending a steep face using stairs and cables for support. The hike is not recommended for those with physical limitations or those with a fear of heights. Guests who do not wish to tackle Wayna Picchu will explore elsewhere with a local guide, with a chance to photograph additional temples.

After descending, enjoy a relaxed afternoon in Aguas Calientes. The lush gardens surrounding our hotel are filled with orchids, butterflies and hummingbirds—ideal subjects for macro and nature photography. Later, stroll along the riverside path as dusk falls, capturing the soft tones of twilight and reflections in the water.

Day 6: Garden Photography / Train to Cusco / City Photography Walk

Begin the day with a peaceful walk through the lush gardens around our hotel, where hummingbirds flit between orchids and bromeliads. It's a chance to refine macro techniques with delicate morning light. The 11-acre property is renowned in Peru for its commitment to sustainability and conserving nature and has long been a leader in the ecotourism space. More than 1,500 plant species are found on the premises, including three new types of orchid discovered here in 2023.

On our return journey to Cusco, shoot from the train windows as the Urubamba River winds through steep canyons. Snowcapped peaks occasionally appear between clouds, offering fleeting landscape shots. Once we disembark, set out on a photography walk through Cusco's historic core with our Expedition Leader. As the former capital of the Inca Empire, Cusco is the main gateway to the Sacred Valley, but it also stands alone as a trove of historic treasures. Strolling through its cobblestone streets, encounter the fusion of Incan and Spanish colonial architecture, most notably the Qorikancha Temple and the Church of Santo Domingo. From the grand Plaza de Armas to narrow Inca alleys lined with carved stone walls, capture the textures, colors and people that bring this ancient city to life. Local markets hum with activity, with traditional textiles and handicrafts for sale, while the savory aromas of street food fill the air. End the afternoon as the sun dips low, painting Cusco's red tile rooftops in golden light.

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Day 7: Cusco / Sacsayhuaman / Fly to Lima / Depart

On this final morning, head just outside Cusco to photograph the striking ruins at Sacsayhuaman in the early light of day, sharing awe at one of the most impressive examples of Inca walls found in the region. The site is still enveloped in mystery, and we ponder how the Incas moved these enormous stones to this site without the advantage of wheeled carts, and how they managed to fit such large, perfectly honed granite stones together so tightly that a pocketknife blade cannot be inserted between them. Back in the city, wander on your own to document scenes in markets, doorways and lively streets—moments that capture both centuries of heritage and contemporary daily life.

Over a farewell lunch, share favorite images and memories with your fellow photographers. Then transfer to the airport for our return flight to Lima, carrying home a gallery of unforgettable images from the Andes. From Lima, continue with homeward departures.

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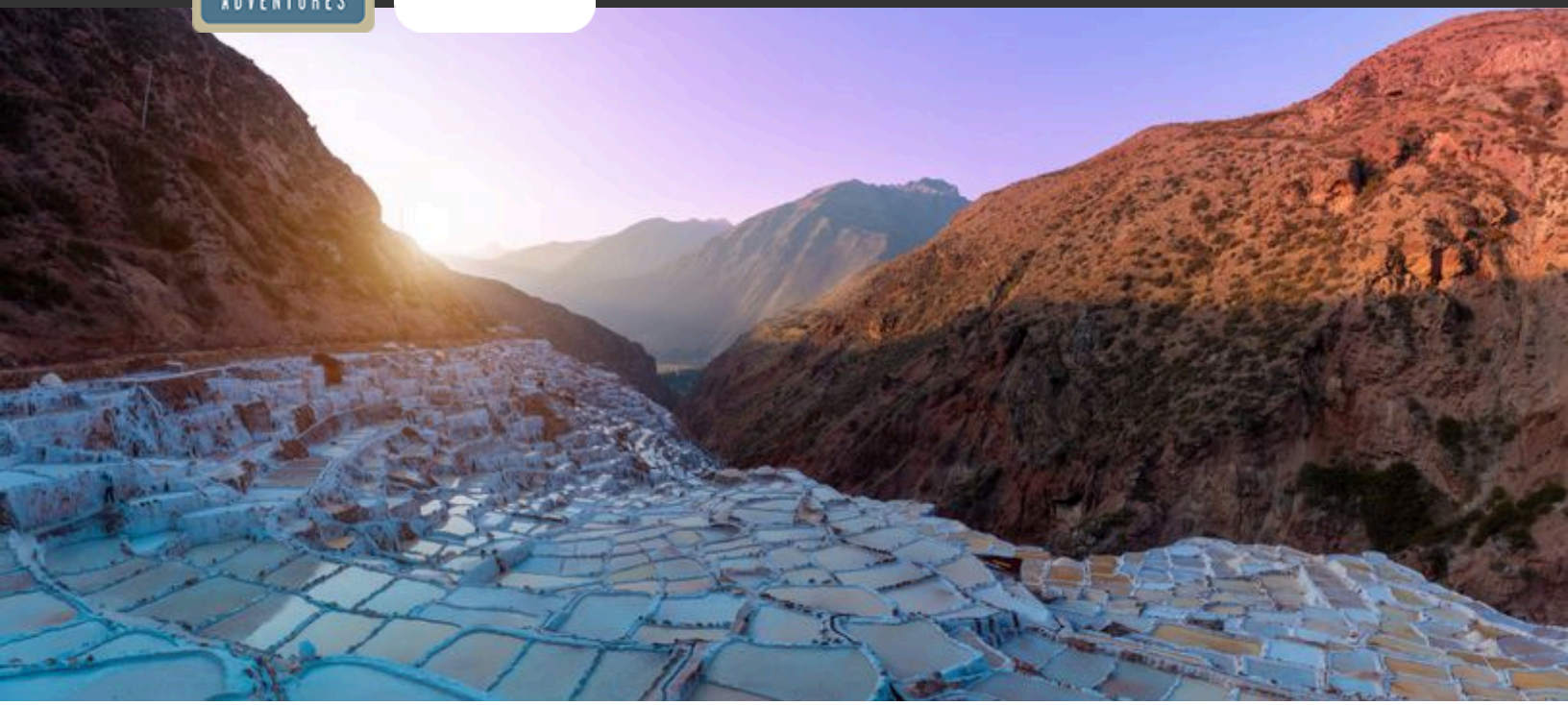


Accommodation Details:

Palacio del Inka

Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba

Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel

La Casona

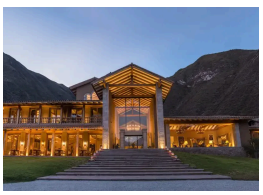
For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/south-america/machu-picchu-photo-expedition/accommodations

Machu Picchu & Sacred Valley Photo Expedition Accommodations

A Photographer's Journey into the Ancient Wonders of the Inca Civilization

Palacio del Inka

A storied mansion dating back nearly five centuries, this luxury hotel located in the historic center of Cusco evokes Peru's colonial past while offering an array of contemporary amenities.

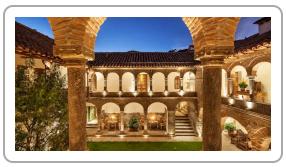


Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba

Surrounded by 100 acres of countryside in the Sacred Valley, this contemporary luxury hotel offers accommodations in individual casitas with stunning views of Andes peaks.

Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel

One of National Geographic's Unique Lodges of the World, this secluded hotel on the Urubamba River enjoys an ideal location near the famous ruins of Machu Picchu but away from the crowds.



La Casona

A restored 16th-century manor in Cusco's Plaza Las Nazarenas that blends colonial elegance with modern comfort, refined Andean cuisine, native botanical spa treatments and sustainability.

A Full Photography Immersion in Machu Picchu & the Sacred Valley

We've designed this itinerary to give you in-depth exposure to the natural grandeur, Inca history and enduring culture of Peru's Andes, including South America's most famous cultural site—Machu Picchu, the fabled Lost City of the Incas. In the company of an outstanding photographer Expedition Leader who is also an expert in the natural and cultural history of the region, you'll get images you would never get on your own. Read more about the features that set this Photo Expedition apart:

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1. **In-Depth Photography at Machu Picchu on Two Separate Visits** Most visitors to Peru's most famous archaeological site spend just a few hours on a single day. Our itinerary visits the ruins on two different occasions, with extended time for multiple angles, careful compositions and shooting in varied light conditions. We also offer an optional hike up Wayna Picchu to get the classic view of the Lost City from on high.

2. **Document Andean Culture Up Close** Meet local artisans and farmers, hear their stories, and get portraits during village visits and at the Urubamba market. You'll gain insight into Peru's living heritage, turning your photos into stories that transcend mere images.

3. **Photograph Beauty & Biodiversity in the Cloud Forest** In the extensive gardens of Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo hotel, shoot an array of orchids, butterflies and hummingbirds—an ideal setting for macro photography in soft, diffuse light.

4. **Luxury Accommodations in Natural Settings away from Crowds** We choose our accommodations to enhance your experience of Peru's mountain culture in peaceful settings. After each day in the field, retreat to our carefully selected boutique hotels and ecolodges that combine comfort and conservation—perfect places for photographers to rest, recharge and review their work. Near Machu Picchu we stay at Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, a luxury lodge secluded in lush cloud forest. The hotel enjoys a private setting surrounded by 11 acres of flower gardens containing more than 300 orchid species. In the Sacred Valley, we hand-pick our accommodations for ambience and privacy, away from crowds.

5. **Travel Seamlessly by Train, Electric Van & on Foot** Our itinerary is coordinated to flow smoothly with a mix of transportation that's perfectly suited to our needs. From the scenic Vistadome train along the Urubamba River to our transfers by electric van and intimate walks through villages and small farms, our travel mode fits the context and logistics are smooth, giving you more time behind the camera and less time in transit.

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6 **Travel the Sacred Valley in Our New All-Electric Vehicle** Nat Hab has set a new standard in Cusco Province with the rollout of **Peru's first electric vehicle** (EV) used for tourism. Introduced on our trips in 2025, our spacious, comfortable electric van provides our small groups the opportunity to ride in quiet, zero-emissions style. And don't think the lack of a diesel engine means any compromise in power: our EV navigates the high, winding mountain roads with plenty of get-up-and-go. When you travel with us, you are part of raising the bar on sustainability for tourism in Peru!

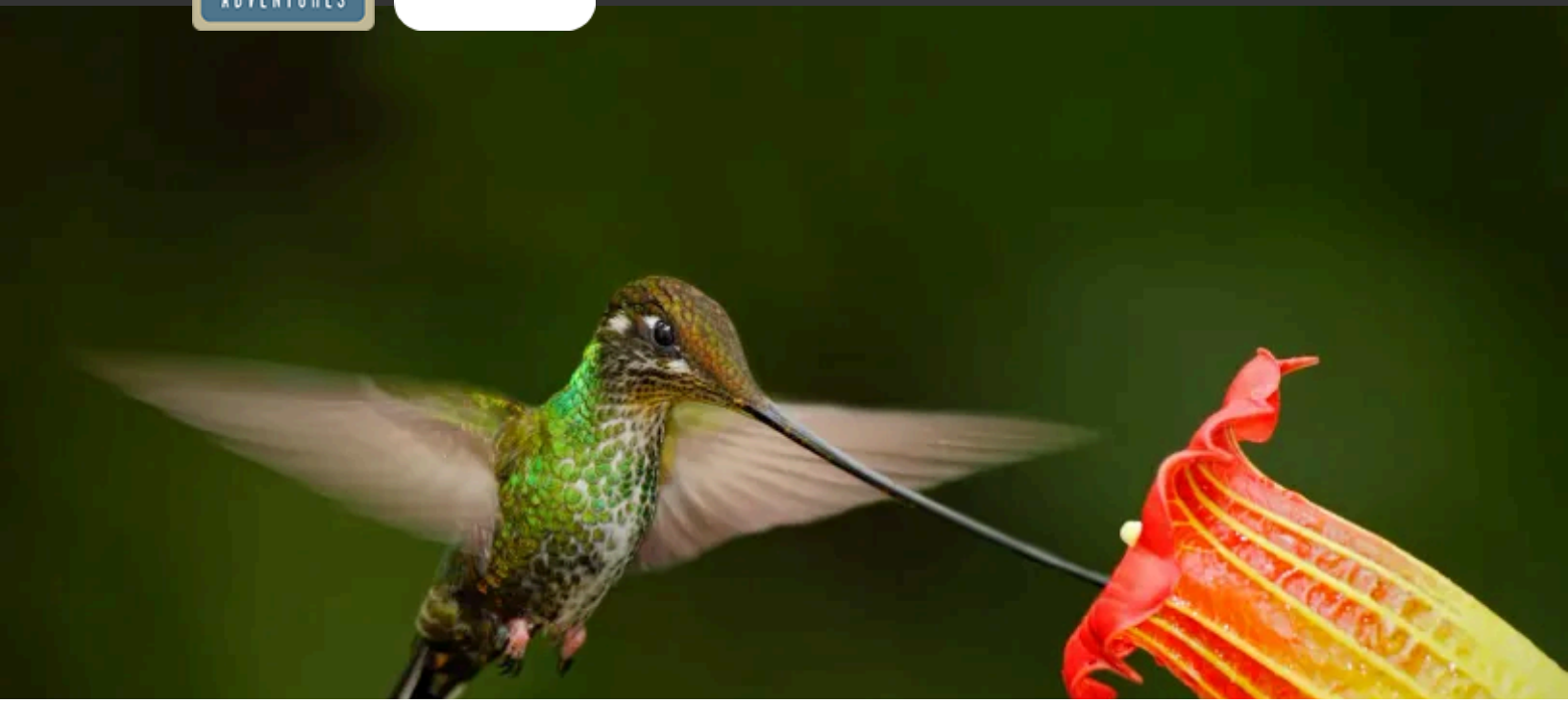
7 **Learn from Our Expert Photographer Guide** You'll be traveling with a genuine pro who is as capable an instructor as an accomplished. photographer. Learn composition, exposure and storytelling techniques tailored to the high Andes—from landscapes and wildlife to candid portraits of local life. If you're already highly facile with your camera, you'll get local insight to make your images even better—and if you're a keen intermediate or avid novice, our Photo Expedition Leader will tailor tips and techniques to suit your personal needs. And our guides' expertise in both natural and cultural history makes all the difference when it comes to gaining a richer understanding of the sites we explore. **See Expedition Leader bios** and traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

8 **A Small Group Ensures More Meaningful Encounters** Machu Picchu offers one of the world's most captivating travel experiences. But it's also a world-renowned destination, and trying to navigate the site in a big group with multitudes of tourists jostling for photos and competing to hear the guide, your visit to this World Heritage Site can lose its magic. Our groups are limited to just 12 guests, allowing for in-depth exploration and greater access to places that larger groups can't go.

9 **Our Quality-Value Guarantee Ensures Your Outstanding Machu Picchu Photo Expedition** With Natural Habitat Adventures, you receive our exclusive guarantee that clearly states that we will meet the high expectations we set forth in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company. **Read our important promise.**

10 **Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey** We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

11 **Natural Habitat Adventures is WWF's Travel Partner**
Because of our commitment to environmentally friendly travel, as well as the exceptional quality of our small-group nature adventures, World Wildlife Fund, the world's leading environmental conservation organization, has named Natural Habitat Adventures its worldwide travel partner—a designation that makes us exceedingly proud!



Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From $

Group Size:
Limited to 10 Travelers

Machu Picchu & Sacred Valley Photo Expedition Dates, Pricing & Info

A Photographer's Journey into the Ancient Wonders of the Inca Civilization

2027 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Prices and dates not confirmed for 2027		
Aug 21, 2027	Aug 27, 2027	$7395 USD (+internal air)
Oct 2, 2027	Oct 8, 2027	$7395 USD (+internal air)
Nov 27, 2027	Dec 3, 2027	$7395 USD (+internal air)

Pricing

See https://nathab.com/south-america/machu-picchu-photo-expedition/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

- **Trip price includes:** Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s), round-trip train from Ollantaytambo to Aguas Calientes, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through lunch on final day, some gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

- **Internal air fees includes:** The internal air fee includes round-trip flights from Lima to Cusco, and if you are connecting with the Galapagos it also includes a flight to or from Lima.

Not Included

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, dinner on Day 1, alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees (if any), optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry and internet, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

Important Information About This Trip

Our Machu Picchu adventure differs from the way most others experience this site in that we have a top Peruvian Expedition Leader at the helm from the time you arrive in Cusco to the time you depart. Traveling with a highly experienced local specialist is the only way to get the most out of the region's rich nature, culture and history in the integrated way it deserves.

At certain times of the year, two of our scheduled Galapagos trips may end on the same day and will have concurrent dates for their respective Machu Picchu extensions. Should this occur, we will combine all Natural Habitat travelers booked on the two extensions together onto one trip. This enables us to use one vehicle and Expedition Leader, thus reducing our environmental footprint.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least $250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

Getting There & Getting Home

This trip begins and ends in Lima, Peru. **You may arrive in Lima at any time on Day 1.**

If your itinerary follows our Galapagos adventure aboard the *Petrel* or *Tip Top,* you will return to Quito for an overnight before flying to Lima on Day 1. You will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel, joining the entire group the next morning, Day 2, to transfer to Cusco.

If your itinerary precedes our Great Amazon River Expedition, you will return to Lima around 5 pm on Day 7 for an included overnight.

You may depart Lima any time after 8 pm on the final day.

Our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk can best assist with your travel reservations, as our staff is familiar with the specific requirements of this program and can help arrange the most efficient itinerary. Please call us at 800-543-8917. While we offer the best available rates to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may occasionally find special web rates or lower fares online.

Extension Details:

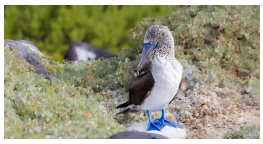
Galapagos Wildlife Photo Expedition
$19995

Galapagos Discovery: The Nat Hab Experience
$8100

The Great Amazon River Expedition
$9495

Machu Picchu & Sacred Valley Photo Expedition Extensions

A Photographer's Journey into the Ancient Wonders of the Inca Civilization



Galapagos Wildlife Photo Expedition

The ultimate Galapagos photography adventure! Capture amazing wildlife close-ups as we explore 15 diverse islands in 17 days—plus an overnight among wild giant tortoises at our private Tortoise Camp.
$19995 (+air/park fee)

Galapagos Discovery: The Nat Hab Experience

Small-group adventures aboard your choice of private yachts, led by our outstanding naturalist guides and photography pros. Snorkel and swim with sea lions, sea turtles and penguins on this incomparable nature odyssey.
$8100 (+air/park fees)

The Great Amazon River Expedition

Encounter rainforest wildlife from monkeys to macaws as our deluxe riverboat follows more than 400 miles of the Peruvian Amazon and its main tributaries to explore the river's remote headwaters.
$9495 (+air)

Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together
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WWF's membership travel program is operated by Natural Habitat Adventures (Nat Hab). To date, Nat Hab has provided more than $6 million in support of WWF's mission and will continue to give 1% of gross sales plus $175,000 annually through 2028. WWF® and ©1986 Panda Symbol are owned by WWF. All rights reserved.