Inca Trail 3-Day Acclimatization Plan

Sleep low first, then go up · Cusco, the Sacred Valley and the Classic Inca Trail

TERRA QUECHUA PERU
Real Adventure Awaits...
TREKKING · BIKING & JUNGLE SPECIALIST

≈3,400 m
Cusco, 11,150 ft: arriving here is usually the hardest moment

≈500 m lower
the Sacred Valley (Urubamba, Ollantaytambo)

4,215 m
Dead Woman's Pass, for a short time only on day 2

2–3 days
to acclimatize before the trek

The plan

Day 1 ☐
Land in Cusco, sleep in the Sacred Valley
Go straight down to Urubamba or Ollantaytambo. Rest, eat light, drink water, no alcohol.

Day 2 ☐
Easy day in the Sacred Valley
Visit Pisac, Moray or Ollantaytambo at a gentle pace and sleep there again.

Day 3 ☐
Move up to Cusco
Sleep in Cusco, walk the city slowly; trek briefing at our office at 6:00 p.m.

Day 4 ☐
Start the trek
On the Classic route the first night (Wayllabamba, ≈3,000 m) is lower than Cusco.

Fewer days? Keep at least two nights at altitude before the trek.

Where you sleep, night by night (Classic route)



Approximate altitudes from our route profiles; campsites are assigned with each permit and can vary slightly. The 2-day Inca Trail never goes above 2,720 m.

What the CDC says

- **Cusco is a known risk:** flying straight in is common, and without gradual acclimatization altitude illness can approach 50%.
- **Sleep lower first:** 1–2 nights below the airport's altitude, then go up; it may avoid the need for medication.
- **Go up gradually:** above 3,000 m, raise your sleeping altitude by no more than 500 m a night.
- **No alcohol** for the first 48 hours at altitude.
- **Medication:** acetazolamide is a prescription medicine; ask your doctor whether it suits you.

CDC Yellow Book, altitude illness (page updated April 2025), as summarized in our guide.

Symptoms

Acute mountain sickness: headache, usually with loss of appetite, dizziness, fatigue, nausea or vomiting, 2–12 hours after arriving or climbing higher.

Act now: confusion, drowsiness or unsteady walking; or cough, chest congestion and severe breathlessness at rest. Tell your guide immediately, never go higher with symptoms, and descend if they get worse. Going down 300 m or more usually brings quick relief.

On the trail

- Go slow on day 2: about 1,200 m of climbing to the pass.
- Drink and eat: filtered boiled water from lunch on day 1.
- Tell your guide early; we carry emergency oxygen.
- Travel insurance with evacuation cover is required.

Coca tea is a comforting local custom, not a substitute for gradual ascent or your doctor's advice.

General information, not medical advice. Talk to a travel-medicine doctor before your trip.

→ Altitude sickness on the Inca Trail
terraquechuaperu.com/blog/inca-trail-altitude-sickness/

→ Sacred Valley guide
terraquechuaperu.com/blog/sacred-valley-peru-guide/

→ Machu Picchu and Cusco elevation
terraquechuaperu.com/blog/machu-picchu-elevation/

Terra Quechua Peru · WhatsApp +51 932 213 973 · reservation@terraquechuaperu.com · Calle Garcilaso 210, Of. 204, Cusco