

12-Week Inca Trail Training Plan

Classic Inca Trail, 4 days · built on the trail's real numbers · Terra Quechua Peru



+1,215 m

(3,990 ft) of climbing on day 2, up to Dead Woman's Pass, 4,215 m (13,828 ft)

–1,400 m

(4,590 ft) of descent on day 3, mostly on Inca stairs

Your goal

5–6 h with 1,000–1,200 m of climbing, and hike again the next day

YOUR 12 WEEKS · TICK EACH SESSION

Week	Weekdays	Weekend hike	Daypack	Done
1	3 brisk walks × 30 min (one on hills) · 2 strength × 20 min	1.5 h, 150–300 m (500–1,000 ft)	Empty	□□□□
2	3 × 35 min · 2 strength	2 h, 300 m (1,000 ft)	2 kg (4 lb)	□□□□
3	3 × 40 min, one on stairs · 2 strength	2.5 h, 400 m (1,300 ft)	3 kg (7 lb)	□□□□
4 · easier	3 easy × 30 min · 1 strength	2 h, easy terrain	3 kg (7 lb)	□□□□
5	3 × 45 min, one with 20 min of stairs · 2 strength	3 h, 500 m (1,650 ft)	4 kg (9 lb)	□□□□
6	3 × 45 min, 25 min of stairs up and down · 2 strength	3.5 h, 600 m (2,000 ft)	4 kg (9 lb)	□□□□
7	3 × 50 min, 30 min of stairs · 2 strength	Sat 3.5 h + Sun 2 h (first back-to-back)	5 kg (11 lb)	□□□□
8 · easier	3 easy × 40 min · 1 strength	2.5 h	4 kg (9 lb)	□□□□
9	3 × 50 min, 35 min of stairs · 2 strength	Sat 4–5 h, 800 m (2,600 ft) + Sun 2–3 h	5 kg (11 lb)	□□□□
10	3 × 55 min, 40 min of stairs · 2 strength	Sat 5–6 h, 1,000 m (3,300 ft) + Sun 3 h with long descents	5–6 kg (11–13 lb)	□□□□
11 · peak	3 × 50 min · 1 strength	Sat 5–6 h, 1,000–1,200 m (3,300–4,000 ft) + Sun 4 h, mostly downhill	5–6 kg, full kit	□□□□
12 · taper	2–3 easy walks × 30–40 min	1.5 h easy, or travel to Cusco	Light	□□□□

Weekday sessions: brisk uphill walking, stairs, an inclined treadmill, cycling or swimming. Why 5–6 kg? On our Classic trek porters carry up to 5 kg of your things; you carry a daypack with about 2 L of water (2 kg), rain gear, a warm layer and snacks. On the 2-day route there are no porters: train with your real pack.

STRENGTH · 20 MIN, TWICE A WEEK

- Step-ups on a stair or bench
- Reverse lunges
- Slow step-downs: lower the heel in 3 seconds
- Calf raises
- Glute bridges
- Plank, 30–45 seconds

2 rounds of 10–12 reps. Add weight in a backpack when they feel easy.

TRAIN THE DESCENT

- From week 6, walk down stairs too: elevator up, stairs down
- Choose weekend routes with long descents
- Train with poles (rubber tips are required on the Inca Trail)

IF YOU LIVE SOMEWHERE FLAT

- Treadmill at 15% and 3 km/h (1.9 mph) ≈ 450 m (1,480 ft) of climbing per hour
- Day 2's climb ≈ 400 floors at about 3 m (10 ft) each
- Parking garages, office and stadium stairs
- One test weekend in real hills, weeks 9–11

BENCHMARKS · END OF WEEK 11

- ☐ 5–6 h with 1,000 m+ of climbing and 5–6 kg, still able to talk
- ☐ 3–4 h the next day, with descents, no knee pain
- ☐ Boots, socks, pack, poles and water tested on 3+ long hikes

GEAR TEST CHECKLIST

- ☐ Boots broken in, no blisters
- ☐ Hiking socks (the pairs you will take)
- ☐ Daypack adjusted, with rain cover
- ☐ Poles with rubber tips
- ☐ 2 L water bottles or bladder
- ☐ Rain jacket and warm layer
- ☐ Headlamp

BEFORE YOU GO

- Fitness does not prevent altitude sickness (CDC): arrive in Cusco 2–3 days before the trek
- Start from at least 150 min of activity a week + 2 strength days
- See your doctor first if you have heart, lung or joint conditions

Only 6 weeks? Do weeks 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10, then taper. **2-day Inca Trail?** One 6–7 h day with about 650 m (2,130 ft) of climbing, carrying your own pack: weeks 1–8 plus the taper are enough for most people.