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Trip Notes

MOONSTONE TREK

Trip Code: TPM
 Country: Peru
 Amended: April 2011
 Edition No: TF 2 2011
 Validity: 01 Jan 2011 - 31 Dec 2012

ADULT GROUP



HIGHLIGHTS

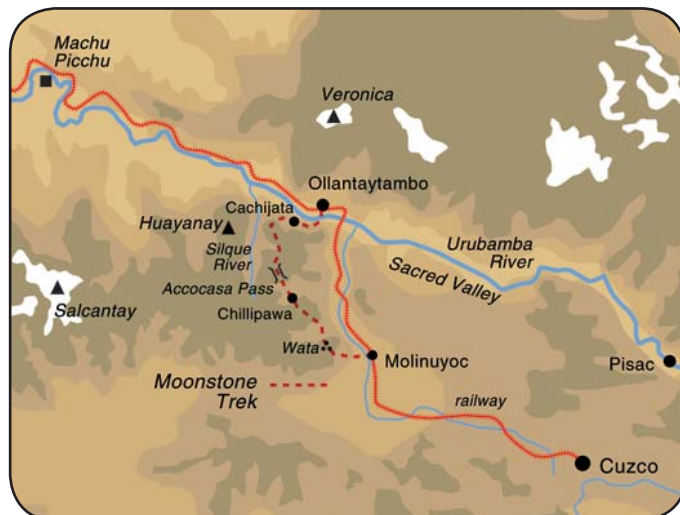
- Unexplored ruins both Inca and Pre-Inca
- Seldom walked trails and few other tourists (if any!)
- Beautiful mountain vistas
- Hanging glaciers and rugged summits

SUMMARY

The information on these trip notes is also contained on our website at page: www.exodus.co.uk/feature/moonstone-trek-option

With Inca Trail permits running out earlier than ever and 500 people starting the trail most days during peak season, we are delighted to be able to offer a fantastic alternative trek that can be substituted into most of our Inca Trail trips. This is an isolated route with unexplored ruins, discovery at every turn and great mountain views - an excellent introduction to high Andean trekking.

The trek starts in a quiet, rural valley between Cuzco and the Sacred Valley and finishes in Ollantaytambo, only seven miles upstream from the start of the Inca Trail. It passes through seldom-visited Andean villages, Inca and pre-Inca ruins and heads onto a beautiful altiplano plateau surrounded by glaciated peaks. Most groups won't encounter any other tourists for the entire trek and the combination of stunning mountain scenery and wildlife, fascinating relics and real isolation is truly rewarding.



IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

There are 4 days walking with full portage, at a maximum altitude of 4600m, average 3600m. A little higher and tougher than the Inca Trail, this trek is remote and on some fairly rough paths, some sections of which present mild exposure. Anyone of reasonable fitness and with prior walking experience should find no real difficulties, except for a satisfying challenge in ascending the high-pass (about 800m of ascent to about 4600m). No prior experience of trekking at altitude is required.

HOW DO I BOOK IT?

Simply book onto any of our guaranteed Walking & Trekking departures that do the standard Inca Trail and put a note on your booking that you want the Moonstone Trek. One of our sales team will then be in contact to confirm your choice of route. If you are in any doubt, please call our sales team on 0845 863 9600.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The trek can be chosen at time of booking at no extra cost on any of our Walking & Trekking trips that do the standard Inca Trail route. The trip must be guaranteed and we require a minimum of two clients to do the Moonstone Trek to run it at no extra cost. If just one person books the trek, we can still organise it, but a supplement of £600 on top of the main trip cost will apply. Special



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permits are not required and so this route can be booked after Inca Trail permits have run out.

If chosen, it completely replaces the first three nights of the Inca Trail trek and clients will receive a separate pre-trek briefing in Cuzco. All trekkers will leave Cuzco at roughly the same time in the morning to drive to their respective start points. The Moonstone Trek finishes in Ollantaytambo, from where those walking the route take the train down to Aguas Calientes - the village below Machu Picchu and meet with the rest of the group. Those walking the Inca Trail will have walked down from the Sun Gate that day and won't have explored the ruins. The next morning, the whole group heads up to the citadel for a guided dawn tour. There should be ample time to walk up the Sun Gate to get that classic view or explore the cloud forest around Machu Picchu.

The trek uses horses rather than human porters and so does not have the weight limit imposed by porters on the Inca Trail. It is also a little tougher than the standard Inca Trail, as it goes higher and covers slightly more distance and so is graded "C" or "challenging". The altitude chart below shows the altitudes for the trek.

For those choosing the Moonstone Trek, the itinerary below replaces those days in the trip when the group walks the standard Inca Trail. For the Inca Trail & Amazon Rainforest (code TPJ) and Classic Peru (TPR), these are Days 7-10 of the full itinerary; for The Inca Trail (TPT), these are Days 4-7 (or days 3-6 of the land-only itinerary); and for Inca Trail, Titicaca & Nazca (TPD) these are Days 6-9.



LAND ONLY ITINERARY

The entries in bold at the end of each day indicate the meals included (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner).

Day 1 An early start as it's a very busy first day! We take a private minibus to the trailhead, stopping first to explore the nearby ruins from which the trek takes its name. This is a large site with several distinct Inca remnants, clearly of religious importance. As with the rest of the trek, we are most likely to have the site completely to ourselves. The Moonstone itself is a large carving on an enormous boulder, and its significance is not yet understood.

The trailhead is in a quiet, dusty valley and we soon climb high enough from the floor to enjoy some great views. At around lunchtime we stop to explore the imposing pre-Inca fortress of Wata that straddles the trail. The ruin has not yet been accurately dated and pottery can often still be found lying on the ground. The path then traverses along a green side valley as we make our way above a few tiny villages before entering the village of Chillipawa, where we camp.

Day 2 A long, steady climb with plenty of rest stops to aid acclimatisation takes us above the villages and into the high pampas - rugged meadows of long grass. We normally stop for lunch shortly before the crest of the Accoccosa Pass (and the very rare Andean Flicker is sometimes seen (although often heard!). The last leg of the pass is on loose red scree, but the view from the top makes it



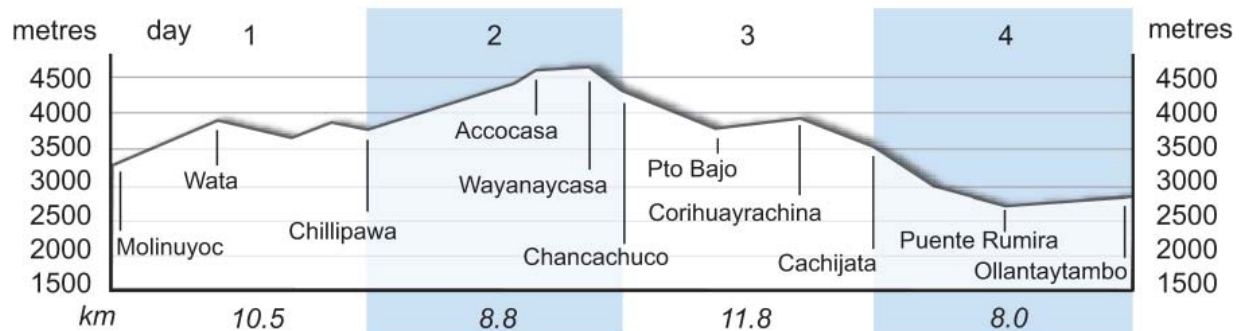
all worthwhile: a broad, hidden valley surrounded by snowy peaks - the Huayanay Range on the left, the Urubamba Range straight ahead and beautiful, triangular Mt Veronica (5,800m) to the right. We have time to explore this plateau and experience walking in the high altiplano before returning to our camp for a well-deserved hot dinner. The camp's isolation, well away from any settlements, results in spectacular night skies when clear.

Day 3 We start after breakfast by following the stream from down this hidden valley into a narrow canyon. Rare polylepis trees grow here and we pass through a small grove as we leave the canyon. Our path then turns North and traverses very high above a deep and steep valley separating us from the Huayanay Mountains. This is probably the most spectacular section of the trek and we roughly follow a (now defunct) Inca aqueduct spectacularly carved out of the cliffs to take water from the hidden valley of our campsite to the Sacred Valley several miles away. At the end of the traverse we have a short but steep climb up to our lunch spot, a flat, ridge-top meadow facing straight across the Sacred Valley to the snowy Urubamba Range.

After lunch we walk down to Huayrapunku. Meaning "Gate of the Wind", this is a ridge-top Inca shrine oriented to Mt Veronica, of which it has a simply incredible view. Finally a short walk brings us to our final campsite in amongst the granite stones of the Canchiquata Quarry. It was here that huge blocks were cut from the rose-coloured granite before being dragged down the mountainside and across the river to the Sun Temple at Ollantaytambo.

Day 4 Photographers are advised to wake up before dawn this morning, to watch the sun rise over the Sacred Valley from our campsite high above it. The sun's first rays catching the glaciers of Mt Veronica certainly makes the effort more than worthwhile. This is our last day on the trek and we descend from the pampas down into the lush valley floor along the enormous stone ramps on which the Incas dragged the stones. We cross the river and explore the huge Sun Temple complex to see where the stones ended and what use they were put to. Our trek ends as we board the train to Aguas Calientes, where we join the rest of the group at the campsite a short walk out of town and in the cloud forest.

ALTITUDE PROFILE



This chart gives an approximate description of our normal route. Variations are possible due to weather and other conditions

HOW TO BOOK YOUR TRIP

1. **Check availability** Go online to check availability, or contact us by phone or email.

2. **Secure your place** You can provisionally hold a place on this trip, usually for between three and seven days.

3. **Complete your booking and payment** When you're ready to book, go to www.exodus.co.uk for online booking, book over the phone or you can complete a booking form (available online or on request by calling us). We accept all major credit and debit cards, or you can pay by cheque.

Book with confidence: Exodus is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2582 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and we are members of the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO) and ABTA - The Travel Association. This means you can book your Exodus holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected.

