

Ancient Engineers of Peru: Chimu-Moche-Nazca-Inca

Journey into a sacred land and discover our links with the past. In all great civilizations engineers have worked at providing a safer environment for their inhabitants. From providing water to designing transport to constructing buildings, they help define how a culture perceives itself. Join us in a tour that celebrates the achievements of those engineers who participated in developing some of the greatest civilizations of the world.

Day 1: Arrive in Lima, the capital city of Peru and transfer to hotel.

Day 2: This morning you will be at leisure. This afternoon a half day City tour & Pachacamac. This tour includes points of interest such as the Main Square (Plaza Mayor) founded in 1535; by Francisco Pizarro, conqueror of Peru, Government Palace, City Hall, the Cathedral and the House of El Oidor. During the tour, you will see other colonial architectural jewels, such as Torre Tagle palace a beautiful mansion dating back to the 18th century. South of town, see Pachacamac an important pre Incan ceremonial centre. (B)

Day 3: Today you will begin your tour of some of the ancient coastal cities of Peru, north of Lima. Transfer to the airport to embark on a journey to the Chimu and Moche ruins around Trujillo.

Flourishing around 100-800 AD, the Moche empire is noted for its metallurgy, fine ceramics, large pyramids and intensive irrigation. In the same region, the Chimu empire prospered from around 1000 AD to the time of their conquerors, the Incas (~1470 AD). Ruling a kingdom 1000-km along the coastline, their imperial city, Chan Chán is the largest city of adobe in the world. Enclosing 28 sq. km, the royal city contains walk-in groundwater wells, irrigation complexes and agricultural storerooms.

Although the city of Chan Chán is comprised of nine complexes, many of the buildings are washed down from weathering and rains caused by El Niño, because most of the city was constructed of adobe. You will be able to tour the Tschudi complex, which highlights many of the Chimu styles. An afternoon tour will take you to the Moche "pyramids of the sun and moon" (Huacas del Sol y de la Luna). 700 years older than Chan Chán, the pyramid of the sun is the largest pre-Columbian building in Peru. You will have the opportunity to see the Moche Ascope aqueduct and the La Cumbre canal, which is still in use today. (BL)

Day 4: Full day tour from Trujillo to Chiclayo to visit the Archaeological Complex of Sipán and the Royal Tombs Museum (B,L,D)

Day 5: This morning fly to Lima then drive to Nazca. On route, you will see the most common features of the Peruvian environment - the garua, which is a coastal mist formed by the upwelling caused by the Humboldt Current. As well, the desert, which covers 1/3 of Peru, is present for much of the drive. You will also be able to see the impact of the Andean rivers on the coast. At these locations the desert becomes an oasis and it is in these regions that the early cultures flourished. (B,L,D)

The Paraca -Nazca culture began around 200 BC. Their most famous achievement is the construction of the Nazca lines. Different theories, ranging from extraterrestrial space vehicle landing strips to aquifer locators, abound as to why the lines were constructed. While the reason for their construction remains a mystery, their present existence gives testimony to the Nazca's advanced ability to visualize perspective

Day 6: pick up from your hotel to visit Chauchilla, an impressive cemetery in the midst of the desert with thousands of tombs pillaged by "huaqueros" (grave-diggers). Skeletons, skulls, pieces of textiles, braided hair, fragments of ceramics, etc. have been left scattered over an area of several kilometers. There is also a small temple and ancient stone carvings in the nearby area. Then, visit the Cantalloc Aqueducts. Built from 300 to 600 AD, the aqueducts were designed to provide a year round water source for the area. The aqueducts conduct water from the mountain springs down to Nazca by means of underground canals. These canals, 36 in total, are S-shaped to allow the water to travel slower during periods of heavy rain. Some of the Cantalloc Aqueducts are still used by farmers in the area. Visit the Inca ruins of Paredones and return to your hotel.

Day 7: During the morning, transfer to the small airport and overflight of the Nasca Lines. Lasting about thirty minutes, you will be able to see the geometric patterns formed by a culture hundreds of years ago. Then you will be transferred back to Lima by coach for the night. (B)

Day 8: An early morning flight will take you to the sacred city of the Incas - Cuzco. A leisurely day in town, where you can buy souvenirs and adjust to the high elevation. (B)

Day 9: Today will be the day for exploring ruins with a visit to the Koricancha or Temple of the Sun as well as the Cathedral from the early 17th century, a fine example of colonial baroque art. Continue the excursion with the visit to the nearby ruins of Tambomachay with their water fountains; Kenko, the religious center; Puca-Pucara,

the red fortress, and finally the fortress of Sacsaywaman. The site was used for both religious and military purposes and was the base used by the Incas, when they rebelled against the Spanish conquistadors.

After a violent battle, the Spanish regained control of the fortress, leaving the bodies of the dead Incas to the condors. To this day the city of Cuzco has incorporated condors in its coat of arms. It has been speculated that the Incas designed Cuzco to resemble a puma when seen from the air, with Sacsaywamán forming the head. Some of this resemblance can be seen from ground level, where large zigzag walls are said to constitute the puma's teeth. On this site there is a large tank-like structure containing stone conduits, said to provide water for up to 5,000 soldiers.

Day 10: Full day tour to the Sacred Valley of the Incas to visit the Indian Market of Pisac in the morning and Ollantaytambo fortress in the afternoon. This is where the defeated Incan leader, Manco Inca, retreated to after his defeat at Saqsaywamán.

It was here that the Spanish suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of Manco Inca, who strategically used the steep terracing and channels for flooding out the Spanish at the base of the site. The victory was short-lived though, when the Spanish returned in force to flush out the Incan warriors.

This site, including the village at its base, exemplifies the best of Incan engineering. The town has extensive overland drainage control, including open channels designed for drainage to deal with the torrential downpours, and as a source of local drinking water. The courtyards by the houses show how the water during the rainy season was channeled into elaborate fountains. The "fortress" exemplifies the terracing and stonemasonry for which the Incas were famous. Although many stones weigh between kilograms, the finishing is so fine that a piece of paper can not be slipped into the joints. Also visible is the comparative architecture of the Spanish, which was constructed on top of and adjacent to the Incan structures. (B,L)

Day 11: Full day tour to visit Chinchero, Maras and Moray. Famous for its salt mines exploited from Inca times until today Maras is a fascinating visit due to the wonderful show of hundreds of salt ponds. Moray is located 9 Km away from Maras and has elliptical irrigation terraces. It was an Inca agricultural experimental center. (BL)

Day 12: Today you will embark on one of the most exciting journeys in the world - the train to Machu Picchu. Not known to exist by the Spaniards, Hiram Bingham brought Machu Picchu to world attention in 1911, when he was searching for the last Incan stronghold of Vilacamba. The purpose of the site is still unknown, although there are many theories. One of these theories held that the site was used to house women for religious purposes, and was based on the fact that over 80% of the burial sites uncovered here contain the skeletons of women. An on-site guide will provide a preliminary tour, then you may explore until closing. On site you will be able to see the ceremonial baths, the pillar used for calculating the solstice, and a stone model presumed used by the original designers of Machu Picchu. (B)

Day 13: Today will be your return trip to Cuzco by train with time to revisit Machu Picchu on your own if you wish (the second day entrance fee is not included). (B)

Day 14: Transfer and flight back to Lima and onward flight home.

Notes to Travellers

Many of the sites in Peru are only accessible by foot and often the paths are uneven and poorly maintained. Because of this and the high elevations, it is not recommended for people with disabilities or who have difficulty walking.

Many of the buildings we visit may require repairs from time to time. Due to the uncertainty of the repair schedule or weather, some buildings or sites may be closed for the duration of your trip. While every effort is taken to provide the tour as organized, should alterations be required, Worldwide Ecolodges reserves the right to substitute tours.

Because of the extreme heights of Cuzco and Machu Picchu, we recommend non-strenuous sightseeing for the first day here. Difficulty breathing, headaches, nausea and coughing are all symptoms of altitude sickness. We recommend all travelers on this tour see their local travel health authority prior to their journey, for advice on treating or abating this condition.

Price includes : hotels, meals as noted, taxes, local transportation, specialist group leader throughout, local guides and tours. The price does not include airfares for internal or international flights.