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INCA TRAIL PACKING TIPS & LIST



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INCA TRAIL — PACKING TIPS —

"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks."

- John Muir

INTRODUCTION

Winding its way through stunning cloud forests and ancient ruins, the Inca Trail is one of the world's greatest walks.

Weaving through the Peruvian Andes, the Inca Trail takes in remarkable views, historical tales and cultural connections; but the Inca Trail is far more than merely a fun multi-day hike.

One portion of a vast 14,500-mile (23,000km) network of pathways that interconnected the Incan empire, the Inca Trail was a passage of pilgrimage to the mountaintop citadel of Machu Picchu. Other more simple thoroughfares allowed building materials, produce and other items grown and made in the Sacred Valley and Cusco to be brought to the city.

Its religious and ceremonial use focused on honoring the mountains and landmarks along the way, and today it is clear to see why the pathway follows this specific course. Perfectly framing key peaks, the path captures spectacular views, several marked by ruins along the way.

Learn how to best prepare and pack for an Inca Trail adventure and learn more about this walk of a lifetime before taking your first step.

QUICK FACTS:

- The Inca Trail rises to as much as 14,000 feet (4,215m) above sea level
- This makes altitude acclimatization essential
- Though the network of paths extends much further, the Classic Inca Trail is 26 miles (43km) long
- Challenging terrain & altitude make it necessary to take about four days to complete the trail
- The Inca Trail forms part of the longer & more challenging Salkantay Trail, which requires a further 3-4 days to complete
- Llamas are often seen along the way. While friendly & mostly harmless, they can be inquisitive & opportunistic, so securing your tent at night is essential

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TIPS ON CLOTHING

YOUR LUGGAGE

Porters will carry most of your luggage required for the trek. Other items brought to Peru though not necessary on the Inca Trail will be stored at your accommodation or forwarded to your next destination, as arranged in advance. Porters will carry a 30-liter pack weighing up to 20 pounds (9kg) per person.

We recommend that you carry a small day pack. This will provide you access to any items you may need throughout the day, including water and snacks, sunscreen, camera and so on, and it is advised to keep valuables, such as your passport and wallet, in here too.

YOUR CLOTHING

Your clothing should be adaptable, with enough items to last you the journey plus one extra day. Layering is essential, with temperatures averaging 45°F (7°C) overnight to 65°F (18°C) during the day, year-round. When you are walking with a pack on your back on a bright and sunny day, this can feel a lot warmer, and you may wish to just wear a t-shirt, but as soon as you stop, you will cool down and require another layer.

Even through the drier season (May–Oct), showers can occur, so lightweight but reliable rain gear is vital.

BASE LAYER

- The foundation layer worn next to the skin.
- Keeps the skin dry by wicking away moisture.
- Ideally it should be lightweight & dry quickly.
- Avoid cotton which clings to the skin when wet, doesn't insulate & takes longer to dry.

MID LAYER

- The warmth or insulation layer/s. It keeps the warm air in & the cold air out.
- Can be multiple items, depending on the temperature & conditions.
- Common examples include fleece, down or synthetic insulation.
- Fleece is good for quick drying & breathable warmth whereas down is extremely effective in colder temperatures & great for low intensity activity or keeping warm in camp at night.

OUTER LAYER

- Provides protection from the wind, rain & snow.
- It should be both windproof & waterproof but also breathable to allow your base & mid layer to wick the moisture & heat away from your body.



ADVICE ON FOOTWEAR

ABOUT YOUR FOOTWEAR

Footwear is, without a doubt, the most personal and important choice when it comes to trekking. Your jacket, a bit loose or a bit tight, for the most part it will still do its job. Your shoes however, too small and they could steal your toenails, too big and they will cause you irritating blisters. Your boots are the most important piece of kit in one's outdoor arsenal and should not be underestimated.

So how do we choose the right shoes for the Inca Trail? It can be a daunting experience even for proficient hikers, but after reading this section on choosing your footwear, hopefully you will be better armed when entering the footwear arena.

YOUR FEET

Your feet are unique to you for a number of reasons and therefore a notoriously difficult subject to advise on. The type of arch you have, the length of your toes, the width of your foot and even any past injuries you have sustained all have a huge impact when walking.

The gold standard of advice on all matters to do with feet would obviously come from a podiatrist and if you are serious about hiking we would strongly suggest an appointment with one as your feet can easily affect the rest of your body if not looked after correctly.

It is worth mentioning that different makes of shoes will fit different types of feet better. For example, one brand or style will suit a wider foot whereas another will better suit a narrower foot.

SIZE

Over the course of a long hike your feet WILL swell. This is especially true when hiking in hot conditions. Shoes that feel nice and snug in the store, will most probably feel tight and uncomfortable after a few long days on the trail.

Many sales people will recommend a gap of one finger between your heel and the back of the shoe. This is a personal preference but you can even go up to two fingers. It is easier to wear another thin pair of socks until your feet swell than to have boots that are too tight. Tight boots also cause your toes to hit the front of the boots during the descent, which after time may lead to losing a toenail.

If possible, try the shoes on with the same socks you will be wearing on the hike. Before purchasing, walk up and down stairs, run around the store and wiggle your toes vigorously. If there is any tightness whatsoever, the shoes are too small. Most decent stores will have an area where you can simulate walking up and down hills. Some stores will also let you take the shoes home and walk around inside as much as you want to make sure the fit is correct, which is worth considering. Remember, your feet WILL swell.



FOOTWEAR OPTIONS

GENERAL ADVICE

1. Go to a reputable store with knowledgeable and experienced staff able to advise on footwear.
2. Tell the shop attendant where you plan to use your boots and ask for his advice.
3. Your boots should have ankle support. Mountains are an extremely easy place to roll or even break an ankle. Not something you want to do on day one, especially when it could have been so easily avoided.
4. Don't rush to buy your boots. Your boots are a big investment, if you don't feel completely happy with them then try a different pair.

OPTIONS

It is said that each pound (0.45kg) on your feet equates to at least five pounds (2.3kg) on your back. That shouldn't mean however that you sacrifice other important qualities in order to save a few grams on your feet. In our minds there are only two choices of mountain boots. That being said, we see a lot of people on the mountain with a third option, which works fine almost all of the time. However, if the weather closes in, the temperature drops and the rain clouds break, it will be the extremities of the body that are hit first.

BREAK THEM IN!

No matter what your choice in footwear, go for at least a few hikes before embarking on a multi-day trek. Your feet will need time to adapt. This especially holds true if you purchase boots, which may require weeks of regular wear before they feel completely comfortable. Blisters are much easier to deal with in new boots after a single day's trekking. When you have another four days to hike, blisters can be much more bothersome!

B2 Alpine Boots

- Designed specifically for the mountain environment
- Weight: 2.2lbs (1kg) & up
- Stiffened mid-sole
- Higher ankle profile
- Thicker upper with the facility to attach crampons
- Great for someone who climbs mountains regularly & ventures above the snow line
- Expensive as more technical than other options

Heavyweight Boots

- Usually all-leather
- Weight - 3.3 lbs (1.5 kg). Considerably more if water gets inside after days of walking through mud & rivers
- Generally, require a longer break-in period
- The most durable, waterproof & warmest of all trekking footwear
- Can be expensive

Lightweight Boots

- Generally weigh between 2.2 lbs (1kg) & 3.3 lbs (1.5 kg)
- Most popular footwear for backpackers
- Often made from a fusion of synthetic materials, suede & occasionally split-grain leather
- Require very little break-in time
- Comfier, more breathable, & quicker-drying than their heavier equivalents. Less so than trail runners & running shoes
- Most high-end models come with a waterproof-breathable lining. These usually work well when the shoe is new, but lose their effectiveness after repeated wear
- Not as durable as heavier, leather models, but more durable than trail runners



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INCA TRAIL INCLUSIONS

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

Inca Trail options vary significantly. There are budget and premium guided tours, assisted hikes and independent solo treks available, but for our clients we highly recommend a higher level of service for your convenience, practicality, service and enjoyment.

This allows you to focus more on enjoying the scenery, hearing the tales of the trail from your guide, and immersing in the magnificence and history of this profound experience.

Much of your equipment will be provided. Any necessities you will need to bring are outlined in the packing list on the following page. Food and cooking equipment, for example, is all provided, and a chef accompanies you the entire way, providing meals and snacks throughout the day.

Camp staff will provide filtered drinking water throughout your journey.

Camping equipment is provided by your tour operator. Four-berth three-season tents are provided for every two guests, providing greater comfort and extra storage space for packs and equipment. These are highly maintained to provide both cleanliness and performance.

All-season sleeping bags are also provided, each supplied with its own liner. Sleeping bags and liners are scrupulously cleaned after every expedition. These are rated to 0°f (-18°c), so will keep you warm even on the coldest of nights.

EQUIPMENT PROVIDED:

- One four-person tent for every two guests
- One inflatable sleeping pad per person
- One sleeping bag per person, plus liner
- One pillow per person
- Dining tent, tables & chairs
- Separate kitchen tent
- Toilet tent with biodegradable facilities
- Cooking equipment
- All meals - dietary requirements catered to
- One textile snack bag per person, preventing plastic usage
- Biodegradable personal hand soap
- All filtered boiled water, plus warm water for washing every morning & evening
- Complete first aid kit, including emergency oxygen

STAFF

- One English-speaking guide
- Up to 12 porters per group
- One chef

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COMPLETE PACKING LIST

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#	ITEM	QTY	✓
1.	Backpack - 30 liters (up to 20lb / 9kg) with waterproof cover	1	
2.	Smaller day pack for essential items (sunscreen, water, passport, camera etc)	1	
3.	Fleece or similar warm jacket	1	
4.	Lightweight hiking pants	2	
5.	Base layer shirts - t-shirts are okay, but long-sleeve thermal shirts are preferable	3-4	
6.	Waterproof jacket with hood	1	
7.	Waterproof pants	1	
8.	Thermal pants & shirt for sleeping	1	
9.	Hiking footwear. Waterproof trekking boots recommended	1 pair	
10.	Sandals or trainers for comfort in camp	1 pair	
11.	Hiking socks	4 pairs	
12.	Wide brimmed hat or cap	1	
13.	Gloves for early morning & overnight	1	
14.	Headlamp & spare batteries	1	
15.	Sunglasses	1	
16.	Stainless steel water bottle 0.25 gallons (1 litre). Plastic not permitted	1	
17.	Sunscreen > factor 25, preferably 40+	1	
18.	After-sun or hydration cream	1	
19.	Insect repellent	1	
20.	Small towel	1	
21.	Toilet paper / tissues - enough for four days	-	
22.	Snacks (energy/granola bars, dried fruit, chocolate etc). Some snacks are provided.	-	
23.	Swimwear for Aguas Calientes hot springs	1	
24.	Personal medication	-	
25.	Insurance details (reference number & telephone number)	1	
26.	Emergency contact number	1	
27.	Cash in Peruvian soles or USD (approx. \$100 or Peruvian equivalent per person - see Notes & Tips)	-	
28.	Passport, kept on your person	1	
	OPTIONAL		
29.	Camera & batteries (batteries deteriorate quickly in colder climates)	1	
30.	Walking poles (optional. Rubber tips are obligatory to protect the trail)	2	
31.	Water sterilization tablets. Drinking water is provided, but you may also wish to refill from streams	-	

ESSENTIAL ITEMS NOTES & TIPS

#	ITEM	NOTES	TIPS
1.	<p>Thermal Hat</p> 	<p>A fleece or woolen beanie is ideal for the cooler temperatures in the evenings & will be invaluable in the event of cold weather.</p>	<p>A beanie should be a snug fit with minimal loose ends. Make sure the hat is from a reputable company as many of the “designer” brands will not be windproof and lose their thermal properties if they become damp.</p>
2.	<p>Wide-Brimmed / Sun Hat</p> 	<p>A sun hat should be worn & provide ample coverage for the face. A full-brimmed hat is good for added shade & increased sun protection. Additionally, a neck scarf should also be considered to protect the back of the neck.</p>	<p>Too much exposure to direct sunlight, especially at altitude, can lead to sun stroke & be very uncomfortable during your climb. Sun block is essential too, but a hat will provide the best protection from the sun.</p>
3.	<p>Sunglasses</p> 	<p>Your sun glasses should have 100% UVA & UVB protection & should reduce glare as well as visible light. The frames should be lightweight with a wrap-around design for enhanced grip staying power. Additionally, side shields are recommended to block peripheral light.</p>	<p>Polarized lenses are recommended as they help to reduce glare from the sun reflected off solid surfaces. At altitude this glare is greatly increased & by neutralizing the glare polarized lenses will help you see objects more clearly. Polarized lenses also help reduce the harmful effects of UV light.</p>
4.	<p>Scarf or Buff®</p> 	<p>A scarf or Buff® is essential to protect your neck from the elements and, in extreme weather, your face as well. During warmer climates a scarf can also be useful for protecting the back of your neck from the sun.</p>	<p>The type of scarf you take is down to your personal preference but it should be able to cover the face completely & stay in place during cold conditions. Our recommendation is to bring a warm weather Buff® as they pack up small, are lightweight & keep their thermal properties when wet.</p>
5.	<p>Headlamp</p> 	<p>Headlamps are incredibly useful after the sun goes down. Look for ones that have multiple lighting levels, LED bulbs & use AAA batteries.</p>	<p>We recommend bringing two sets of batteries for your headlamp as the cold will affect the lifespan of your batteries considerably. Petzl® & Black Diamond® make several models of small & efficient head lamps.</p>
6.	<p>Waterproof Jacket</p> 	<p>Your waterproof jacket is your outer water-repellent layer used for when it rains & as a possible extra thermal layer if required. Your jacket should not be insulated to keep the weight in your daysack down & should be used in conjunction with thermal layers beneath the jacket for full effect. The jacket should be Gore-Tex® or something similar but must be windproof as well as waterproof & breathable.</p>	<p>We recommend the waterproof jacket should have a hood to keep your head warm & dry. When used in conjunction with a hat it should keep your face covered from the elements. Your waterproof jacket must be able to fit comfortably over the top of all your other layers. If your thermal layers are compressed, they will lose their thermal properties.</p>

ESSENTIAL ITEMS
NOTES & TIPS










7.	<p>Light Fleece</p> 	<p>A lightweight fleece should be used as a mid-layer over your base layer during colder temperatures. It can be used as an outer layer when feeling cold & it is not raining.</p>	<p>A heavier base layer made of wool or Capilene material to be worn at high camps for extreme cold conditions. A Patagonia Wool 3 or 4 or Capilene 3 or 4 are recommended.</p>
8.	<p>Shirts</p> 	<p>Your trekking shirt acts as your non-thermal base layer. The shirt should be moisture wicking, lightweight, & designed for multi-day hikes. Shirts should be made of synthetic material and not cotton.</p>	
9.	<p>Thermal Gloves</p> 	<p>Fleece gloves are essential. Look for gloves that are Polartec® 200 weight with a reinforced palm. For more protection wind-proofing is available and will add an extra layer of warmth.</p>	
11.	<p>Thermal Base Layer: Top</p> 	<p>This will be your base layer for colder mornings & evenings. The material should be lightweight, tight fitting, moisture wicking, & comfortable.</p>	<p>Thermal base layers are good to sleep in at night due to their comfort & they are usually the cleanest items in your pack.</p>
12.	<p>Thermal Base Layer: Pants</p> 	<p>This will be your base layer for colder mornings & evenings. The material should be lightweight, tight fitting, moisture wicking, & comfortable.</p>	<p>Thermal base layers are good to sleep in at night due to their comfort & they are usually the cleanest items in your pack.</p>







ESSENTIAL ITEMS NOTES & TIPS

13.	<p>Lightweight Trousers</p> 	<p>These are your everyday trousers, which will go over your thermal base layer during colder sections. They should be of a lightweight, quick-drying nylon material. Some come with UPF & mosquito protection. Ladies might like to swap a pair of lightweight trousers for trail specific (or thick yoga) pants.</p>	<p>The trend these days is to have tight trousers; this is not the best idea when looking for hiking trousers. Good hiking trousers should give you freedom of movement & the versatility to perform in a range of environments.</p>
14.	<p>Waterproof Pants</p> 	<p>The waterproof shell for your legs. Should be waterproof, windproof & breathable.</p>	<p>Make sure your waterproof trousers fit comfortably OVER your thermal base layer AND lightweight trousers.</p>
15.	<p>Hiking Socks</p> 	<p>These socks are for trekking in the warmest part of the day since they are made of a CoolMax® fabric. 16 CoolMax® wicks moisture, dries quickly & breathes well, keeping your feet dry & preventing blisters.</p>	<p>Tip: Pack your socks into a dry bag with some foot powder. That way if the powder leaks it only leaks on to your socks, it's where it's meant to be!</p>
19.	<p>Hiking Boots</p> 	<p>Boots should have high ankle support with a solid Vibram® or equivalent sole. Gore Tex® or other waterproofing is recommended to have for wet days as well as added insulation. Be sure to break your boots in at least FOUR WEEKS prior to departure.</p>	<p>Bring a spare set of laces...just in case! See section on footwear for further information.</p>
20.	<p>Trainers</p> 	<p>For use in the evening to give your feet a rest from your boots. Any trainers will do as they are not needed for walking but remember it could be muddy in the campsite & it could be quite cold.</p>	<p>If it weren't for the cooler temperatures at night we would recommend flip flops.</p>
21.	<p>Walking Poles</p> 	<p>Collapsible poles are great for steep downhill terrain & assistance up hill. If you have knee problems, they reduce the impact on your joints by 20-30%. It is essential that walking poles have a rubber tip to protect the trail.</p>	<p>A nice soft foam grip will help prevent blisters & the ones with an aluminum shaft are durable & lightweight.</p>

ESSENTIAL ITEMS NOTES & TIPS

22.	<p>Water Bottle</p> 	<p>A 1-liter water bottle is essential for hydrating at lunch, around the camp, & topping up your water intake throughout the day. Stay away from glass & heavy metals & look for lexan® for durability.</p>	<p>A spare Nalgene water bottle can also be used at night as a hot water bottle for a bit of extra warmth in your sleeping bag.</p>
23.	<p>Sunscreen</p> 	<p>30 SPF or higher is recommended as well as waterproof & sweatproof. Sunscreen should protect against UVA and UVB</p>	<p>Typically, guides carry one with 45+ SPF for faces and a 30 SPF for other exposed areas. A natural sun cream is better for your skin & will also help to protect the environment if you rinse your hands or face in streams.</p>
24.	<p>Travel Towel</p> 	<p>The camp towel should be of a polyester nylon blend that dries quickly & compacts tightly in your pack. A large (50 x 27 inches / 125 x 70cm) is a good size & can be used to wash up at the end of the day. Avoid house or beach towels as these will stay damp and start to smell quickly.</p>	
28.	<p>Medication</p> 	<p>Any specific medication you need to take should be kept in your daysack or on your person at all times. Make sure your guide is aware of the medication you are taking so that in the unlikely event that something does go wrong they can pass it on to the medical team.</p>	
29.	<p>Emergency Contact</p> 	<p>Your guide should already have your insurance details but you should always keep the details either in your daysack or on your person as well.</p>	
30.	<p>Emergency Contact</p> 	<p>Again, your guide will already have these details but it would also be prudent to have your emergency contact details with you at all times.</p>	
	<p>Cash</p> 	<p>Tipping in cash is required for all staff escorting you. Tipping amounts are as follows: Trek Staff – US\$45.00 for porters & \$60.00 for cooks per trek. This amount covers all members of your traveling party, not per guest. Guides – US\$7.00 – \$10.00 per day, per guest. eg: a 4-day trek would be \$40 per guest for the guide alone. For a party of 4, this would be \$70 per person approx. It is important to note that the head guide will usually offer to collect the money for all staff the night before the last morning as the porters and cook will not be accompanying you to Machu Picchu. Porters will deliver luggage to your hotel. Small bills are recommended in order for tips to be distributed more easily.</p>	

<p>1.</p>	<p>Hydration Pack / CamelBak</p> 	<p>Hydrators are ideal when hiking for several hours because they enable you to drink slowly & frequently. 2-3 liters is a good size & should fit easily into your pack. All Camelbaks® come with a bite valve, or on/off switch, as well as a large access port for filling.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>High Energy Bars</p> 	<p>While snacks are provided on the trail, it's always nice to have your favorite energy bar in your bag in case you feel peckish.</p>	<p>Protein/high energy bars are next to impossible to find in Peru so bring with you from your country of origin.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Wet Wipes</p> 	<p>Very useful addition to the kit bag!</p>	<p>Clients should be very careful when using these that they are not left on the mountain & are disposed of correctly. Opt for biodegradable bamboo wipes if available.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>First Aid Kit</p> 	<p>Your guide will of course have a first aid kit in his pack but it can be a good idea to have more suited medication to your individual needs.</p>	<p>If you are prone to getting blisters then bringing the type of plasters that work best for you is a good idea.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Poncho</p> 	<p>A poncho is also a good addition but NOT a replacement for waterproof jacket/ trousers. It is good for keeping the rain off your daysack as well.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Flavoring & Electrolytes</p> 	<p>Electrolytes are good for replacing salts lost through sweat but by no means essential, drinking water is perfectly sufficient.</p>	<p>Extra concentrate flavoring is available in most supermarkets these days. These are great as they take up a fifth of the space in your pack. Opting for flavorings that contain valuable electrolytes will help keep you hydrated. Alternate between electrolytes & normal water. Too much electrolytes can lead to loose bowels if not careful.</p>

9.	<p>Dry Bags</p> 	<p>You can never have too many dry bags! A 40-liter+ dry bag used as a bag liner is great for ensuring your personal items are safe in your daysack in case of rain. Cameras, wallets, money & any other valuables can be kept dry at all times.</p>	<p>A dry bag filled with soft clothes & wrapped inside a fleece makes a great pillow. The optimal choice would be to have a dry bag to line your daysack & everything else to have its own sack so that everything has a redundancy in case the first waterproofing layer fails.</p>
10.	<p>Pack Cover</p> 	<p>The pack cover is an additional item we recommend everyone carry in case we encounter heavy rains. The pack cover should have a drawstring cord & elastic edges to fit firmly over your bag. A 40-liter cover will work well on any day pack.</p>	<p>A pack cover is a less effective but much cheaper option to dry bags.</p>
11.	<p>Playing Cards</p> 	<p>During the long afternoons a pack of cards can be extremely useful. Waterproof playing cards will also prevent them from getting damaged by rain or water.</p>	
12.	<p>Earplugs</p> 	<p>If you are a light sleeper, we would recommend packing some earplugs. There is not much that can be done about the heavy snorers on the other side of the campsite unfortunately.</p>	
13.	<p>Pocket Knife</p> 	<p>A knife or a multi-tool is always a useful addition to any pack.</p>	
14.	<p>Sandwich Bags</p> 	<p>As previously stated, there is a strict "leave no trace" policy on the mountains. If you find yourself caught short on trail and need to go to the loo, a resealable sandwich bag or dog poo bag are perfect for collecting tissue paper so that they can be disposed of properly once in camp.</p>	