



Peru

Southern Peruvian Photo Adventure

Tour Leader: Brian Zwiebel

August 27 - September 7, 2027

Itinerary Overview:

Main Tour:

August 27: Arrival in Cusco

August 28: Sacred Valley

August 29: Transfer to Wayqecha with Photo Stops

August 30: Photography at Wayqecha and Transfer to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge

August 31 – September 1: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge

September 2: Transfer to Manu Biological Station

September 3-5: Manu Biological Station

September 6: Transfer to Cusco with Photo Stops

September 7: Departure from Cusco

Extension:

September 7: Transfer to Aguas Calientes

September 8: Machu Picchu and Transfer to Cusco

September 9: Departure from Cusco

Detailed Itinerary:

August 27: Arrival in Cusco

Welcome to Cusco! Your guide will be waiting for you at the airport for a transfer to the hotel. After check-in, there will be time to rest and adjust to the altitude (3,400 meters/ 11,152 feet above sea level).

Overnight: Hotel San Agustín Internacional

August 28: Sacred Valley

We'll start in the Sacred Valley of the Incas close to Cusco, where we will visit two beautiful gardens with feeders. Our morning will start early with a 1-hour drive to the Sacred Valley.

The first garden that we will visit is Santuario de Colibríes *Ensifera ensifera*, a beautiful garden run by a local family. The sanctuary is situated close to the town of Yanahuara and Urubamba at 3,000 meters/9,843 feet above sea level. This green garden with native plants, flowers, and fruits, is home to many interesting hummingbird species. One of them is the spectacular Sword-billed Hummingbird, after which the garden is named. Other hummingbirds that visit the feeders are Lesser Violetear, Shining Sunbeam, Violet-throated Starfrontlet, Great Sapphirewing, White-bellied Woodstar, Giant Hummingbird and the endemic White-tufted Sunbeam. The garden is also visited by other bird species such as the endemic Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch, Black-backed Grosbeak, Red-crested Cotinga, Crested Becard, and Black-throated Flowerpiercer, among others. There is a roofed building here where it is possible to photograph the birds under cover.

In the afternoon, we will visit the beautifully designed Sacred Garden, located among corn and potato

fields in a quiet area of the Sacred Valley, near the village of San Salvador. This bird observatory has many flowers, local plants, fruit trees, bird feeders, different terraces in Inca style, and wooden structures to photograph the birds during rain or sun. The garden is visited by different species of hummingbirds, like the endemic Bearded Mountaineer, Sparkling Violetear, Green-tailed and Black-tailed Trainbearers, Tyrian Metaltail, White-bellied Woodstar, White-bellied Hummingbird, the impressive Giant Hummingbird, and the near-endemic Green-and-white Hummingbird, among others.



Bearded Mountaineer

Other species that we can photograph here are the beautiful Black-backed Grosbeak, Golden-billed Saltator, Rusty Flowerpiercer, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, and the endemic Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch.

In the late afternoon, we'll return to Cusco.

Overnight: Hotel San Agustín Internacional

August 29: Transfer to Wayqecha with Photo Stops

The highlight of this photography tour is the famous Manu National Park. The park can be reached by car in about 3.5 hours heading northeast from Cusco. The drive to the park is spectacular with beautiful

views of high Andean plateaus with potato fields, deep valleys with rivers, and snow-capped mountain peaks to make the picture complete. The road passes through several Andean communities and cultural sites. In the small town of Paucartambo, colorfully dressed farmers sell freshly made bread, cheese, and fruits. Along the way, we will have chances to photograph some interesting Andean species, like Puna Ibis, Andean Flicker, and Mourning-Sierra Finch.

The Manu Road begins at the park entrance at the Acjanaco Pass (3,560 meters/11,680 feet above sea level), first passing through Puna grasslands and elfin forest, and then descends the slopes of the Andes through the cloud forest, eventually reaching the Amazon lowlands at just 150 meters/492.13 feet above sea level. The different altitudes and vegetation types along the road support their own specific bird species, which makes this route truly unique.



Tyrian Metaltail

In the upper part of the park, we will keep an eye out for beautiful species like White-collared Jay, Grass-green Tanager, Golden-collared Tanager, Hooded Mountain-Tanager, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager, Chestnut-bellied Mountain-Tanager, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Pearled Treerunner, Amethyst-throated Sunangel, and Tyrian Metaltail, among others.

Following the road down, we will reach the first lodge where we will spend the night in the Manu National Park, located at 3000 meter/9,843 feet above sea level in the Kosñipata Valley. This lodge is part of a research center called Wayqecha Cloud Forest Biological Station. The charming wooden individual cabins of the lodge are comfortable, with private bathrooms with hot water, electricity, and Wi-Fi. The views from the cabins over the surrounding valley are spectacular.

Several trails around the lodge wind through Puna grasslands and elfin forest, offering a great way to explore the area. The highlight is the canopy walkway, a high hanging bridge, which allows us to see the forest from a totally different perspective. More than 200 species of birds are listed in the area. In the gardens around the lodge, cabins, and dining area are hummingbird feeders that offer good chances to

photograph Amethyst-throated Sunangel, Tyrian Metaltail, Violet-throated Starfrontlet, White-bellied Woodstar, and also other birds like Hooded Mountain-Tanager, Masked Flowerpiercer, Black-faced Brushfinch, Andean Guan, and Great Thrush.

Overnight: Wayqecha Biological Station

August 30: Photography at Wayqecha and Transfer to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge

We will start the day with a visit to the feeding stations for Leymebamba Antpitta and two endemic antpittas: Urubamba Antpitta and Red-and-white Antpitta.

After the breakfast, we will continue our way down to the San Pedro area. The vegetation will turn greener, denser and higher as we are entering the cloud forest. This forest is incredibly rich in flora and fauna and is often covered in fog and clouds due to the constant moisture that is coming from the Amazon lowlands.

Along the way, we will keep an eye out for nice species such as Golden-headed Quetzal, Crested Quetzal, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Barred Fruiteater, Inca Jay, Black-streaked Puffbird, Blue-banded Toucanet, Chestnut-crested Cotinga, Orange-eared Tanager, Golden-naped Tanager, Saffron-crowned Tanager, and with a bit of luck even some mammals like a Woolly Monkey.

We will make a stop at the Manu Bird Sanctuary, where we will have the opportunity to photograph different species of hummingbirds at feeders, such as Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy Inca, Green-fronted Lancebill, White-bellied Woodstar, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Rufous-booted Raquet-tail, Speckled Hummingbird, and Fawn-breasted Brilliant.

Our next destination is the Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge, named after Peru's national bird, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock. The lodge is beautifully located in the cloud forest near a river at 1,600 meters/5,249 feet above sea level. The evergreen trees are covered with mosses, lichens, and bromeliads.

The individual wooden cabins of the lodge have comfortable beds with mosquito nets, private bathrooms with hot water, but no electricity. The cabins can be lit at night with solar lamps. There is Wi-Fi and electricity at night in the dining area, where phones, batteries, etc. can be charged. In the open dining area delicious, good quality meals are prepared by a professional cook.

From the dining room we have great views of the garden with hummingbird feeders and flowers that are visited by Wire-crested Thorntail, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Rufous-booted Racket-tail, Green Hermit, and sometimes the spectacular Buff-tailed Sicklebill. Large-headed Capuchins make regular visits to the garden, and sometimes even to the dining room to look for something tasty to grab. The window panels with mosquito, can be opened to photograph the birds in the garden.

Overnight: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge

August 31 – September 1: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge

During the next two days, we will enjoy photographing the beautiful surroundings of our lodge.

We will visit the beautiful garden of Don Victor and his family, Manu Tanager Garden. The Fernandez family is one of the few families that live along the Manu Road. Don Victor is working hard to create a beautiful garden with hummingbird and fruit feeders. The family's hard work is paying off, since many species have already found their way to the feeders, for example, Versicolored Barbet, Rusty-naped Tanager, Golden Tanager, Golden-eared Tanager, Golden-collard Honeycreeper, and hummingbirds including Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy Inca, and Rufous-booted Racket-tail.



Versicolored Barbet

We will also pay a visit to a lek of the colorful Andean Cock-of-the-Rock close to our lodge, where we can enjoy the males during their noisy, courting rituals to attract females. The lek is situated close to the road and has a roofed wooden terrace. We can also check the river near the lodge. It is regularly visited by the fantastic Torrent Duck, offering great photo opportunities.

Along the road near our lodge, we can photograph other mid-altitude montane species, such as Blue-banded Toucanet, Olive-backed Woodcreeper, Montane Woodcreeper, Montane Foliage-gleaner, and Crested Quetzal, to name just a few.

Overnight: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge

September 2: Transfer to Manu Biological Station

Very early in the morning, we will continue our journey down the Manu Road, descending into warmer climates. Along the way we can find species of the lowlands and secondary forest like Swallow, Turquoise, and Green-and-gold Tanagers, Blue-crowned Trogon, Bat Falcon, and Speckled Chachalaca,

among many others.

We will make a stop at the beautiful Manu Endemic Station, where great hummingbird species are visiting the feeders like White-browed, Green, and Great-billed Hermits, Pale-tailed Barbthroat, Wire-crested Thorntail, Gray-breasted Sabrewing, and sometimes Buff-tailed Sicklebill.

The garden of the Bambu Lodge is another place that we will visit today. We will have good opportunities to photograph various species of tanagers at the fruit feeders, such as Silver-beaked, Blue-necked, Turquoise, Green-and-gold, and Masked.

We will arrive late in the afternoon at our next accommodation, Manu Biological Station, previously known as Villa Carmen, located close to the town of Pillcopata in the Kosñipata Valley. The station, managed by Amazon Conservation Association, spans a transition zone between the Andes and the lowland Amazon, between 480 and 1200 meters/1,575 feet and 3,937 feet above sea level. It is considered a biodiversity hotspot within the buffer zone of Manu National Park and home to a huge variety of species of butterflies, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. More than 650 species of birds have been found in the area.

The lodge of the Manu Biological Station has beautiful wooden cabins with mosquito nets, private bathrooms with hot water, electricity, Wi-Fi, and stunning views of a small lake.

Overnight: Manu Biological Station

September 3-5: Manu Biological Station

During the next three days, we will explore the different trails around Manu Biological Station as well as the small lake, where we will have good chances for Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Blue-throated Piping-Guan, Purplish Jay, Red-capped Cardinal, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Ringed Woodpecker, and the fascinating Hoatzin. We can also do night walks to search for Spectacled Owl, Tawny-bellied Screech-owl, Black-banded Owl, Scissor-tailed and Silky-tailed Nightjars.

We will visit a beautiful private reserve run by local people, Mirador Pico de Hoz. The reserve consists of 6 reforested hectares, with several gardens with feeders, trails, and a small lake. We can photograph different hummingbird species at feeders like White-necked Jacobin, Sapphire-spangled Emerald, Pale-tailed Barbthroat, White-bearded Hermit, Great-billed Hermit, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Long-billed Starthroat, and the fantastic Butterfly Coquette. The owner Jonathan established a special relationship with an Amazonian Antpitta, as well as with an Undulated Tinamou, Goeldi's, White-browed, and White-lined Antbirds, and a Russet-crowned Crake that comes to his feeders during certain times of the year. This reserve is also the only place in Peru that is visited by the fantastic King Vulture. From a hide, we have great chances to photograph this beautiful vulture as well as other vultures like Greater Yellow-headed, Turkey, and Black.

We will also visit Inka Amazonia, another garden with feeders that is run by a local family. This garden



Butterfly Coquette

offers great chances to photograph different species of hummingbirds, like White-browed Hermit, Gould's Jewelfront, Black-throated Hermit, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Blue-fronted Lancebill, the endemic Koepcke's Hermit, and the tiny Rufous-crested Coquette. The fruit feeders are visited by Lemon-throated Barbet, Turquoise Tanager, Yellow-bellied Dacnis, Masked Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, and Speckled Chachalaca. There is a beautiful, big roofed wooden terrace, with chairs and tables, from where we can photograph the birds at the feeders.

Overnight: Manu Biological Station

September 6: Transfer to Cusco with Photo Stops

We leave our lodge early and we will make several photo stops along the road back to Cusco. We have new opportunities for Paradise Tanager, Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Golden-headed Quetzal, Crested Quetzal, White-eared Solitaire, Barred Fruiteater, Hooded Mountain-tanager, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager, and many more.

Overnight: Hotel San Agustín Internacional

September 7: Departure from Cusco

Our driver will pick you up from your hotel to transfer you to Cusco's Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport.

Extension:

September 7: Transfer to Aguas Calientes

Today we will transfer to the old Inca town of Ollantaytambo, located in the Sacred Valley. From there, we will take a train to the town closest to Machu Picchu, Aguas Calientes. The train follows the Willkamayu–Urubamba River and offers spectacular views of mountains, high plateaus, and lush cloud forest.

After arriving in Aguas Calientes, we will go to the hotel for check-in. The afternoon is free to explore this charming town, with its many souvenir shops and restaurants. You may choose to relax in the hot springs or take a stroll along the river, where the beautiful Torrent Duck and Fasciated Tiger-Heron are often seen.

Overnight: Inti Pinku Hotel

September 8: Machu Picchu and Transfer to Cusco

In the morning, we will take a bus to the citadel of Machu Picchu. The impressive ruins became known to the scientific world in 1911, when the American archaeologist Hiram Bingham was led to the site by locals. Dramatically situated on a mountaintop high above the Urubamba River, Machu Picchu is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The story of Machu Picchu is quite remarkable because its function remains unclear. Contemporary archeologists believe that Machu Picchu was constructed as a sacred place and country resort for the most important Inca emperor Pachacuti (1438–1472). There were never more than 750 people living at Machu Picchu and far fewer people during the rainy season. The Inca started building Machu Picchu around 1430 AD in the classical Inca style, with polished dry-stone walls. Its main buildings are the Intihuatana, the Temple of the Sun, and the Room of the Three Windows. The citadel was a well-hidden and well protected place. Located far up the mountains covered in clouds, visitors had to travel a long way to reach it, through valleys with many Inca check points and watch towers. Machu Picchu had been abandoned by the time the Spanish conquered the Inca Empire between 1532 and 1572. Remarkably, the site was never discovered or plundered by the Spanish conquistadors.

Our visit to Machu Picchu will last approximately three hours. At noon, we will return by bus to the town of Aguas Calientes, where we will board the train back to Ollantaytambo. Upon arrival, our driver will be waiting to transfer us back to Cusco.

Overnight: Hotel San Agustín Internacional

September 9: Departure from Cusco

Our driver will pick you up from your hotel to transfer you to Cusco's Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport.

Trip Details:

Cost:

Main Tour:

Price per person (double occupancy), from Cusco, Peru: \$6,799

Single Supplement: \$600

Minimum Participants: 4

Maximum Participants: 6

Main Tour:

Price per person (double occupancy), from Cusco, Peru: \$1,399

Single Supplement: \$100

Minimum Participants: 4

Maximum Participants: 6

Price Includes:

Expert Guide

Ground Transportation in Peru

All Lodging

All Meals

Park Entrance Fees

Price Does Not Include:

Airfare to and from Cusco, Peru

Visa and Passport Fees (if applicable)

Alcoholic Beverages

Personal Items

Travel Insurance

Tips

Deposit:

A deposit of \$500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (May 29, 2027).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact us at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

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