



# High-Altitude Acclimatization Guide for Peru

You're headed to the Andes! We will be at higher altitudes than you are likely accustomed to. To help you enjoy your adventure to the fullest, here's how to acclimate safely and feel your best.

## **Why Acclimatization Matters**

As we travel through the Andes, we'll be at elevations higher than what most of us are used to. At high altitude, oxygen levels are lower, and it takes time for the body to adjust. Without proper acclimatization, some travelers may experience altitude sickness — symptoms can include headache, nausea, shortness of breath, fatigue, or trouble sleeping.

Most of the time, these symptoms are mild and manageable with rest, hydration, and a gradual approach to activity. That said, altitude sickness can affect your comfort, energy, and ability to hike — and in rarer cases, it can become more serious. Giving your body the time and care it needs to adjust is key to having the best possible experience.

## **Our Plan to Help You Acclimate**

Day 1-3: Stay in the Sacred Valley and sleep in Ollantaytambo (9,160 ft)

We go straight from the Cusco airport to the lower elevation of the Sacred Valley. This gives your body a gentler first step into altitude.

Day 4: Hike the Inca Trail (our section will start at around 7,200 ft and go up to around 9,000 ft)  
By this point, you'll have had 3 nights to acclimate before we begin hiking.

Day 6-8: Cusco (11,152 ft)

You should be well acclimated by then. If you go to Palcoyo Rainbow Mountain, you will go up to 16,078 ft and climb 650 feet over around 1.5 hours. If you are taking Diamox, you would continue to take it until you leave Cusco.

## What You Can Do to Help Your Body Adjust

- **Take it easier the first couple of days:** Light walking is great, but avoid strenuous activity.
- **Hydrate well:** Drink more water than usual. Dehydration makes altitude symptoms worse.
- **Avoid alcohol** (especially the first 24-48 hours): It can interfere with your body's adaptation and worsen symptoms.
- **Eat healthy meals:** Your digestion slows at higher altitudes - whole foods, soups, fruits, and small portions are ideal early on. Best to avoid heavy animal fats the first few days.
- **Consider altitude medication:** Ask your doctor if acetazolamide (Diamox) is appropriate for you. It helps many people adjust faster. It is usually started two days before you enter the Cusco airport but should be taken and prescribed by your own physician. Some people may experience side effects including mild tingling in fingers or toes, increased urination, and altered taste of carbonated beverages.
- **Coca tea or coca leaves:** Coca tea is a traditional Andean remedy that can relieve mild altitude-related symptoms and is served at many places we will visit.

### \*\*\*Important Note About Coca Tea:

They do not cause a "drug-like" high but can have mild stimulant effects. The leaves contain small amounts of coca alkaloids (called benzoylecgonine), which can trigger a false positive test result for cocaine on workplace urine drug tests for up to 48 hours later.

### Disclaimer:

This guide is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. Always consult your personal healthcare provider before making any decisions about medications, supplements, or significant activity at high altitudes.