



Best of South America

Worldwide Tour | 16 Days | Moderate

Lima – Sacred Valley - Cusco – Puno – Lake Titicaca – La Paz

Buenos Aires – Iguacu - Rio de Janeiro

Experience the best bits of South America on an incredible adventure that encompasses Incas, Iguacu and all that's in between finishing with a bang in the spirited city of Rio de Janeiro

- Stand in the midst of spectacular Machu Picchu
- Hear the Road of Iguacu Falls
- Feel Rio's laidback vibes
- Cruise the fascinating Lake Titicaca
- Discover dynamic Buenos Aires
- Explore breath-taking La Paz

Best of South America tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- Touring with guides and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort
- Porterage
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping (USD198 per person), early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Worldwide Tours:

With these worldwide tours you can expect exactly the same Wendy Wu Tours experience. You'll get to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Ecuador and Peru on an excellent value group tour, whilst also getting to travel with like-minded people. This tour includes all meals, so you'll get to taste a range of delicious local foods at handpicked local restaurants or at your hotel. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort and local guides throughout, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

'Best of South America' is a **moderate** tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

Moderate Tours:

- There will be time spent at altitude – Cusco, where you will stay is at 3,399 metres, Puno at 3,810 metres, Lake Titicaca at 3,812 metres and La Paz, the highest point on your tour, at 4,000 metres.
- You will be required, at Lake Titicaca and the Parana Delta, to climb on and off boats without assistance and spend an extended amount of time on boats in open water.
- There will be several days of sightseeing on foot for a period of time and in some cases for an extended period of time.
- There will be periods when you will need to climb a number of steps

Of course, our National Escort will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Itinerary – Best of South America

Day 1: Arrival to Lima

Fly to Peru's historical capital, Lima. On your arrival, you will be welcomed at the airport by your Wendy Wu Tours guide and transferred to your hotel. The transfer time is approx. 50 minutes. Depending on your time of arrival, the rest of your day is yours to start soaking up the local culture.

Destination Information

Lima – Sit overlooking the Pacific in Peru's central region, Lima is a huge city of 10 million people. It was founded by conquistador Francisco Pizarro in 1535 and became the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, and remained capital after the War of Independence gave Peruvians their freedom. The historic centre of the city is beautiful, and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988.

Day 2: Lima – Cusco – Sacred Valley

This morning, enjoy a city tour of Lima, starting in the charming colonial centre with visits to the Plaza des Armas to admire the cathedral, Archbishop's Palace and City Hall. Explore the San Francisco Monastery, including the catacombs, before heading into the more modern part of the city. Head to the districts of San Isidro and Miraflores, finishing at 'Parque de los Enamorados', where there are great ocean views.

This afternoon, fly from Lima to Cusco, a 1 hour 10-minute flight. On arrival, there will be a one hour and 20-minutes transfer to your hotel at the Sacred Valley.

Destination Information

Sacred Valley – Tucked under the tawny skirts of formidable foothills, the beautiful Río Urubamba Valley, known as El Valle Sagrado (The Sacred Valley), is about 15km north of Cuzco as the condor flies, via a narrow road of hairpin turns. Long the home of attractive colonial towns and isolated weaving villages, in recent years it has become a destination in its own right. Star attractions are the markets and the lofty Inca citadels of Pisac and Ollantaytambo, but the valley is also packed with other Inca sites.

Plaza de Armas – The point where the city was born in the 16th century, the Plaza de Armas is surrounded by some of Lima's most magnificent (though not original) architecture – the Government Palace, Cathedral, Archbishop's Palace of Lima, Municipal Palace and the Palace of the Union.

San Francisco Monastery – The monastery complex, complete with church, monastery, library and catacombs, was completed in 1774 and is a prime example of Spanish Baroque architecture. Keep an eye out for Moorish designs in the central and two side naves of the church vaults.

Day 3: Sacred Valley

The Sacred Valley, also the Urubamba Valley, is home to colonial towns, Incan citadels and beautiful scenery. Transfer an hour out of Cusco to the charming town of Pisac, where you'll visit the excellent market to both mingle with the locals and to browse the plentiful Peruvian handicrafts. In the unlikely event that this day of touring is scheduled on a day that the market does not run, you will be taken to a suitable alternative market. This afternoon, meet a typical Inca community at Ollantaytambo, a one hour 15-minute transfer. Above the town is an old Incan fortress, whilst there is also an area of wonderfully preserved houses, both of which you can explore. Travel approximately 40 minutes back to your hotel. Today's sightseeing is about 6 hours in total.



Destination Information

Pisac – Situated on the Willkanuta River, Pisac is a colonial village famous for its Incan ruins and its three times weekly market. The market takes up the Plaza de Armas and surrounding streets with stalls selling ceramic, jewellery and textiles.

Ollantaytambo – Ollantaytambo was once the royal estate of the Emperor Pachacutec and is the starting point for the famous Inca Trail. The Incan ruins here are huge, whilst the town itself is a prime example of an Incan city – it is still laid out as it was when it was built by Pachacutec in the 13th century.

Day 4: Sacred Valley – Machu Picchu – Cusco

Transfer 45 minutes to Ollantaytambo to board the train that will take you through the mountainous landscapes to the small town of Aguas Calientes in 1 hour 30 minutes. From here you will ascend to the Incan citadel of Machu Picchu by shuttle bus, which takes about 30 minutes along winding roads. Stumbled upon by Hiram Bingham in 1911 after it had been long abandoned, it is considered by many to be a wonder of the world. A guided tour will give you some insight into the Inca Empire. This includes three hours of sightseeing, walking on uneven terrain. Return to Ollantaytambo by train and transfer to your hotel in Cusco (1 hour and 30 minutes trip by bus).



Destination Information

Machu Picchu – One of the world's great archaeological discoveries, Machu Picchu sits on a mountain ridge 2,430 metres above the Sacred Valley. Built around 1450, it was abandoned about 100 years later, and left 'undiscovered' (the local people knew of it) until 1911 when it was brought to international attention. A classic example of Incan style, there are three main structures – the Temple of the Sun, the Inti Watana and the Room of Three Windows.

Day 5: Cusco

Home to an incredible Incan legacy, Cusco has some of the richest heritage in South America and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The tour will include visits to the Plaza de Armas, once the heart of the Incan capital of Huacaypata; and Qoricancha, the temple of the sun. Stroll down the Inca street of Loreto and marvel at the old Inca walls. Head just out of town to the ruins of Sacsayhuaman, from where you can get fantastic views back over the city. Today will involve about 4 hours on foot moving at a comfortable pace.



The rest of your day is at leisure.

Destination Information

Plaza de Armas – The present day Plaza de Armas was called Huacaypata and it was the heart of the Incan capital, and is still the heart of the city today. The plaza is surrounded by colonial arcades, whilst the colonial cathedral and a number of other ornate churches stand imposingly around the edges. It is a vibrant and fascinating place to spend some time.

Qoricancha – Once one of Cusco's, and the whole Incan Empire's, most important temple, Qoricancha walls were once covered in sheets of solid gold. Although the temple was demolished to make way for a colonial church, the Incan foundations remain and incorporates original Incan stonework.

Sacsayhuaman – Just north of Cusco, on top of a steep hill, some sections of the citadel of Sacsayhuaman date from around 1100, whilst others are 13th century. The complex stone walls are fascinating – huge boulders were carefully cut out and fitted tightly together without the use of mortar.

Day 6: Cusco - Puno

Leave Cusco and head across the Peruvian Altiplano, passing Andean peaks and crossing La Raya Pass, 4,335 metres above sea level, to reach the town of Puno on Lake Titicaca. Travel time today will be approx. 6 hours. There will be a stop at Pucara on route to Puno, where you will enjoy a tour of Pucara's famous pottery as well as the 'Museo Litico de Pucara' (Pucara Stone Museum). There will also be a tour of the town, including a visit to the Andahuaylillas church, considered the 'Sistine Chapel of the Americas' because of the quality of its artwork found inside.

You will also have a stop at the ruins of Racchi. The Racchi Ruins are the best, and to some extent, the only surviving ruins that have adobe walls still sitting on a base of Inca rock walls. Touring and travel today will be approx. 11 hours.

Destination Information

Puno - is a beautiful and charming town located on the banks of Lake Titicaca. The town is home to beautiful Andean architecture which spreads down from the sides of the hill to the banks of Lake Titicaca.

Day 7: Puno – Lake Titicaca

Depart Puno and take an overland journey of approx. two hours and 30 minutes to the town of Copacabana, located just across the border in Bolivia. You will disembark your coach, cross over the bridge by foot and re-board your bus on the Bolivian side after you have passed through border control. Your guide/National Escort will assist with all aspects of the border control.

Once in Copacabana, start your touring with a visit to the shrine of the Virgen de Copacabana, the patron saint of Bolivia. Next board a hydrofoil cruise to Moon Island on Lake Titicaca where you will visit the Sun Virgins Temple, known locally as “Iñak Uyu”. Next, continue by hydrofoil to Sun Island. Here, visit the Inca “Grand Stairs” and the Sacred Fountain where if you taste the water, it is said you will have eternal youth and happiness. Next visit a small handicraft market on Sun Island. Return to your hydrofoil cruise to Huatajata where you will visit an Andean Roots Eco Village where you will meet some local Bolivians and see vicunas, llamas and alpacas.

This evening visit the Native Observatory Alajpacha where you will have a talk from an indigenous Aymaras Cosmologist who will talk about the constellations of the southern hemisphere.

Destination Information

Lake Titicaca – The largest lake in South America it is surrounded by a slow pace of life where crops are still harvested by hand and vast plateaus stretch for miles.

Day 8: Lake Titicaca – La Paz

Depart this morning for La Paz. Your first stop will be at El Alto where you will take a cable car to La Paz City. Here, you will enjoy magnificent panoramic views over La Paz from Killi Killi Lookout point. You will next continue by road to Moon Valley, an area of tall clay spires, formed by erosions of the mountains in the area.

This afternoon, enjoy a city tour of La Paz. Visit a handicraft market before visiting the mystical Witch Doctors market. Next, view the San Francisco church from the exterior and enjoy a walk through the Main Square, which houses the metropolitan cathedral, Parliament and the Presidential Palace. This evening, watch a traditional “peña” show to glimpse Bolivian folklore, dance and performance art, all in traditional dress. Travel today will be approx. two hours 30 minutes and touring at Moon Valley and in La Paz will be around four hours.

Destination Information

La Paz – Resting at an altitude of 3,660 metres, La Paz is one of the highest cities in the world. It is therefore important to take time to acclimatize. La Paz is one of the fastest growing cities in Latin America. The tradition is rich and lively markets are ever-present with some of the finest alpaca knitwear to be found.

Day 9: La Paz – Buenos Aires

Early this morning, transfer approx. 40 minutes to the airport in El Alto for your international flight to Buenos Aires. There are no direct flights from La Paz to Buenos Aires so you will travel via a third destination.

Destination Information

Buenos Aires – The Paris of South America, Buenos Aires is a romantic and lively city. The culture of the city is extremely diverse and the asado (barbecue) restaurants are second to none. Most importantly of all, Buenos Aires is the home of Tango and performers can be seen dancing in restaurants, bars or even on the streets.

Day 10: Buenos Aires

Start touring today at 9 de Julio Avenue, the widest avenue in the world, where you will pass the Colon Theatre, one of the world's best known opera and a centre of culture in the city. Next, drive down May Avenue (Avenida de Mayo) into May Square (Plaza de Mayo) which is surrounded by the Casa Rosada (Government House), the Metropolitan Cathedral and the first City Hall built during Spanish rule, the Cabildo. Visit inside the Metropolitan Cathedral, an example of neo-classicism. Located inside, you will visit the Mausoleum of General San Martin, the National Hero of Argentina. Next, visit San Telmo, a historical neighbourhood and oldest district in the city. You will have some time here to stroll through the many antique shops.

Next visit La Boca, where you will visit Caminito, a little walkway with some of the most beautifully colourful buildings. You may also see locals dancing Tango in the streets. Next visit Palermo which is known for its beautiful green spaces. End your tour with a visit to Buenos Aires' most affluent area, Recoleta, where you will visit the Recoleta Cemetery. The mausoleums and pantheons here reflect the architectural diversity of the city and during your 30 minute visit here, you will visit the grave of Eva Peron (Evita).

This evening, take part in the Argentine Experience with a night of creating your own empanadas, eating the world's best steak and learning Argentinian gestures and the etiquette of Mate tea.

Day 11: Buenos Aires

A town situated in Greater Buenos Aires, Tigre sits on the Parana Delta, an area of rivers and streams packed with marinas, Belle Époque mansions and rowing clubs. Spend some time travelling through the channels and see the sights on a boat excursion which will last approx. one hour. This evening you will enjoy one of the famous Tango Houses for dinner and a Tango show – a must in Buenos Aires.

Destination Information

Tigre – A popular weekend destination from Buenos Aires, Tigre sits on the banks of the Parana Delta and most activities here are water-based. The surrounding waters have a dark tint due to the iron deposits washed down from the jungle.

Day 12: Buenos Aires - Iguacu

Transfer approx. 40 minutes to the airport for your flight to Foz do Iguacu which is around one hour 40 minutes. On arrival, transfer from the airport to your hotel on the Brazilian side of the Iguacu Falls. After check in, enjoy an afternoon tour of the Iguacu Falls on the Argentinian Side. Your first stop will be at the Visitor Centre before making your way to the Superior Circuit which sits at the top of the waterfalls. You will then enjoy a walk along the Inferior Circuit which give you a different perspective from the bottom of the Falls. You will next take the Ecological Jungle Train which takes you to the most impressive observation point – the Devil's Throat. This evening, dine on delicious barbecue, a traditional Brazilian meal.

Destination Information

Iguaçu Falls – The incredible Iguazu Falls spans the border of Argentina and Brazil and features hundreds of rushing cascades, set in a lush rainforest scene. The region has been declared a world heritage site and received the status of one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature in 2011.

Day 13: Iguacu

Today you will visit the Brazilian side of the Iguacu Falls. You will walk along the paths and catwalks that will take you very close to the waters and the bottom of the Devil's Throat. Take a lift up to the top of the Falls where you will re-join your coach.

Day 14: Iguacu – Rio de Janeiro

Depart Foz do Iguacu and transfer to the airport for your two-hour flight to Rio de Janeiro. On arrival, transfer approx. 30 minutes to your hotel, located ideally close to Copacabana Beach.

Day 15: Rio de Janeiro

Leave the hotel for Cosme Velho Station. Board the cog train that ascends the Corcovado Mountain, on the peak of which Christ the Redeemer watches over the city, passing through the lush vegetation of the Tijuca Forest. Emerging from the top terminus, you'll find Rio laid out at your feet, with views over the city proper to the beaches and beyond to the islands that dot the bay. Descending by train, the tour concludes with a visit to some of Rio's beautiful beaches.

The cog train through the Tijuca Forest and up the Corcovado Mountain takes 20 minutes. You will also need to take an escalator or steps up to the Christ the Redeemer Statue. Overall touring will last approximately 6 hours today.

There will also be an optional tour to Sugar Loaf Mountain this evening (paid locally).

Optional Excursion: Sugar Loaf Mountain (4 hours)

Your tour starts on 1ª de Março Avenue, the first commercial street built in the 18th century. Visit the Paço Imperial Palace, Banco do Brasil Cultural Centre and the Candelaria Church. Proceed to Presidente Vargas Avenue, the second most important street in downtown, built to create access from the suburbs to the commercial centre of the Capital in the early nineties, passing through the popular market and Tiradentes Square. You will see the Metropolitan Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro, Rio's aqueduct, Santo Antonio Church, BNDES and Petrobras buildings reaching Lapa, the most popular nightlife point in Rio. Admire a panoramic view of the Teatro Municipal, the National Library and the City Council building – all of them inspired in the European 18th century style. Afterwards, drive through the Flamengo Park from where you have the chance to see highlight of this tour, Sugar Loaf. This famous mountain is reached by cable car at 1,200 feet high, an experience you will never forget. Discover the most spectacular views of Rio from the mountain. If you choose to participate in this excursion, lunch today will be served in a barbecue restaurant. Otherwise, lunch will be provided at your hotel.

Day 16: Rio de Janeiro

Transfer 30 minutes to Rio de Janeiro airport and fly to the UK, arriving home the following day.

Best of South America Travel Information

Visas

UK passport holders currently do not require a visa to enter either Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance.

Eating in South America

South American cuisine is some of the most eclectic in the world, and each country has its own regional specialties worth sampling. If you've got the stomach and curiosity, make your way to vibrant food markets, which sell everything from fresh produce and exotic fruits to hearty dishes. When in Peru, you can't skip sampling ceviche or a pisco sour and while visiting Argentina, don't miss digging into a hearty steak paired with a classic Malbec.

Health

Drinking bottled water and eating well-cooked food is strongly recommended. It's much safer to stick to bottled, treated or boiled water. Ice, along with salads or fruits washed in tap-water should likewise be avoided.

In Peru and Bolivia, altitude sickness (or "Soroche" as it is known in Peru) can be a common problem. Many people that travel to places above 3000m, such as Cusco or Puno, may feel its effects. Symptoms can include dizziness, fatigue, nausea and in some cases vomiting. It is recommended that travellers utilize their first day in high-altitude destinations to acclimate. Staying hydrated, eating light meals and following a very light schedule will all help. Also aim to invest in at least a day of rest. This will decrease your likelihood of suffering from altitude sickness. Many hotels are equipped with oxygen on site and treatment can help enormously. There are also pills such as Diamox, and the local Peruvian version - Soroche pills - that can help treat and prevent symptoms. Consult a doctor before taking any of these medications, before engaging in strenuous activity at high altitude and regarding any necessary vaccinations in plenty of time before travelling.

What to Pack

Peru: On the coast in winter (June to September) it can be cool. At the same time in the mountains it can be warm and sunny during the day but very cold at night. Dressing in layers will help you cope with the temperature changes. In December through to April you will experience heavy rain in the mountains, so a waterproof raincoat is essential. The opposite applies on the coast.

Bolivia: The wet season officially runs from October to March, but throughout the year the weather is unpredictable and varies across the country. Our advice is to pack a lightweight raincoat and umbrella whenever you plan to visit. Even in summer it can still be cool in the evening, so be sure to pack a light sweater.

Argentina: The winter in the South during May to October is cooler - so layer up, and take a warmer coat or fleece and shoes or boots. The north is hot and humid with heavy rain through December to February, where a lightweight raincoat or umbrella would come in handy.

Brazil: Most of Brazil is tropical, which means hot and humid, so natural fabrics will be more comfortable. The summer (December to March) is very hot and natural fabrics like linen, silk and cotton are advisable.

Dry Bags/Rucksack Liner – Handy when travelling to South American countries during the wet season.

First Aid Kit – This by no means has to be an extensive medical kit, but ensure it has the essentials. It's advisable to include bandages and dressings. You will also want to add any prescription medication you're taking to last the duration of the trip. Other items to consider are diarrhoea relief, antihistamines, paracetamol and oral rehydration sachets.

Water Purification Bottle – The quality of the drinking water in South America varies from country to country, so many travellers opt to drink bottled water. Recycling isn't common in many parts of South America, so you can either buy larger bottles of water to help reduce waste plastic, or invest in a re-usable water purification bottle. Water purification bottles can be filled up with water from almost any source (tap, stream etc) and the built-in filter will remove most harmful contaminants, making it safe to drink. This is a much more eco-friendly option compared to buying bottled water.

Mosquito Repellent – We would recommend using a mosquito repellent with no less than 50% DEET.

Travel Adapters – The plug types used in South America vary, with Type A, B, C and I plug sockets found throughout the continent. You may want to consider packing a universal travel adapter, as this features the majority of plug types found in South America. You may also require a voltage converter in some countries to use certain appliances, as the voltage may not be the same as in the UK.

Sun Protection – Make sure you pack a good quality sun cream for your trip, with high SPF, UVA & UVB filters. You should also pack aftersun to help rehydrate your skin after sun exposure.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from business to tourist hotels. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality may exist between the UK and South America. All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers between destinations. Roads in South America are generally well-maintained, although you'll find some roads are not paved but gravel, particularly in Bolivia, but please be aware traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. There may be sections of road where the surface may be comparatively bumpy but our drivers will do their utmost to lessen the impact.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Optional activities

A list of optional activities and approximate costs will be provided with your final documents. These can be arranged by your guide and are paid for locally.

Souvenirs

There are plenty of interesting bits and pieces to buy as souvenirs in all the visited destinies, such as indigenous textiles in Peru, handicrafts and artworks, carved wood and mate tea. There will be some opportunities during your tour to pick up souvenirs.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 30 travellers in each group.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 10 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

Tipping Policy

Tipping in South America is to reward good service, however, for those working in the tourism industry, if you feel that the service you received should be rewarded, leaving a small tip is very much appreciated. For the whole trip the suggested amount is USD198 per person which will be paid on arrival by customers to the National Escort to be provided to the local suppliers.

After booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.