

## ESSENTIAL SOUTH AMERICA – OCT 2018

### OVERVIEW

Tour Date: 2 October 2018 – 1 November 2018

Tour Duration: 31 days

Tour Cost (\$AUD): \$21,450

Single Supplement (\$AUD): \$3,850

*South America is often the last continent that people visit, yet it is without doubt the world's most exciting. Our action-packed 31-day itinerary embraces all the major highlights of Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina.*

Steeped in history, culture and awe-inspiring scenery South America is a continent of superlatives. It possesses the largest jungle, the longest river, the widest waterfalls and the longest mountain chain in the world. Our spectacular tour begins in the capital of Peru, Lima – known as the 'City of the Kings', before spending three days in the Amazon jungle reaching areas that are seldom visited by explorers, let alone tourists! Leaving the Amazon we fly to Cusco and the Sacred Valley, from where we explore the fantastic lost city of the Incas, Machu Picchu, before heading to the world's highest navigable lake, Titicaca. Almost every day is a highlight as we move south across the Royal Range of the Andes in Bolivia, before flying to Brazil's most exciting city, Rio de Janeiro, lying in the shadow of the mighty statue of Christ the Redeemer. After four nights in this vibrant and colourful city we head to what many people regard as the most stupendous waterfalls in the world – Iguassu. We spend two nights at the falls staying in the magnificent Hotel Das Cataratas, right in the heart of the national park. Finally we visit Argentina's lively capital, Buenos Aires – birthplace of tango. This tour is a feast for all the senses and many of our regular travellers consider it their favourite!

Tour Fitness Level: Active

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### TOUR ITINERARY

#### 02/10/2018 Australia – Lima (D)

Fly from your preferred capital city to Sydney, connecting with our flight to South America. Crossing the International Date Line, we arrive in Lima on the same day.

Depart Sydney Lan LA 800, 09.50

Arrive Santiago 13.15

Depart Santiago Lan LA 642, 15.00

Arrive Lima 16.55

On arrival we transfer to our hotel where we enjoy a welcome dinner.

Arawi Hotel

Lima

#### 03/10/2018 Lima (BL)

Known as the 'City of the Kings', Lima was the first seat of the Spanish government in 1533 and still has many perfectly preserved buildings from this colonial period. We begin our tour with a stroll in the heart of the city from Santo Domingo Church to San Francisco Monastery, passing through the main square where the Presidential Palace is situated. We have lunch at the magnificent Rosa Nautica restaurant which is on a pier in the Pacific Ocean! In the afternoon we stroll through the fantastic bohemian district of Barranco.

#### 04/10/2018 Lima – Iquitos – Amazon (BLD)

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Iquitos, deep in the Amazon Basin.

Depart Lima Lan LA 2380, 10.05

Arrive Iquitos 12.00

On arrival we drive to the river where we board a small boat for the trip into the jungle. Our destination is the remote Explorama Lodge, located in a private jungle reserve about 80 kilometers from the bustling city of Iquitos. Our newly-renovated lodge provides us with an authentic and comfortable stay for our time in the Amazon, with all bedrooms having en-suite bathrooms. The hammock house near the edge of the forest provides a space for peaceful relaxation to listen to the musical sounds of the jungle inhabitants, and in the evening romantic kerosene lamps illuminate a beautiful dining room and bar area. After dark we take a boat trip by torchlight in search of jungle wildlife.

#### 05/10/2018 Amazon Jungle (BLD)

This morning we walk along a jungle trail to the stunning aerial walkway. It is the longest of its kind in the Amazonian rainforest and affords magnificent views of the jungle canopy. Our expert guides point out many examples of native plants used as medicine by the locals. After lunch we take a boat trip along one of the small tributaries to try our hand at piranha fishing! We may even spot the delightful freshwater dolphins found in this area.

#### 06/10/2018 Amazon Jungle – Iquitos (BLD)

After a relaxing morning in the tranquil surroundings of our lodge, we return to the bustle of Iquitos. In the evening we celebrate our jungle adventures with a special dinner at *Al Frio y al Fuego* floating restaurant.

#### 07/10/2018 Iquitos – Lima – Cusco – Sacred Valley (BD)

After an early breakfast we return to the airport for our flight to Cusco via Lima.

Depart Iquitos Lan LA 2375, 08.15

Arrive Lima, 10.00

Depart Lima Lan LA 2041, 11.10

Arrive Cusco 12.30

On arrival in Cusco we travel to a very special place indeed: the house of our local tour-leader! We meet the family and have a chance to sample their traditional homemade coca tea which helps with the effects of altitude. Their mother is also well known throughout the region for her delicious empanadas and sweets. After our visit to 'mum', we drive to our hotel in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, passing through the beautiful 'Granary of the Incas' en-route.

**Sonesta Posada del Inca Yucaj Hotel**

Urubamba

### 08/10/2018 Sacred Valley (BL)

This morning we drive to the town of Ollantaytambo, situated at the foot of spectacular Inca ruins that once protected the entrance to the lower Urubamba Valley. The temple area is at the top of steep terracing, providing excellent defences. Stone used for these buildings was brought from a quarry high up on the opposite side of the Urubamba River – an incredible feat involving thousands of workers. Ollantaytambo is the only Inca settlement to have resisted attacks from the Spanish. We also visit the famous Písaq arts and crafts market, a colourful and vibrant fair for which this delightful town is famous.

### 09/10/2018 Sacred Valley (BL)

Continuing our exploration of the Sacred Valley of the Incas, we travel high into the mountains to visit a remote community. These charming people rarely venture out of their settlement and it is a privilege to meet them. This is very much a Travel Directors' trademark as it is a unique chance to experience a very genuine, typical and traditional way of life which has not changed for centuries. This visit takes us back in time as we interact and mingle with the original people of this ancient land.

### 10/10/2018 Sacred Valley – Machu Picchu (BL)

After an early breakfast we transfer to Ollantaytambo for the amazing vistadome train ride to Machu Picchu.

Depart Ollantaytambo, 08.30

Arrive Machu Picchu Pueblo (formerly Aguas Calientes) 09.50

The railway line follows the Urubamba River valley with the snow-capped Andes towering above. After checking into our superb hotel in Machu Picchu town, we enjoy lunch at the entrance to the site before making our first visit to the great ruins. Machu Picchu is undoubtedly the best known and most spectacular archaeological site on the continent. It is a complete city, set on the saddle of a high mountain with terraced slopes falling away to the Urubamba River, which rushes through great hairpin bends far below. The ruins themselves are amazing, comprising staircases, terraces, temples, palaces, towers and the famous sundial.

**Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel**

Machu Picchu Pueblo

### 11/10/2018 Machu Picchu – Cusco (BL)

The morning is free to continue exploring the ruins of Machu Picchu without the crowds, before our afternoon train journey to Cusco. There is time, for those who wish, to trek to the famous Sun Gate, the traditional entrance to Machu Picchu. From here the views of the ancient citadel are extraordinary. The train ride back to Cusco is fun-filled to say the least, thanks to the delightful and hardworking crew. The train stops in the town of Poroy and the wonderful sight of Cusco at night comes into view.

Depart Machu Picchu, 15.20

Arrive Poroy (Cusco) 19.05

After disembarking from the train we transfer to our hotel.

Picoaga Hotel

Cusco

12/10/2018 Cusco (BL)

Cusco is the archaeological capital of the Americas and the continent's oldest continuously inhabited city. Massive Inca-built stone walls line most of the city's central streets to form the foundations of colonial and modern buildings. Many streets are stepped and narrow and inhabited by Quechua-speaking descendants of the Incas. Our exclusive city tour, designed to give our guests 'the real Cusco', also takes in Sacsayhuaman, the Temple of the Sun, and San Pedro market. We continue to the artists' quarter before finishing in the magnificent Plaza de Armas, Cusco's main square. In the afternoon we have an unforgettable visit to the cathedral, famous for its painting of the last supper which depicts the Peruvian 'Chicha' drink instead of wine as well as the Andean delicacy – guinea pig!

13/10/2018 Cusco (BD)

Today is totally at leisure in this wonderful city. You may wish to visit more museums or Inca sights, shop in the charming back streets, or simply relax in one of the many cafes and watch the world go by.

14/10/2018 Cusco – Lake Titicaca (BL)

Today is momentous as we travel across the Andes to La Raya Pass (4,380m) and on to Puno. We stop for lunch en-route and also visit a remarkable and rarely-visited Inca site. As the road weaves its way up to the heights of La Raya, we enjoy breathtaking views before a late afternoon arrival at our hotel on the shores of Lake Titicaca.

Libertador Lago Titicaca Hotel

Puno

15/10/2018 Lake Titicaca (BL)

Venturing out onto Lake Titicaca we visit the famous floating reed islands. These strange spongy masses are home to the Los Uros Indians, a unique tribe that pre-dates the Incas. We visit one of the families on these unique islands and learn about their traditional way of life while also having the chance to ride on one of their extraordinary reed boats. After lunch we return to Puno.

16/10/2018 Lake Titicaca – Sun Island (BLD)

Today we drive through the towns of Juli and Pomata. After completing both Peruvian and Bolivian border formalities, we visit the majestic Church of the Virgin of the Lake in Copacabana. We then sail to Sun Island and start our hike to the unspoiled village of Yumani, where we experience the everyday life of the locals as they tend their animals, weave ponchos and build their unique reed boats. We overnight on the island.

Ecolodge La Estancia

Sun Island

17/10/2018 Sun Island – La Paz (BL)

After breakfast we explore the beautiful northern part of Sun Island and its archaeological site 'Chincana'. We also have the opportunity to take a three-hour hike from one side of the island to the other, via a well-worn trail that affords beautiful views of the lake and Royal Range of the Andes in the distance. For our less energetic travellers the journey can be made by boat. Lunch

today is an authentic and delicious Bolivian hangi on the shores of the lake itself. In the afternoon we sail back to Copacabana and travel by road to the straits of Tiquina where the Bolivian Navy is based. Here we board a ferry, while our bus crosses the straits on a huge vehicle ferry. Re-boarding our bus on the other side of the straits we drive along a breathtaking plateau until we reach a basin rim. Deep in this natural crater is our first spectacular glimpse of the city of La Paz.

**Hotel Europa**

La Paz

**18/10/2018 La Paz (BLD)**

The amazing city of La Paz is the administrative capital of Bolivia and, as such, qualifies as the world's highest capital. Enjoying an incredible location it well deserves its nickname, 'the city that touches the sky'. Our tour begins in Government Square, from where we visit the Presidential Palace and the Indian handicraft market. We then drive out of the city to the extraordinary Moon Valley. Formed millions of years ago when the area was under water, it is a labyrinth of bizarrely shaped sandstone formations, which give the appearance of a lunar landscape.

**19/10/2018 La Paz (BL)**

After breakfast we head to the legendary pre-Inca site of Tiahuanaco – thought to have been an important ceremonial centre and to have once bordered Titicaca. The influence of this civilisation was far-reaching, extending even to the coast of Peru where Tiahuanaco artifacts are common. These ancient people are believed to have been even more advanced than the Incas in art, pottery, astronomy and mathematics. Many of the monoliths from the site at Tiahuanaco have been moved to the Museo Nacional de Arqueología in La Paz for preservation and easier viewing. Still on site are the Gate of the Sun, the Acapana Pyramid and the Kalasaya compound.

**20/10/2018 La Paz – Rio de Janeiro (BD)**

Early this morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Rio de Janeiro.

**Depart La Paz Boliviana OB 736, 08.00**

**Arrive Sao Paulo 14.25**

**Depart Sao Paulo Tam JJ 3510, 17.40**

**Arrive Rio de Janeiro 18.45**

On arrival we transfer to our hotel.

**Excelsior Hotel**

Rio de Janeiro

**21/10/2018 Rio de Janeiro (BLD)**

Rio de Janeiro sweeps 20 km along a narrow alluvial strip between the mountains and the sea. Brazilians say: 'God made the world in six days; the seventh he devoted to Rio'. Few people who have been to this magnificent city would argue! Our excursion today follows Rio's famous beaches and passes Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon to Cosme Velho. Here we board a funicular train for the 20-minute ride to the top of the 800m high Corcovado Mountain. The statue of Christ the Redeemer on top of the peak is Rio's most famous landmark and one of the modern Wonders of the World, affording an incredible 360-degree view of the city. Later we explore the district of Santa Teresa and the famous Selaron Steps which lead up to the convent there.

### 22/10/2018 Rio de Janeiro (BL)

This morning a cable car takes us to the top of Sugar Loaf Mountain, uniquely situated at the entrance of Guanabara Bay. The journey to the top is completed in two stages, with beautiful views of the city and its beaches.

### 23/10/2018 Rio de Janeiro (BD)

Today we head away from the familiar tourist haunts and visit the famous favelas, or slum areas. Open-topped jeeps take us on an exhilarating journey to these lively suburbs built into Rio's hillsides. Our guides are residents of the favelas who know the area intimately and ensure our tour is both fascinating and safe. They give a unique insight into a part of this extraordinary city not normally visited by tourists. The view of Rio from high up in the favelas is simply extraordinary. Later we explore the coastal part of Rio, taking a stroll along Ipanema beach and then back to the hotel via the famous Copacabana beach. Tonight we visit one of Rio's most famous traditional restaurants for dinner and then attend the dazzling Plataforma 1 samba show.

### 24/10/2018 Rio de Janeiro – Iguassu Falls (BL)

This morning we return to the airport for our flight to the spectacular Iguassu Falls.

Depart Rio de Janeiro Tam JJ 3188, 10.10

Arrive Iguassu Falls, 12.30

On arrival in Iguassu Falls we transfer to our hotel which is located in the very heart of the National Park, with amazing views of the falls.

Das Cataratas Hotel

Parque Nacional Iguassu

### 25/10/2018 Iguassu Falls (BL)

The Iguassu Falls are considered by many to be the most impressive in the world, surpassing in grandeur both Niagara and Victoria. Some 275 separate cascades surge over a winding 3-km cliff frontage into a gorge 60m deep. The morning is spent exploring the Brazilian side of the falls. We then travel by 4WD vehicles to the Iguassu River where we board a powerful speed boat for a thrilling ride through the rapids to the very base of the falls.

### 26/10/2018 Iguassu Falls – Buenos Aires (BD)

This morning we head to the spectacular Argentinian side of the falls where bridges and walkways take us within a few metres of many of the cascades. The most famous is the 'Devil's Throat', where the water crashes 100m to the valley below, creating an amazing sight. We also visit the superb Iguassu bird park which is home to hundreds of exotic species and, weather permitting, take a magnificent helicopter ride over the falls for breathtaking views. We then transfer to the airport for our domestic flight to Buenos Aires

Depart Iguazu Aerolineas AR 1737, 15.45

Arrive Buenos Aires, 17.40

On arrival we transfer to our hotel

Hotel Lafayette

Buenos Aires

### 27/10/2018 Buenos Aires (BL)

A fun-filled relaxing day today as we head out of the city on a 'Fiesta Gaucho' tour. We drive into the fertile grasslands – the pampas – which surround Buenos Aires, to an estancia or horse ranch. After cocktails and empanadas our hosts provide a typical Argentinian BBQ and a vibrant gaucho folk show.

**28/10/2018 Buenos Aires (BD)**

Buenos Aires, the fabulous capital of Argentina, is the most European city in South America with many beautiful parks and plazas. 'Portenos', as the locals call themselves, are fun-loving people who enjoy their city and music. On our city tour we take in Government House (Casa Rosada, or Pink House), the House of Congress, the Metropolitan Cathedral, Eva Peron's tomb in the Recoleta Cemetery and the famous Italian La Boca district. This evening we enjoy a spectacular tango show.

**29/10/2018 Buenos Aires (BL)**

Today we explore the area around Buenos Aires, travelling through glorious countryside to the River Plate delta where we have lunch.

**30/10/2018 Buenos Aires – Santiago (BL)**

Today is a leisurely day to relax and enjoy the city on our own or do some last minute souvenir shopping. This evening we transfer to the airport for our flight to Santiago and Sydney.

**Depart Buenos Aires Lan LA 442, 20.15**

**Arrive Santiago 22.40**

**31/10/2018 Depart Santiago**

**Depart Santiago Lan LA 801, 00.20**

Whilst in-flight we cross the International Date Line

**01/11/2018 Arrive Sydney**

**Arrive Sydney 08.00**

On arrival in Sydney we transfer to the domestic terminal for our connecting flight home.