



the
leap

GAP YEAR PROGRAMME

Leap to Peru

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT + HIGH ANDES + AMAZON EXPLORATION

Peru *Perspective*

Discover Peru, where stunning geography meets deep history. Soar over Machu Picchu, conquer Rainbow Mountain, and immerse yourself in the untouched beauty of the Amazon rainforest.

LOCATIONS:

SACRED VALLEY + AMAZON

ACCOMMODATION:

HOMESTAY + HOSTELS

ENVIRONMENTS:

ANDES + AMAZON JUNGLE

PROJECTS:

REFORESTATION + COMMUNITY

TEAM SIZE:

10 PER DEPARTURE

SOCIAL:

CHILLED VIBE

FITNESS:

GOOD FITNESS REQUIRED

STAY LENGTH:

3 WEEKS

Reserve your place

INFO@THELEAP.CO.UK / +44 1672 519922





Join The Leap's thrilling 3-week Peru adventure, blending iconic sights with meaningful impact. Explore the Sacred Valley, connect with Andean traditions, marvel at Machu Picchu, then journey into the Amazon to paddle along jungle rivers and spot rare wildlife.

Over your first two weeks, you'll dive into the heart of the Andes in the Sacred Valley. Here, life moves to a different rhythm – one where ancient traditions thrive. Picture yourself wandering through fields sown by hand, meeting women in bowler hats, and getting up close with llamas as tame as family pets.

Your days will be filled with a mix of community projects, exploration, and adventure. Stand in awe before the legendary Machu Picchu, conquer the heights of Rainbow Mountain, and immerse yourself in authentic Peruvian culture as you live alongside one of our warm-hearted host families.

For your final week, the adventure shifts dramatically as you plunge into the lush, steamy Amazon jungle. Glide by boat down the Madre de Dios River to your jungle haven at Lake Sandoval. From there, paddle through the jungle's labyrinth of tributaries, exploring the dense rainforest in search of rare wildlife and dazzling birds.





Peru *Itinerary*

Day 1 Calca

Arrival

Your adventure begins in Cusco, where you'll be greeted and transferred to Calca, your home for the first two weeks. Nestled in the heart of the Andes at 9,600 feet, Calca is surrounded by patchwork fields, breathtaking mountain views, and the sacred Mount Pitusiray.

Here, you'll stay with local families, immersing yourself in Andean life, sharing traditions, and enjoying homemade meals. This warm, immersive welcome sets the stage for your adventure, offering unparalleled insight into local culture.

Day 2 Calca

Settle in + Explore

Begin the day with a visit to the Andean Alliance for Sustainable Development (AASD) office for a familiarization briefing, where you'll learn about their impactful work and your role in supporting their projects.

Next, it's time to explore Calca, a vibrant town with lively streets and welcoming energy. Wander through the bustling market, filled with colourful produce, handmade goods, and friendly locals. Relax in the picturesque main square, the town's social hub, especially lively on weekends when the community gathers.

For a modern twist, check out the hipster cafes tucked away in town, offering smoothies, freshly brewed coffee, and delicious snacks. We love Calca for its down to earth local charm.

Peru *Itinerary*

Days 3 - 7 Calca

MORNINGS Spanish Lessons + the EcoHuella Experience

Your mornings will kick start with informal Spanish lessons at the AASD office, giving you the confidence to interact with everyone and immerse yourself in the Andean culture.

Then it's off to EcoHuella, a highly regarded hub for innovation and sustainability in the Sacred Valley. This pilot project is a game-changer for high-altitude Andean communities, offering them cutting-edge solutions to adapt to climate change. Farmers and community leaders come here to learn about sustainable practices, from diversifying crops to improving soil health, ensuring their traditions thrive in the face of modern challenges.

In your first week your mornings will be filled with:

- Reforestation - preparing tree seedlings that help combat soil erosion and restore the landscape.
- Caring for the guinea pigs - a vital part of Andean agriculture, teaching you about their role in sustainable farming.
- A hands-on coffee workshop, where you'll meet local farmers, learn about the coffee trade's challenges, and see how innovative practices are transforming their livelihoods.

This is your chance to be part of a project that's empowering communities and protecting the Sacred Valley's future.



Peru *Itinerary*

Days 3 - 7 Calca

AFTERNOONS Scenic Hikes + Community Connection

After lunch with the EcoHuella team, your afternoons will be all about exploring Calca's breathtaking surroundings and connecting with its vibrant community. Our gapper favourite experiences are:

- Hiking to the Chapel of Calca, where you get great panoramic views over the valley.
- Hiking along the ancient Inca irrigation channels, which combines nicely with the Urco Youth Jewelry Association - an inspiring project where local students learn jewellery-making skills. Here you will partner up with a student to craft your own unique piece—a meaningful keepsake, and a chance to connect with the youth who are shaping their community's future.





A person wearing a green hat and blue jacket is leading three pack animals (donkeys or mules) up a dirt trail on a mountain. The animals are carrying large, colorful striped packs. The background features steep, rocky mountain slopes with patches of snow under a clear blue sky.

Although this is from a personal point of view, I wanted to share the great personal development this trip gave me. I believe travel and any unknown/unusual environments affect and shape any individual. It altered my being in a way I find hard to articulate, it changes and challenges you more than any 9-5 working existence ever could.

Peru *Itinerary*

Days 8-9 Calca + Cusco *Weekend to explore*

The weekend is yours to embrace the Sacred Valley at your own pace.

This is the perfect opportunity to venture further afield and soak in the rich culture and stunning landscapes of the region.

Many gappers choose to head out to Cusco, which is about 1.5 hours away. It is a great place to explore and hang out – lots of vibrant streets, historic sites, and bustling energy. Explore the Plaza de Armas, visit the fascinating Qorikancha Temple, or enjoy a leisurely coffee at one of the city's many groovy cafes. Highly recommend.



Peru *Itinerary*

Day 10 The Quengo Community

Journey to the high Andes

it will be an early start - but so worth it as you venture into the High Andes to meet the Qenqo community, who live in the most beautiful place at about 4,000m. The drive alone is jaw-dropping as you climb higher and higher into the mountains.

Qenqo is an AASD success story, where greenhouse tech has turned this remote village into the go-to supplier of flowers and strawberries for Sacred Valley hotels. After exploring the village, you'll visit the sacred "Lake of Gold" (yes, actual Inca legend vibes here), where the Incas are believed to have hidden their treasure during the Spanish invasion.

You'll be welcomed with a stunning petal ceremony, treated to a delicious lunch, and hear all about the history of this fascinating area. After lunch, it's your turn to roll up your sleeves for some reforestation action—planting and pruning trees to help restore this special place.



Peru *Itinerary*

Day 11 Pisac, The Sacred Valley *Alpacas, Textiles + The Famous Pisac Market*

A great day planned in and around the Sacred Valley. The first stop will be with the incredible Evangelina and Elisvaan at their alpaca farm for a hands-on textile workshop. Here you will learn how they dye and weave intricate patterns using traditional techniques, and try your hand at making something unique. Fancy a new poncho, belt, or scarf? This is THE place to pick up authentic Andean textiles – no imports here.

After lunch, you'll head off to explore the epic Inca ruins of Pisac, a sprawling site with terraces, ceremonial baths, and ancient cemeteries. The views here are insane, wrapping up the day at the Pisac market, a buzzing hub of colourful stalls where you can snag everything from alpaca hats to Peruvian cowboy hats.



A group of people, mostly women, are gathered around a market stall. They are wearing traditional Peruvian clothing, including colorful sweaters, skirts, and hats. One woman in the foreground is wearing a white hat and a light-colored sweater. Another woman in the center is wearing a red sweater and a straw hat. A woman on the right is wearing a bright pink sweater and a red vest. They are all looking at something in the stall, which appears to be a display of food or goods. The background shows a stone wall and a poster with the text 'LA NAVIDAD' and 'VENIDA'.

A truly professional and wonderful experience for any young person. I did not expect there to be such good communication between the The Leap and us parents. This was in the form of emails building up toward the trip and during the time away. Very reassuring for parents.

Peru *Itinerary*

Day 12 Rainbow Mountain

Summit Hike+ Breathtaking Views

Prepare for an early start (5 AM departure) as you head to one of Peru's most iconic landmarks: Rainbow Mountain. Located at a staggering 5,200 meters (17,060 feet) above sea level, this natural wonder is a breathtaking kaleidoscope of colours, created by mineral deposits over centuries.

The hike to the summit is challenging, but the reward is absolutely worth it. As you ascend through sweeping valleys and rugged terrain, the stunning stripes of red, yellow, green, and purple emerge, painting the landscape like something out of a dream. At the top, take a moment to marvel at the surrounding Ausangate Mountain, a sacred peak in Andean mythology, revered by local communities for centuries.

After soaking in the panoramic views and snapping epic photos, you'll descend and head back to Calca.



Peru *Itinerary*

Days 13-14 Ollantaytambo + Machu Picchu

Scenic journey + Unforgettable Ruin Exploration

Next up is the bucket-list moment you've been waiting for—Machu Picchu, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World and Peru's ultimate treasure.

But this isn't just any trip to Machu Picchu—you'll take a far more unique and meaningful route. Your journey begins in the breathtaking Lares Valley, a remote and untouched region where you'll visit the Quishuarani community, a high-altitude village thriving against the odds with the help of AASD's greenhouse technology. Meeting these families, hearing their stories, and seeing their resilience firsthand is a humbling and inspiring experience that will stay with you long after you leave.

After connecting with the community, you'll unwind in natural hot springs before descending to Ollantaytambo, a beautifully preserved Inca town surrounded by ancient terraces and fortress ruins. You'll spend the night here, soaking up the magic of this historic town as you prepare for the adventure ahead.



Peru *Itinerary*

Days 13-14 Ollantaytambo + Machu Picchu cont...

Scenic journey + Unforgettable Ruin Exploration

The following morning, you'll board the train to Aguas Calientes, the gateway to Machu Picchu. As the train winds through lush valleys and towering peaks, the excitement builds for what lies ahead. Perched at 2,430 meters (7,970 feet) is Machu Picchu, a 15th-century masterpiece built as a royal estate for Emperor Pachacuti.

Hidden from the world for centuries, it was rediscovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911 and has since become one of the most iconic destinations on the planet.

Upon arrival, you'll hike up to explore the ruins in their full glory. Wander through the Temple of the Sun, marvel at the intricate agricultural terraces, and soak in the mystical atmosphere as mist drifts across the peaks. Surrounded by jaw-dropping views, you'll feel as if you've stepped into another world.

After a day of unforgettable exploration, you'll take the train back to Calca, carrying memories, stories, and photos of one of the most awe-inspiring places on Earth.



Peru *Itinerary*

Days 15-16 Calca

Relaxation + Chill

The weekend is yours to relax or explore before boarding an overnight bus to Puerto Maldonado on Sunday night, the gateway to your Amazon jungle adventure.



Peru *Itinerary*

Day 17 Puerto Maldonado

Relax + Preparation

You'll arrive in the early morning in Puerto Maldonado – the gateway to the Amazon and you'll settle into a charming hostel with time to unwind by the pool – getting used to hot and humid climate.



Peru *Itinerary*

Day 18 Madre de Dios River

Journey into the Amazon + Jungle

Your adventure begins with a morning transfer down the mighty Madre de Dios River, winding your way deeper into the untouched Amazon. The river itself teems with life, and as you glide through the lush canopy, you'll feel the thrill of venturing into one of the world's last great wildernesses. Upon arrival at the eco-lodge, you'll have lunch while soaking in the lodge's views.

In the afternoon, you'll set off on a thrilling exploration of the western end of Lake Sandoval, keeping your eyes peeled for the vibrant, Red-Bellied Macaws that flock here in remarkable numbers – it's the largest recorded congregation of these birds in the world, an unforgettable sight as they return to roost at dusk.

As night falls, you'll return to the lodge for a delicious dinner and prepare for stargazing under the brilliant Amazonian sky. Heaven.



Peru *Itinerary*

Day 19 Lake Sandoval, Amazon

Magical Sunrise + Rainforest Wonders

Rise before dawn for one of the Amazon's most magical moments – sunrise over Lake Sandoval.

As the early morning mist lifts from the water, you'll quietly paddle out in search of Giant Otters as they hunt for breakfast and witness the Amazon awakening with an explosion of birdlife. After a rewarding morning of wildlife spotting, you'll return to the lodge for a leisurely breakfast and a chance to relax.

In the afternoon, you'll delve deeper into the rainforest, walking among towering Brazil Nut trees and learning about the rich history of their harvest. Then you'll climb aboard a catamaran and glide through the canopy in search of playful monkeys swinging between the trees.

As night falls once again, you'll have the chance to spot the elusive Black Caimans that glide silently through the waters or take a nighttime stroll through the forest to witness the Amazon's nocturnal creatures.



Peru *Itinerary*

Day 20 Maurita Palm Forest, Amazon

Parrots, Parakeets + Macaws Galore

Today you'll set off across the lake for another thrilling wildlife encounter in the Mauritia palm forest, where you'll witness the jaw-dropping spectacle of hundreds of parrots, parakeets, and macaws gathering for their morning congregations. The vivid flashes of colour and the cacophony of calls create a symphony of life you won't soon forget.

Afterward, you'll embark on a guided hike along a pristine forest trail led by a local naturalist, who will share their knowledge of the rainforest's flora and fauna. This day offers a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the Amazon's ecosystems and the delicate balance that sustains life in the world's largest rainforest.





“The trip to Peru was so well organised, great programme and fantastic experiences. Thank you so much for everything. Our daughter has made memories and friends for ever.”

Peru *Itinerary*

Day 21 Lake Sandoval & Cusco

Farewell to The Amazon & Departure

On your final morning in the jungle, you'll take one last canoe ride across Lake Sandoval, savoring the tranquility and soaking in the final moments of your Amazon adventure. After lunch at the lodge, you'll bid farewell to the rainforest and journey back by boat to Puerto Maldonado reflecting on the profound experiences of the past few days – the wildlife, the vibrant jungle, and the unforgettable encounters.

Once back in Puerto Maldonado, you'll transfer back to Cusco for your final night in the Sacred Valley. There, you'll have time to relax, and celebrate the extraordinary journey you've completed with your team of Leapers..



Peru *Staying & Food*

One of the most enriching aspects of this programme is the rare opportunity to live with local Peruvian families, immersing yourself fully in their culture and daily life. This isn't just accommodation - it's a heartfelt connection to the people and traditions of this incredible country.

Calca

In Calca, you'll stay with our beloved host families, who have been welcoming Leapers for years. Each of you will have a cosy private room, and you'll share breakfast and dinner with your hosts, enjoying delicious, home-cooked meals. This is your chance to practice Spanish, learn about local life, and even pick up a few words of Quechua.

- Gleny and Edmundo: Hosting since 2017, Gleny runs a small bodega selling fresh produce, honey, and cacao. Known for her care, she's always ready with herbal remedies for altitude sickness. Edmundo, a trusted taxi driver, ensures everyone gets where they need to go safely. Their son, Edmundo, is studying engineering in Cusco but might be around for a chat, he comes and goes.
- Maritza and Lucho: Hosting since 2012, this wonderful couple are both teachers in the Calca. They'll make you feel right at home, sharing stories and teaching you Quechua phrases. Their young daughter will brighten your day, and their older sons may pop by for a visit.

Amazon

In the Amazon, you'll stay in a fun hostel and an eco-lodge, surrounded by the lush rainforest. These tranquil places combine comfort with nature, offering an unforgettable experience in one of the world's most biodiverse regions.

Every place you stay is a doorway into the heart of Peru, offering a unique perspective on its people, traditions, and landscapes. These experiences are not just accommodations - they are a privilege and an integral part of your journey.



Peru *Staying & Food*

Food

Get ready to embark on a culinary adventure as part of your three-week programme, with all meals (3x a day) provided throughout. This is your chance to savour the vibrant and diverse flavours of Peruvian cuisine, renowned for its fresh ingredients, bold spices, and rich cultural heritage.

Expect to try traditional dishes and don't be surprised if a local community treats you to cuy (guinea pig), a revered delicacy in the Andes – an experience as unique as it is authentic.

For those with dietary preferences, rest assured that vegetarian and vegan options are always available.



Project *Background*



THE ANDEAN ALLIANCE FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the breathtaking highlands of Peru, where the majestic Cusco, Sacred Valley, and Machu Picchu form the backdrop, a quiet revolution is underway. Our partners at the Andean Alliance for Sustainable Development (AASD) are championing the survival of high-altitude farmers whose livelihoods face increasing threats from globalization and environmental challenges.

Founded in 2010, AASD is dedicated to empowering these resilient communities through sustainable, community-led agricultural projects. At the heart of their efforts is Ecohuella (Ecological Footprint) Farm, a unique training center co-founded by three siblings. Here, campesino farmers receive hands-on workshops and guidance tailored to their needs, all while respecting the Quechua language, traditional practices, and local learning styles.

This programme goes beyond stunning landscapes, uncovering a story of cultural preservation and innovation. Through our partnership with AASD, you'll gain insight into the struggles and triumphs of Peru's highland farmers as they fight to sustain their way of life and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Peru *Dates & Costs* 2026

13TH FEBRUARY 2026	3 WEEKS	£3250
10TH APRIL 2026	3 WEEKS	£3250

INCLUDED:

- Pre-departure briefing on all aspects of the programme
- 24-hour emergency back-up, management and support by UK and in-country team
- Safety and induction course on arrival
- Accommodation throughout
- Food throughout
- Safe drinking water
- Airport transfers for team flight
- All transport to and from projects + Amazon phase
- Leap T-shirt
- 4 x 1 hour Spanish lessons
- All activities described in the itinerary including Machu Picchu, Rainbow Mountain, Pisac and Amazon permits

NOT INCLUDED:

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Medical expenses (reclaimable through travel insurance)
- Soft drinks and alcoholic drinks etc
- Food and accommodation if away from the programme
- Any excursions not listed above.
- Laundry fees
- Private transfers to and from the airport if you do not arrive on the main team flight

“The most brilliant company for gap year trips – would highly recommend – organised but also independent – two of mine have done it now and had the best time.



Peru *Nitty Gritty*

What to Pack?

Clothes

Please note when packing – you are at high altitude so temperatures can get cold, especially at night. The key message for Peru is you need lots of layers...it can go from hot to cold to rainy in a few hours and you will need light weight clothes for the Amazon.

- A selection of trousers, jeans, and shorts
- Light weight long sleeved shirts and trousers for the Amazon
- Tracksuit bottoms/trekking trousers
- T-shirts – long and short sleeved
- A couple of hoodies for cooler evenings
- A lightweight, waterproof jacket
- A warmer down jacket for the nights
- 1 pair trainers
- 1 pair of walking boots and walking socks for the treks
- 1 pair flip-flops
- 1 pair casual shoes
- Sun hat with brim
- Warm 'going out gear' for when you're off out in the evenings, especially if you go to Cusco at the weekends
- Swimming gear for the hot springs
- Warm pyjamas – past volunteers slept in thermal layers

Peru *Nitty Gritty*

What to Pack?

Equipment

- 80 litre rucksack – NO hard-shell SUITCASES
- 25 litre day rucksack
- Head torch
- Water bottle
- Sunglasses
- Plug adapter required – they have American style plugs
- Towel/sarong
- Portable phone charger
- Cozy ugg-style slippers for home stay

Toiletries & Medical

- Basic everyday toiletries
- Sun cream/after sun
- Travel wash
- Hand sanitiser
- Insect repellent
- Antibacterial spray/cream for open wounds.
- Rehydration powders
- Savlon
- Antihistamines
- E45/Sudocream
- Immodium
- Mediplasters
- Personal Medication: Bring extra supplies, know the generic names of your medication, and ensure you can manage allergies (e.g., carry an epipen if necessary)



I would recommend The Leap to anyone. Best thing I've ever done. Made so many good friends and became much more adaptable and open minded.



Peru *Nitty Gritty*

Communication

Spanish is the language of Peru, and you'll find that local people generally don't speak English, therefore it's helpful to learn a few key phrases before you arrive. We will offer translation during all planned activities and informal Spanish lessons will be available in your first week.

Your Health

Each location will have first aid on site. For more serious emergencies: Volunteers need to pay for minor medical expenses on their credit card and then reclaim these expenses back through their travel insurance. This includes the cost of the host driving a volunteer to and from hospital. In an emergency, and where evacuation by air is necessary, the insurers will settle bills directly.

Your Team

Maximum of 12 and a minimum of 6 volunteers per departure. The programme cannot run with fewer than this. 5 to 6 weeks prior to departure, if the minimum group size hasn't been met, you will be offered an alternative placement or a postponement, depending on availability and preference. Anyone aged 18- 22 can participate.

Peru *Nitty Gritty*

Behaviour

This is a team experience and looking out and being respectful to one another is vital to create a positive experience for all. However, if anyone puts themselves or others at risk, does not listen to safety advice and is being disrespectful to the team and staff then we have to revert to our discipline procedures. These involve: a verbal warning, followed by a written warning, followed by a dismissal from the programme – with no refund. Please do not be that person who ruins it for everyone else.

Managing Expectations

We do our best to describe our programme as accurately as we can so that you have realistic expectations. It's important that you read this document carefully, and listen to the pre-departure zoom, so you are fully prepared with what lies ahead. Please remain flexible, as tasks and projects may change, depending on the needs of the communities, projects on the ground and weather.

Your Safety

We prioritise safety in our gap year programmes through detailed risk assessments, safety audits, and adherence to industry standards such as BS8848, Trading Standards, the Year Out Group, and the Gap Year Association. On arrival, teams receive thorough safety briefings and are provided with secure accommodation, risk-assessed vehicles, medical evacuation access, and reliable emergency communications. Professional medics and healthcare support ensure swift resolution of emergencies. Our destinations are rigorously assessed for safety, and detailed audits are available upon request. These measures ensure participants experience enriching adventures with the highest levels of safety and risk management.

Accreditations

We're a member of the Year Out Group and the first UK company accredited by the Gap Year Association. Our safety procedures follow the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's 'Know Before You Go' advice. Your money is financially protected through IPP London, and flights are booked via Trailfinders.



Reserve your place

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