

What To Bring On Your Andes Trip

LUGGAGE: Most airlines allow one small carry-on and two check-in suitcases. The check-ins can be up to 62 inches total (get by adding length, width and height), and a maximum weight of 70 lb. each.

LAUNDRY - Laundry is fast and inexpensive, so can bring things that you can wear over and over. Layering is the best idea to stay comfortably warm. April signifies the end of the rainy season in Cuzco, however rain in Cuzco is still likely!

INSECT REPELLANT - The most important protection against biting insects, is clothing. Wearing long sleeved shirt and silk long johns will give you warmth and protection from insects. If you wear pants over them that have zip-off legs, you can convert the pants to shorts but still keep those silk johns on and have them tucked into boots. The subtropical region around Machu Picchu seems to be the only place biting insects are a problem in the Cuzco area. For women, A silk or cotton dickey works well in providing extra warmth in the early morning. It is easier to stuff in a pocket than a whole turtle neck shirt.

EAR PLUGS - Ear plugs are a must since Fireworks go off in Cuzco at sunrise whenever a favorite saint is celebrated. Everyday in the Catholic Church has a saint assigned to it, and someone in town will like her.

PAJAMAS - Bring warm PJ's as evenings are cool in Cuzco and the Sacred Valley.

PANTS - I recommend two pair lightweight nylon zipper-pants and one pair polypropylene long-johns. For women a pair of exercise pants that can be worn underneath your regular clothing can come in handy.

RAIN JACKET AND PANTS - Light weight breathable rain gear. The rain jacket should be loose enough to fit layered clothing underneath. I always have a rain jacket with me, but between June and October, you can leave the rain pants at home. The rain jacket also doubles as an effective wind breaker. Even a rain poncho can be sufficient during the dry season. If we experience rain, it will most likely be very brief light showers. My motto, it is always good to be prepared for wet weather.

FLEECE PULLOVER or FLEECE JACKET

SHIRTS - 2 lightweight, light colored long-sleeved shirts to keep the bugs off of your skin and 2 Short-sleeved shirts.

MONEY BELT & BREAST POUCH - Reduces chances of robbery. I use a money pouch that attaches to my belt with straps and folds over the top edge my pants, resting between my pants and my underwear. The breast pouch is a pouch with a chord that hangs around your neck. It should be flat with 2 pockets. It is worn around your neck and under your garments. This is where you keep your daily necessities e.g., money for the day and your passport.

WAIST PACK / BACKPACK - A waist pack may be easier to handle than a backpack. It can be difficult carrying stuff when breathing is difficult. A waist pack that has a water holder is recommended. For myself, I use a backpack.

SUN HAT , SUN GLASSES, SUN SCREEN !!, INSECT REPELLENT with high DEET concentration (available at most military surplus stores), or your favorite natural insect repellent. In the Andes, insects are usually only a problem during our journey to Machu Picchu.

LIGHTWEIGHT HIKING BOOTS. Think about breaking them in Prior to the trip. Consider wearing your boots on the airplane. If your luggage gets lost, you will have your boots. Also they take up too much room in the suitcase.

WOOL HIKING SOCKS & SOCK LINERS - (2 each) In wet and moist conditions sock liners help wick moisture away from your feet helping to keep them dry.

TOILETRY BAG - (Lightweight) with basic personal hygiene stuff.

NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS - Nutritional supplements and prescriptions drugs should be brought in their

original bottles to avoid being confiscated. You might want to bring a written prescription in case you lose important heart medicine, etc.

SEWING REPAIR KIT

PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT (Include some "Moleskin" by Dr. Scholl. It protects the feet from shoes and prevents blisters when walking.)

PLASTIC ZIP LOCK BAGS in sandwich and snack size.

HEAD LAMP OR SMALL FLASH LIGHT with spare batteries. I use a Petzel LED head-lamp which is great for walking in the jungle at light.

A SMALL POCKET KNIFE: A small pocket knife can be very handy in variety of ways.

TRAVEL ALARM

SNACKS – Bring some of your favorite snacks like trail mix and Protein bars for our hikes. If there is a special tea that you like e.g. yerba mate then you best bring that too.

BOTTLE OF HAND DISINFECTANT OR ANTI-BACTERIAL WIPES

CONTACT INFORMATION - Bring email addresses of people you want to contact. There are internet centers all over Peru now.

WRITING SUPPLIES - Addresses for postcards, pens, NOTEBOOK FOR JOURNALING

SPANISH-ENGLISH DICTIONARY

LONELY PLANET GUIDE – I highly recommend picking up a copy and reading it before the trip, but also bring it with you. It has handy information should you get lost and need assistance.

XEROX COPY OF YOUR PASSPORT (On the back of this, write the numbers of your traveler's checks, airline tickets, credit-card telephone numbers in case of loss, health-insurance telephone numbers and other numbers or email addresses important to you.)

GRAPEFRUIT SEED EXTRACT – Grapefruit seed extract is a powerful antibacterial substance and can help if you've eaten something questionable. Using a small amount in your drinking water can also help you keep your bowels happy. A lactobacillus supplement like iFlora also be very helpful to maintain healthy intestinal flora while in South America.

CASH: I recommend having \$1500 - \$2000 in spending money. Make sure all your bills are NEW \$100 bills!. Give your bank one month's notice to get the bills together for you.

Peruvian currency is the 'Sol' Bills of S/10, S/20, S/50, S/100 and S/200 are in circulation. The Sol is divided into 100 centimos and there are copper coins of .05, .10, .20 and silver coins worth .50 and S/1. Also there are a couple of bi-metallic coins worth 2 and 5 Soles.

COUNTERFEIT CAUTIONS: Change money with someone our guide picks out for us. Counterfeit money and high fees abound. I received a counterfeit \$100 bill out of an ATM machine at Plaza de Armas in Cuzco. If you plan to get US currency out of an ATM machine in Peru, stick with \$20 bills and check each bill with a felt tipped counterfeit currency identifier pen. These are available in most major stationary stores.

NO TRAVELERS CHECKS!!! Banks charge 10% to cash them. It's better just to bring cash and keep it on you in your money belt.

CREDIT CARDS are accepted in shops, restaurants, etc.

Be sure to notify your bank that you will be using your credit or debit card in Peru, OTHERWISE IT MAY BE DECLINED IN PERU!

CAMERAS – You will definitely want to bring a camera!! Lightweight digital or disposable cameras are recommended. Cameras are a high theft item in Peru. Do not keep them in pants pockets that can be cut with razors. If you are not taking a photo, keep it well secured in your backpack, especially when in the city, crowded market places or in public busses.

BRING YOUR OWN FILM AND BATTERIES. Quality is not the greatest in Peru.

PASSPORT – Please make sure your passport is up-to-date. It can take up to 2 months to renew your passport. TIME in Peru is the same as the East Coast.

TRAVEL INSURANCE (LIABILITY AND HEALTH) – All participants will be responsible to carry their own travel insurance in case of death, injury, disease and loss of personal items via theft or other uncontrollable forces. Tour facilitators (us and our associates) are not responsible for injury, sickness, fatality, loss of personal items, cancellation of flights, acts of God, or any other occurrence that is beyond our control.

ABOUT ALTITUDE:

Antioxidants, especially Coenzyme Q10 (150-300mg daily) and vitamin E (400mg daily) can be very helpful for feeling better and having more energy at high altitudes.

Below is some additional information about natural alternatives to aid the body in assimilating oxygen more efficiently at high altitude. The information was found on the following web address.
<http://www.denvernaturopathic.com/news/altitude.html>

Altitude Sickness:

Subject: nutritional and herbal supplements to prevent altitude sickness.

The ski season has arrived and with it out of town guests who assume they can travel from sea level and ski our continental divide unscathed. Somewhere in the tourist brochures and vacation package advertisements there is usually a line about acclimatizing to the altitude but it's in small print. New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles are at sea level. Denver is a Mile higher. Arapahoe Basin tops out at 13,050 feet. Altitude sickness has ruined enough vacations that it is incumbent on us, the local hosts, to know about prevention and if necessary treatment. In this article I want to review which natural substances may be useful to prevent and treat altitude sickness and then tell you my favorites.

Vitamin C: Paul Petzoldt, the founder of Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School once wrote that whenever his students were out of sorts in the mountains he would give them a dose of vitamin C. If he says it works, it probably does. Rats dosed with vitamin C can endure higher altitudes in lab simulations.[1] People probably can too. So consider regular doses of Vitamin C for the duration of their stay. How much, I've heard anywhere from 500 mg (which I think was what Petzoldt talked about) to 10,000mg/day from Dr Randall Bradley of Nebraska.

Antioxidants: Many of the symptoms of altitude sickness appear to be related to free radical activity and a number of studies have used antioxidants to decrease the effects. A study monitoring humans on an Everest Expedition found that daily doses reduced the effects of altitude. Climbers took daily doses of 1000 mg vitamin C, 400 iu vitamin E and 600 mg alpha Lipoic Acid.[2]

Glutathione, that favorite of mine, appears to be quickly depleted at altitude quickly making the body susceptible to the many forms of damage it normally protects one from.

L-glutamine: Adding glutamine has a protective effect.[3] Rats fed doses that in a human would be equivalent to about 2-3 grams a day were 4.5 times as resistant to hypoxia than non-treated rats, more resistant to cold and were able to gain weight at high altitudes. This may be because glutamine helps replenish the glutathione levels. If so other substances that help produce and protect glutathione in the body may also be useful. Glutamine is considered a conditionally essential amino acid. Under certain conditions of especially physical stress the body isn't able to manufacture this amino acid in adequate amounts to keep up and supplementation is useful

Three general categories of herbs have a beneficial effect; adaptogens, flavonoids and cardiotonics. There is one additional herb which is illegal. The most studied are the adaptogens. Herbs in this diverse group all effect the adrenal axis and increase the body's capacity to endure stress. Some, such as Cordyceps and Siberian Rose [4], have been studied and published on their protective effect. Other adaptogens have traditions of use

and are probably just as useful. In the later category I would put Eleutherococcus (Siberian Ginseng), Panax ginseng (Korean ginseng), Ashwagandha, Reishi mushrooms and Schizandra. Ginkgo not considered an adaptogen is also useful [5]. Ginkgo may work because it increases blood circulation and oxygen to the brain. It is useful at treating asthma so perhaps the people who think it helps altitude sickness simply had asthma that responded. Technically, ginkgo is a flavonoid so my second category are the flavonoids. Another plant flavonoid, milk thistle also has a positive effect on altitude sickness. [6]

Probably the most famous plant used to treat altitude sickness is Coca, the plant from which cocaine is derived. Coca leaves were and are still used by the Indians of the Peruvian Andes to prevent the ill effects of altitude and increase stamina, but for obvious reasons we are not going to suggest their use. Altitude sickness might quickly become the least of your worries. Especially if you have to travel through airports prior to your high altitude experience. Homeopathic preparations of Coca have also been used for altitude sickness. Our experience is that homeopathic coca does in fact work quite well for symptomatic complaints of high altitude, the headache nausea etc. Unfortunately this homeopathic medicine is a great example of the inconsistencies of modern medicine and law. Homeopathic Coca is so diluted that most medical and scientific authorities say there is no measurable chemical left in the medicine so it can not work. On the other hand the FDA still considers it a narcotic and prohibits its use without prescription. Other homeopathic medicines that have been suggested for altitude sickness are Arsenicum alba, Glonine, and Calcarea carbonica.

The third general category of herbs I was thinking about when I first started writing this several weeks ago were the cardiotonics. I was thinking specifically of extracts of hawthorne berries which have the effect of strengthening the heart's contraction in a manner similar to digitalis. Technically we might not be treating altitude sickness but simply cardiac insufficiency, yet it still may help your older relatives get up the stairs while visiting. I could find no references to this use.

Co Enzyme Q 10 might be suggested for this same reason though one could argue that it is an antioxidant and so on.

For all my fancy footnotes and scientific explanations and rationales, when it comes to my favorite high altitude trick, I can not tell you how or why it works. It is a proprietary formula called Cataplex E2 manufactured by an old nutritional company called Standard Process. This company prides itself in its whole food extracts rather than synthetic vitamins or chemicals. They've been selling their line of products for almost a hundred years. Most of their products were developed in the 1920's by early nutritional researcher, Dr. Royal Lee. In the company's literature, Cataplex E2 somehow increases the ability of red blood cells to deliver oxygen to the tissues. So it is frequently used to help conditions like congestive heart failure, emphysema and the like. I first learned the altitude trick from Dr. Clive Armstrong on a ski trip a few years back. Clive who regularly leads high altitude climbing expeditions to South America or the Himalayas swears by it. He has methodically timed climbers going over the same stretch of mountain with and without taking Cataplex E2. As I can never keep up with him I gave it a try. I still can't keep up with him, but I can sure feel a difference using it. Standard Process does not sell their products through retail stores, but only through health practitioners. This is one product we try to never run out of. So give us a call if you want to try it.

I need to mention water. Few visitors to our high country from the humid lowlands have any comprehension of how quickly they become dehydrated while here. At high altitudes more water is lost through breathing and sweating than most people realize. People can quickly dehydrate without being aware of it and confuse their condition with altitude sickness. Bug your guests and make sure they are drinking enough water that they are having to urinate as often or more often as they are accustomed to at home.

Summary:

Drink a lot of water

Ginkgo: 120-180 mg/day (any history of asthma)

Milk Thistle: 120-240 mg/day (any liver complaints)

Antioxidants:

Vitamin C 2-3,000 mg/day

Vitamin E 400 iu/day

alpha lipoic Acid 150-300 mg/day

Raise glutathione levels:

Selenium 200 mcg/day (if you have a family history of cancer never stop taking this!)

N-acetyl-cysteine 1-2000 mg/day (especially if prone to nasal congestion)

L-glutamine: 3,000 mg/day (especially if prone to stomach irritation)

Adaptogenic herbs: your choice: Korean Ginseng, Siberian Ginseng, Ashwagandha, Reishi, (which has a growing reputation of being useful) etc.

Cardiotonics: Hawthorne Berry Extract (Crataegus): 250-500 mg/day and Co Q 10 90 mg/day (both especially if you have a weak heart)

The Bottom Line:

My favorite thing to use Cataplex E2: 2 tablets 3-4 times per day plus a multivitamin with high antioxidant levels. Having read through all these abstracts I am going to try to start adding l-glutamine, ginkgo and glutathione to my ski morning breakfast.

References:

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2. Bailey DM, Davies B. Acute mountain sickness; prophylactic benefits of antioxidant vitamin supplementation at high altitude. *High Alt Med Biol* 2001 Spring;2(1):21-9
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4. Kelly GS. *Rhodiola rosea*: a possible plant adaptogen. *Altern Med Rev* 2001 Jun;6(3):293-302
5. McKenna DJ, Jones K, Hughes K. Efficacy, safety, and use of ginkgo biloba in clinical and preclinical applications. *Altern Ther Health Med* 2001 Sep-Oct;7(5):70-86, 88-90
6. Schreiber M, Trojan S. Protective effect of flavonoids and tocopherol in high altitude hypoxia in the rat: comparison with ascorbic acid. *Cesk Fysiol* 1998 Jun;47(2):51-2