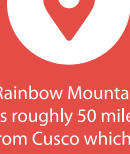
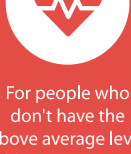


# RAINBOW MOUNTAIN

## INFO



Rainbow Mountain is roughly 50 miles from Cusco which is about a 3 hour journey in the South East direction. Road PE-S3 if travelling yourself.



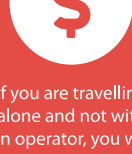
For people who don't have the above average level of fitness it takes to trek the mountain, it is possible to rent a horse that will take you to the top.



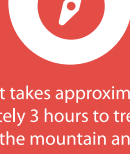
At 5,200m you will have the perfect view of the magical Rainbow Mountain in the Wilkanata Mountain Range, within the Andes, Peru.



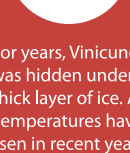
If travelling alone, a common route is through Checacupe, Pitumarca, Hancipacha. If you are with a tour operator, they will take you where you need to be.



If you are travelling alone and not with an operator, you will be charged a 10 soles entry fee. This may not be at the start of your journey but possibly somewhere on route - be wary of this.



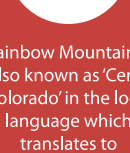
It takes approximately 3 hours to trek the mountain and the same back down, check out our How to Get There page for more info on getting to Rainbow Mountain.



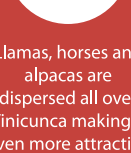
For years, Vinicunca was hidden under a thick layer of ice. As temperatures have risen in recent years, the snowpack thawed revealing multi-coloured minerals.



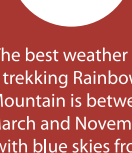
Colours range from maroons to custards with green turquoises, blues and so many more that attract an increasing amount of travellers everyday.



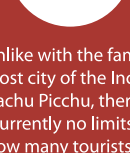
Rainbow Mountain is also known as 'Cerro Colorado' in the local language which translates to seven-coloured mountain and hence the name "Rainbow Mountain".



Llamas, horses and alpacas are dispersed all over Vinicunca making it even more attractive to people who decide to tackle the challenging trek up this mountain.



The best weather for trekking Rainbow Mountain is between March and November with blue skies from June to August - however at such a high altitude it will still be harshly cold and often windy.



Unlike with the famous lost city of the Incas, Machu Picchu, there are currently no limits on how many tourists can trek to the stunning spot. It is becoming increasingly popular so we recommend going as soon as you can.

## TOP TIPS

Rainbow Mountain is at an altitude of more than half of Mount Everest.

You can rent a horse at any point on the way if you begin to find the altitude and trek too difficult - you do not need to have one hired from the beginning.

The colours of Rainbow Mountain are made up from 14 different colourful minerals.

The mountain was entirely covered in snow only 4 years ago.

Temperatures still drop below 0 at night.

Llamas and Alpacas can be seen dotted all along the route to Vinicunca.

The weather changes so rapidly that you can experience everything from snow and hailstorms to blistering sun in the space of an hour.

## OPERATORS

### RAINBOW MOUNTAIN TRAVELS



- ✓ #1 recommended operator
- ✓ Friendly, attentive guides with perfectly fluent English and extensive knowledge on all things concerning Rainbow Mountain - First Aid trained
- ✓ Top features - oxygen tanks, first aid kits, official guides, have regularly updated info and a safety guarantee

### KANTU PERU TOURS



- ✓ #2 recommended operator
- ✓ Medical first aid kit and trained first aiders present on every tour.
- ✓ Personalised tour with the safest and most reliable tour operator of Rainbow Mountain

### RASGOS DEL PERU



- ✓ #3 recommended operator
- ✓ Medical first aid kit and trained first aiders present on every tour.
- ✓ Personalised tour with the safest and most reliable tour operator of Rainbow Mountain.

### HAKU TRAVEL



- ✓ #4 recommended operator
- ✓ Medical first aid kit and trained first aiders present on every tour.
- ✓ Personalised tour with the safest and most reliable tour operator of Rainbow Mountain.

## HOW TO GET THERE

### GETTING TO THE MOUNTAIN FROM CUSCO



#### 1. BY CAR

Renting a car is another popular way for people to travel to Rainbow Mountain.

Vinicunca is approximately a 3-hour drive/50 miles South East of Cusco. Most drivers will first reach Checacupe. After that is a slightly bigger village - Pitumarca, and the final village on your path will be Hancipacha.

After that is the final stop, the car park where you leave your vehicle behind and face the path to Rainbow Mountain.



#### 2. BY TAXI

Simply getting a taxi is another option commonly used by travellers to get from Cusco to the base of Rainbow Mountain before climbing. This option is obviously more commonly used among travellers who don't wish to use an operator and can't drive but we would also recommend drivers use this option as the effects of altitude might be more taxing than you expect. Driving back to Cusco after the trek may not be a very safe option.



#### 3. TOUR OPERATORS

This is our number one suggestion for getting to Rainbow Mountain.

Tour Operators are the most convenient and often the cheapest way to experience a trek to Vinicunca depending on the size of your group. As they usually take large groups, transport often works out cheaper than renting or buying tickets.

As well as this, guides (of the right companies) have an in-depth knowledge of the mountain and can inform you about it as you trek.

### GETTING TO THE MOUNTAIN FROM CUSCO



#### 1. PERU HOP BUS

This is our number 1 recommendation for getting to Cusco from Lima.

Altitude Sickness is an issue that effects many people in Cusco, stopping them from being able to climb Rainbow Mountain. Peru Hop's hop on hop off system is the perfect way for travellers to gradually adjust to altitude while travelling through Peru.

As Vinicunca is at an altitude of 5,200m, it is essential travellers are adjusted before trekking.



#### 2. LOCAL BUSES

The next best option is for travellers to catch a local bus from Lima to Cusco.

These journeys are often direct, so can be very long, sometimes up to 26 hours. Several local companies use shortcuts on roads that go through the Andes to reduce this time. However, These roads can be very, very dangerous and buses sometimes even get hijacked so be extremely careful when choosing a company.



#### 3. FLYING

We would only ever recommend flying from Lima to Cusco if you are incredibly short on time.

Not only do you miss seeing all of the other amazing destinations in Peru, but you are also putting yourself at high risk of Altitude Sickness.

Going from sea level to 3,400m in such a short space of time does not allow your body to adjust - this affects the majority of travellers who opt. to fly direct so we strongly advise against.

## TREKKING THE MOUNTAIN OPTIONS



#### 1. FULL DAY TREK

This is the most popular option when it comes to trekking up to Rainbow Mountain.

Most operators have quite an early start leaving Cusco and driving for roughly 3 hours to Pitumarca. Then operators will usually move on to Qesoyuno for the start of the trek. It takes roughly the same amount of time to get back down and to return to Cusco.

Most operators will have you back in Cusco Plaza by 19:00pm.



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## WHAT TO BRING



#### WARM CLOTHES

Depending on the time of year, the skies while climbing Rainbow Mountain can either be a crystal-clear blue or a moody variation of grey shades. However, on both occasions comfortable, durable clothes are imperative.

It is very cold at that altitude and can also be incredibly windy making the trek abundantly more uncomfortable if you do not have clothes that keep you warm. While many focus on trekking boots, more experienced trekkers will understand the necessity of having a strong pair of pants both able to breathe and help cut wind.



#### WALKING BOOTS & SOCKS

Weather can change very quickly when climbing Rainbow Mountain. The varying weather can have an effect on the condition of the path however, in more recent times, the path has become smoother with the tracks of other travellers.

Yet we still advise wearing a strong, durable pair of walking boots and thick hiking socks when trekking Vinicunca. Some spots can still be rough so wearing these is the ultimate way of preventing falling injuries.

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There are no more facilities as you progress on the route so be sure to also bring hand sanitizer if you think you may need to go again along the way.



#### RAIN JACKET/PONCHO

It's quite common for it to rain on the trip to Rainbow Mountain, particularly outside the months of June to August. With such a high risk of rainfall, we highly suggest bringing waterproof material on your trek.

The journey up and down can be tough but twice as much so if you are damp and cold. A simple rain poncho bought in Cusco is often enough to help with this.



#### SUN HAT & SUNGLASSES

Between the months of March and November, particularly June to August, people will visit Rainbow Mountain under a blue sky. As you may have guessed by now, the weather will vary greatly throughout the duration of your trek.

We recommend a sun hat and glasses as the radiation from the sun at this altitude can be quite strong and the glare almost blinding. This weather can be a great distraction which should be avoided when walking on rough terrain.



#### TOILET PAPER & HAND SANTIZER

When you arrive to the base of the mountain, before climbing, there will be huts with toilet facilities available. However, fair warning, these toilets are not very well developed and if you think you will need toilet paper, you better bring your own.

There are no more facilities as you progress on the route so be sure to also bring hand sanitizer if you think you may need to go again along the way.



#### SUNCREAM

It's quite common for it to rain on the trip to Rainbow Mountain, particularly outside the months of June to August. With such a high risk of rainfall, we highly suggest bringing waterproof material on your trek.

The journey up and down can be tough but twice as much so if you are damp and cold. A simple rain poncho bought in Cusco is often enough to help with this.



#### SMALL BACKPACK

Several of the things on this list are small essentials that can be packed in a small, convenient backpack to be brought up the mountain with any other things you may want to take. Try to only bring things you will need as walking with a backpack will get difficult quite fast at such a high altitude.

We recommend taking a backpack with a waist adjuster or hip belt as without one, your backpack can tire you fairly quickly.



#### COCA LEAVES

Coca leaves are one of the items on this list we would consider crucial. It is for this reason that you can also find coca leaves on our Safety Advice page.

For anyone prone to suffering symptoms of altitude sickness, coca leaves are the ideal aid to help with a throbbing head and make it less difficult to breathe at such a high altitude. It is advised to chew on coca leaves for this help.



#### LOTS OF WATER

Staying hydrated and drinking lots of water is also on our Safety Advice page. It is so important to keep your body hydrated to ensure you will be able to climb the mountain without tiring out quickly and easily.

We also suggest taking only small sips of water as you go rather than large gulps so you don't burden yourself with a sudden urge for the toilet when trekking.



#### ENTRY FEE

There is a 10 soles entrance fee for anyone entering the park. If you decide to visit Rainbow with an operator, the 10 soles entrance fee may or may not be included in your package, depending on the operator you choose to travel with.

It is not included with most tours so be sure to check before you leave.



#### TREKKING POLES

We recommend these for anyone who thinks they might struggle while trekking Rainbow Mountain. They are mostly useful going uphill and downhill however they are also often used on slippery ground such as mud, snow or loose rocks.

Having two extra points of contact help your traction immensely so we would recommend to anyone who feel they may have a difficult time with this trek.

## SAFETY TIPS



#### STAY HYDRATED

This is among the most important things for travellers to be conscious of while travelling Rainbow Mountain.

At such a high altitude it is important for your body to be hydrated so make sure you bring plenty of water and only take small sips of instead of large gulps. This allows the body to process hydration without the urgent need for the toilet.



#### BRING COCA LEAVES

Coca leaves are a famous aid used in Cusco to help with altitude.

When chewed, coca leaves are known to clear a throbbing head and make it easier to breathe at such a high altitude.

They can also be bought quite cheap in Cusco so we advise picking up a bag to bring on your trek in case altitude sickness worsens while trekking.



#### BOOK WITH A RELIABLE OPERATOR

Trekking Rainbow Mountain is no easy task and many people struggle, particularly with the altitude. Therefore, it is so necessary that you choose a qualified operator.

Check out our operators page to see who our top picks are based on quality of service, equipment, transport and guide. These are the most important things to look out for with Operators, read below for more detail on why these are so important.

## PRIORITIES WHEN CHOOSING OPERATOR



#### 1. QUALIFIED GUIDES

The quality of your guide can make the difference between an enjoyable, interesting trek up to Rainbow Mountain and a dragged out, boring, disappointing experience.

There are several unqualified operators in existence, with more and more setting up as Rainbow Mountain grows in popularity. Some of these will have guides with little to no English or possibly even rush travellers to finish the experience faster.

There are also operators with guides untrained in first aid or who don't bring oxygen tanks - do not travel without these insurances.



#### 2. OXYGEN TANKS

The need for the use of an oxygen tank while trekking Rainbow Mountain is quite common.

Altitude effects different people in different ways. Many times, athletes or people known to have a high level of fitness, have struggled with Rainbow Mountain far more than others in their group, needing the use of their operators' oxygen tanks.

You won't know until you get there if you will need an oxygen tank or not therefore it is necessary you travel with an operator who provides one.



#### 3. FIRST AID KITS

This is something you should look out for when trying to pick an authentic and professional tour operator but is mainly just precautionary recently.

As more people travel to Rainbow Mountain the path is becoming more paved and less dangerous. Operators are also taking more precautions to follow a safe route.

However, injuries do still happen from time to time and so, providing a guide trained in first aid with a first aid kit is definitely something you should look for in an operator.