

# Mini Photo Safari to Manu Cloud Forest

Cusco – Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge – Cusco

Duration                    3D/2N

Fixed departure - Tuesday & Saturday

The Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge is located at 1600m/5200ft elevation in the Kosñipata Valley, 165km/102 miles by road from Cusco, and situated within the 5,060ha/12,500-acre cloud forest reserve of the conservation group Peru Verde. We take just 7 to 8 hours by bus from Cusco to reach the peace and simple comfort of this lodge -- although many groups are so enthralled by the magical diversity of what the world's leading bird tour company has called "the best road in the world", that they spend a bit longer.

It has 12 comfortable, double-occupancy bungalows, with hot showers, flush toilets and private balconies overlooking the cloud forest. Just minutes walk from the lodge, the world's largest, most accessible and tamest known group of displaying Andean Cocks-of-the-Rock awe and delight visitors with their twice-daily courting antics.

## Itinerary

**Day 1: Cusco to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge.**- Our overland journey begins at 3,400m/11,150 ft, with an early departure from the highland city of Cusco. Today's destination is the lush cloud forest region where the Andes fall away to the Amazon basin. This is a day of scenic drama and striking contrasts. We first visit a mountain wetland habitat teeming with migrant and local waterfowl, before crossing two mountain ranges between the Cusco valley and the Paucartambo valley, to a maximum altitude of 3,900m/12,790ft. Finally, we follow a sinuous ribbon of highway on its plunge through an extraordinary world of forested cliffs, waterfalls and gorges. We take leisurely stops to see mountain villages, a hilltop necropolis of *chullpas* (pre-Inca burial chambers), and the abrupt ridge top of Ajanaco, which marks the final high point where the Andes begin their swoop into the Amazon basin. In clear weather we will see a breathtaking panorama of cloud forest and mountain giving way to the lowland rainforest plains far below us.

After a lunch we descend through the startling and rapid environmental transformations characteristic of the tropical Andes, passing from grassland and stunted trees through elfin forest, until we wind through a lush and magical world of overhanging trees, giant ferns, monster begonias, countless orchids and bromeliads, and a diverse and teeming birdlife.

We make frequent spontaneous stops, perhaps spotting a brilliantly feathered quetzal, a trogon, or the wild turkey-like Guan. We reach the comfortable Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge. **(Box Lunch, D)**

**Day 2: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge: Along the road and trails.**-In the early morning, we have a chance to view the Cock-of-the-Rock in full, raucous courting display. This lek and its observation blind are famous among birders, since nowhere else on the planet allows so many of these spectacular blazing red birds to be seen so easily. (Note that the very best months for viewing Cocks-of-the-Rock are in September, October and November, although the males display throughout the year.) Afterwards we can stroll along the clearing formed by the nearby road, spotting other birds, and with luck some Brown Capuchin or Woolly Monkeys.

After a hearty breakfast we can explore the forest overhanging the gravel road near the lodge, or some of the miles of trails that wind through the valley, to see high elevation cloud forest birds. This is a relaxed and enchanting day. As we amble among the woods and waterfalls we can marvel at the extraordinary variety of orchids, bromeliads, ferns, begonias, lichens and mosses -- and we also have a chance of sighting Woolly and/or Brown capuchin monkeys. Along the way we may encounter some of the most colorful denizens of the cloud forest, such as the brilliant Golden-headed Quetzal, Gray-breasted Mountain Toucan, Blue-crowned Motmot, Umbrella Bird, Blue-banded Toucanet, fruit-eating tanagers, Red-crested Cotinga, Banded-tail Fruit-eater, and a variety of flycatchers.

In the afternoon we can relax at the lodge, enjoying the dining hall viewing platform, or our private forest-overlook balcony. Or we can cross the river on the lodge's private *oroya* (cable bridge) and hike the trail on the south side of the Kosñipata River. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 3: Cock of the Rock Lodge to Cusco – Departure day.**- After an early breakfast we set off once more up the cloud forest highway, pausing here and there to alight and stroll in search of more birds: ones we have already seen, but are too spectacular to ignore, and birds we are seeing for the first time. Or perhaps we will glimpse monkeys that have so far eluded us. We wind our way through the enchanted mountain landscape on our route back to Cusco, knowing that the memory of this will remain with us for years to come. **(B, Box Lunch)**

**Important notes;**

- Please note that the program may vary slightly so as to maximize your wildlife sightings, depending on the reports of our researchers and experienced naturalist guides based at the lodge.
- We strongly recommend read your **PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION**.
- Our staff can be contacted 24 hours a day on **972 252 655** in Cusco.