

# THE INCA TRAIL

on the highway of the great empire



M. D' Aurio

Inca Trail Phuyapatamarca, Cusco

The Incas built a vast network of roads to be able to communicate with the four regions of their huge empire. The network was known as Qhapaq Ñan (the sovereign's highway) or Inca Road. It was built of stone pathways, suitable for the traffic of two or three people with a herd of llamas. Rivers were crossed by hanging bridges and the steep slopes were conquered with stairways and ramps. There are remains of the Qhapaq Ñan throughout Peru that are still used to this day by local farmers and peasants. One of the most impressive and best preserved roads is the trail that links Cuzco to Machu Picchu.

Today, hiking the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu allows the visitor to step back in time and walk through a variety of eco-systems and dazzling scenery. The length of the 39 kilometers (24 miles) includes unforgettable views, archaeological remains; 400 different species of orchids and begonias, exotic trees like the pisonay, the queñual and innumerable species of fauna in their natural habitat, such as the cock-of-the-rocks, the white-winged guam, llamas and vicuñas, the white-tailed deer, vizcacha and, if visitors are lucky, the endangered and vegetarian spectacled bear. The Inca Trail is one of the world's most important trekking and camping routes and is possible to get there in 4 days/ 3nights or 2 days / 1 night and find the altitude between minimum 2,600 meters - 8,528 feet; Maximum: 4,200 meters - 13,776 feet.



A. Balaguer / PromPeru

On the way to Machu Picchu

# MACHU PICCHU

the lost city of the Incas



W. Wust / PromPeru

Machu Picchu

Imbued with a magical silence, 120 km (74 miles) from Cusco on the slopes above the Urubabamba River, lies one of the world's most extraordinary archaeological sites. Some also consider it to be a mystical place that exudes vital energy. Machu Picchu (2,400 meters / 7,872 feet), is remarkable for its solid construction, its well-balanced use of space and the harmony of the design with its natural surroundings. Its name comes from the ancient Quechua word that means old mountain.

The site was built entirely of stone, using every space in harmony with function. There are two main sections: the urban area, which includes temples, palaces, stairways, and fountains; and the agricultural area made up of various types of terraces for cultivation.

The local people knew of the ruins long ago. In 1911, the guide Melchor Arteaga led professor Hiram Bingham to Machu Picchu. Bingham returned in 1914 with the support of Yale University and the National Geographic Society and since then, Machu Picchu has been known as the 'Lost City of the Incas', an initial confusion with Old Vilcabamba.

The citadel is believed to have been fundamentally for religious purposes. Bingham found a cemetery exclusively of women, which led him to believe it was an immense monastery of acllas (young women) and a retreat and resting place for the Cuzco sovereign. Its construction possibly dates to the times of Tupac Inca Yupanqui, the final era of the Inca empire.

The Machu Picchu Historical Sanctuary (32,492 hectares - 80,255 acres) is a natural reserve, which UNESCO declared a World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site in 1983.



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Terraces Machu Picchu