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HIKING FOR HEALTH IN PERU

A fresh way to see the sights: trekking to ancient Inca cities and traversing tree canopies in the jungle

words by GABRIEL O'RORKE







Say hiking and Peru in the same breath and most people think of the Inca Trail. But the Inkaterra approach is as far from backpackergrunge as it gets. Its three hotels are for those seeking both adventure and creature comforts, and are now all strung together on a new Walking to Wellness tour, which spans the Amazon, Machu Picchu and Cusco for 16 days of adrenalin-pumping activities, healthy

local food and spa time.

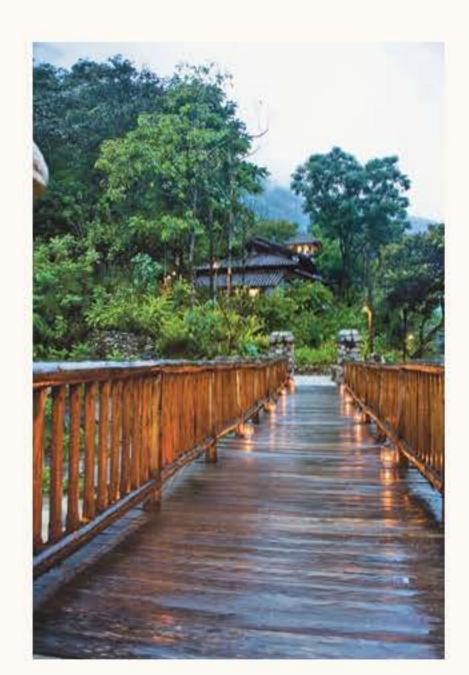
At Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica, excursions are twice daily. The most hardcore are in the morning (partly due to the 5am wake-up call), taking on knee-knocking canopy walkways, cayman-ridden rivers in a kayak and jungle hikes.

Next it's on to the Andes and Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel for treks around the everything-it's-hyped-up-to-be Lost City of Machu Picchu. After scaling the steps of the 15th-century Inca citadel, it's back to Pueblo for daydreaming in the Andean sauna, a candle-lit eucalyptus hut. There are also hot-stone massages with gems and coca-leaf oil (the same leaves that make the class A drug, so it gets the blood flowing).

The last stop is Cusco. The UNESCO World Heritage city is 3,400 metres above sea level and Inkaterra La Casona's micro-spa is one of the few in the world where therapists ask if you want extra oxygen with your massage. This trip will leave you hyper-toned from trekking, massaged to knot-free oblivion and wide- and bright-eyed having soaked up all the marvels of the Incas.

Rainbow Tours (+44 20 7666 1260; www.rainbowtours.co.uk) offers the Walking to Wellness trip from £6,135, including flights, transfers, excursions and activities

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Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel