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## Ten Things: Cusco & Urubamba / Only In South America

AUGUST 30, 2015 by MATT

*Highlights from our recent trip to Peru with LAN Airlines. Today is all about Cusco and Urubamba.*

### **Urubamba, Sacred Valley Of The Incas**

The largest town in the Sacred Valley Of The Incas, Urubamba is only an hour away from Cusco and makes a great stopping point in acclimating yourself to the area. Miles and miles of scenic pastures, blue and purple mountains, and sun and fog illuminate the ancient valley, which is nothing short of breathtaking. There's not much to do here other than marvel at the views and visit with Urubamba's locals, and that's fine with me. However, we were lucky enough to stay at a new property run by Peru's small boutique hotel group Inkaterra called the [Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba](#). Built in the style of a traditional Hacienda, the main lodge has a few rooms with larger casitas nestled at the foot of the mountains out back. Having just opened this summer, we didn't have a chance to visit the casitas but the elegantly tranquil lobby and restaurant and bar were absolutely perfect. It was a perfect place to rest once the altitude sickness took over. And it did.

















































### **Saksaywaman**

Located on the outskirts of the city center of Cusco, this [Citadel](#) dates back to the 1100s when it was started by the Killke culture and subsequently taken over by the Inca in the 13th century. Jaw-dropping stones of ungodly weight and shape rest in delicate grooves that make up the walls of the citadel, and yet no one knows exactly how the large monoliths were fit together so precisely. A quarry in the area answers the question of where the stones came from, but the rest is a mystery that will leave you scratching your head. I can't tell you how many "aliens from outer space" jokes were made. Definitely worthy of a visit.















































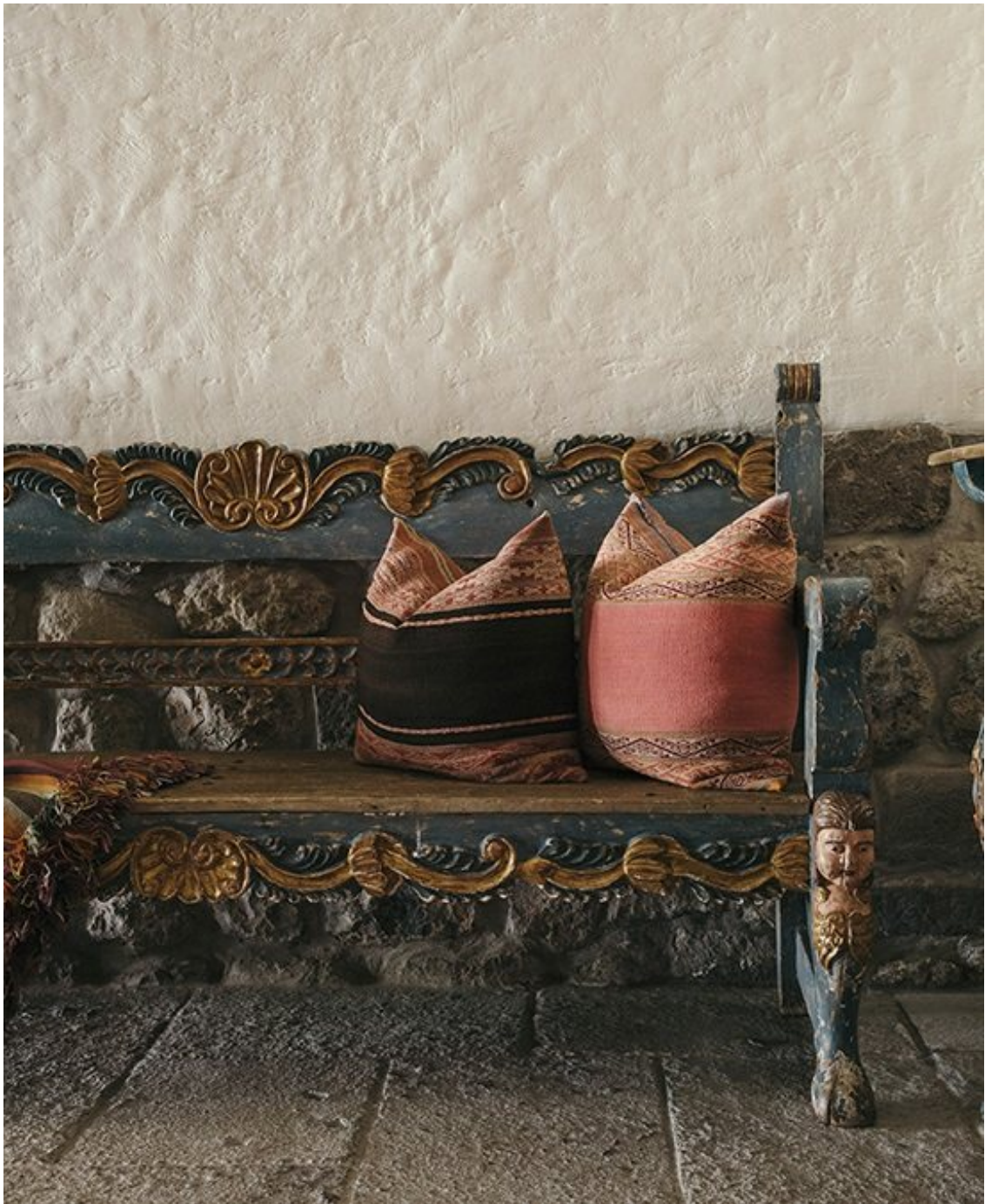










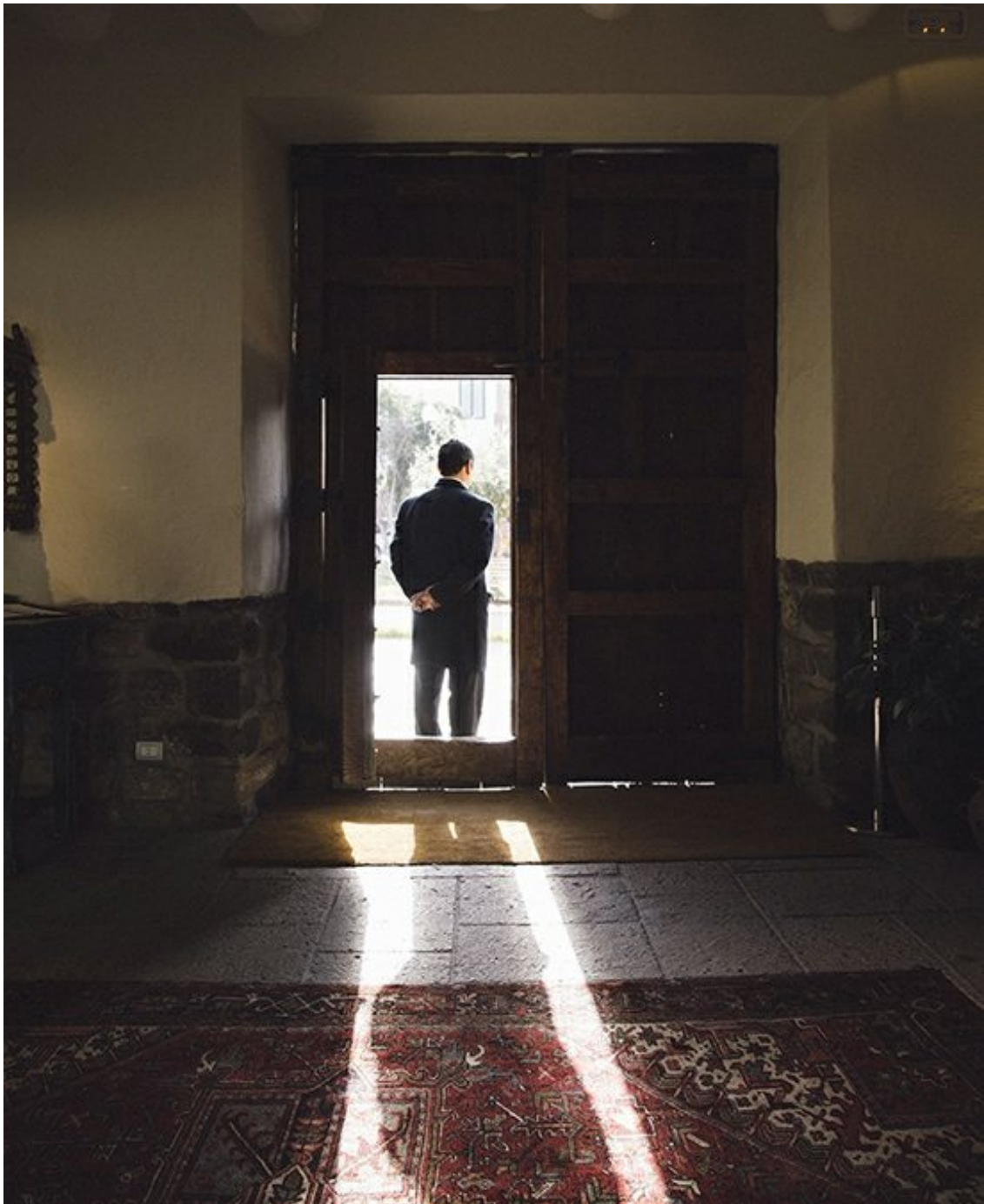


























### **Qorikancha (Temple of the Sun)**

There are Incan temples, then there's Temple Of The Sun, which was the richest of all temples built. Covered in gold which represented the sun, this site was eventually looted and destroyed by the invading Spaniards who then proceeded to built a church and convent on top. Some of the Incan stonework remains, but no sign of gold is to be found, unfortunately. However, looking at Incan masonry up close and touching it leaves you with a sense of awe as to how such artistic precision was even possible without modern-day tools. I was told their work at this site specifically is studied by builders and architects and I can see why. My mind was blown.



















## Tea

If the altitude introduced us to the consumption of coca leaf tea, then Peruvian culture introduced us to a whole variety of other types of tea for us to enjoy. So many different types of mint, fresh chamomile, lemon verbena and other plants were steeped in warm water, sweetened and sipped while enjoying the view, and trying to replicate it at home just isn't the same.

















### **Train to Machu Picchu**

There are a few different ways to get to Machu Picchu, and luckily for us we took the scenic route with [Perurail](#). With curved glass windows, Perurail affords you with a phenomenal view of the passing scenery which includes rivers, snowcapped mountains and an on-board fashion show. That's right, a fashion show featuring local Alpaca wool apparel modeled by the crew. You can't miss it. There are a few other surprises too.



## Llamas

What, you didn't think I'd visit Peru and not catch a glimpse of these beauties, did you?





### **Luciana**

My entire trip to Peru would have been worth it if the only photograph I took was of Luciana. While walking around the market I instantly saw her from across the aisle, and spent most of my time at her stall while she graciously sampled juices and answered questions. "I would have worn earrings today had I known you were taking my picture!" she said, but if you ask me, nothing more was needed from such a beautiful woman like her. My heart be still!





**Up next: Visiting Machu Picchu!**

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## Comments





Stephanie says

September 1, 2015 at 3:18 pm

Wow, I love everything about this post and now I want to go to Peru even more! Your photos are breathtaking! And the hotels are incredible, especially the last one! How cool is that quinoa plant, the nest, cute lama that your pants matched, hehe, and that baby lamb Gabe is holding! I could go on..... I can only imagine how amazing the food was!