

Condé Nast Traveller

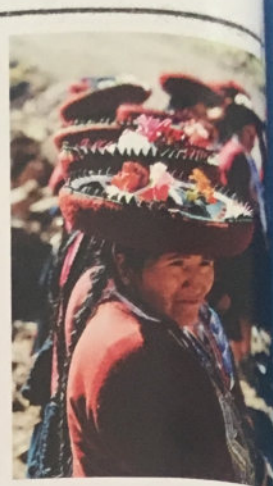
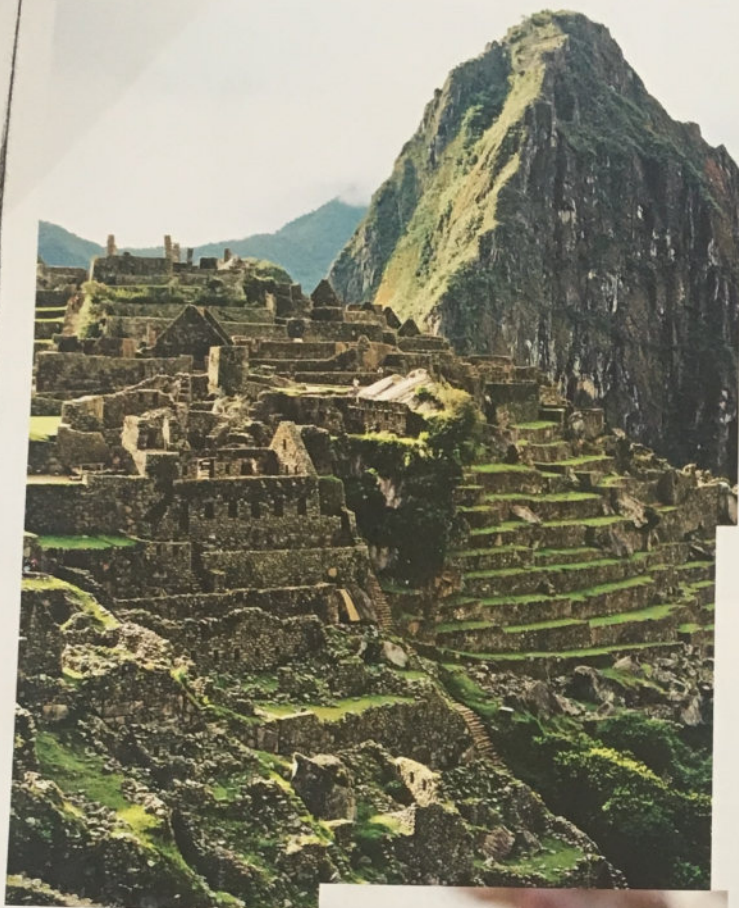
JUNE 2018 £4.50

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THE INCA ADVENTURE

FAR-FLUNG EXPLORING IN DEEPEST PERU

An archaeology holiday might not be the way to sell it, but a trip through Peru's highlands is likely to be profoundly educational and deeply enjoyable. For children, as for adults, it's all about making connections. Peruvian indigenous peoples, and their clothes, culture and food, remain a force in this mesmerising region – and going overland helps to link must-see sites with present-day realities. Big, blue, deliriously beautiful Lake Titicaca is enticing. But to get to know it, approach from multiple angles. Sleek Titilaka Lodge is the ultimate base: wake up with the immense, glass-calm lake filling your bedroom window, then, after breakfast, set off on a small boat to visit the Uros people, who dwell on floating reed islands. There are also pole-rafting excursions and bustling market visits. The fine Peruvian fusion food, from subtle sea-bass ceviche to tender llama steaks and grilled guinea pig (gulp), helps to power lungs and legs. From

THE FUSION FOOD, GRILLED GUINEA PIG (GULP), HELPS TO POWER LUNGS AND LEGS

the lake it's a day's drive across the Andean high plain, an otherworldly region of golden grassland, llama herds and sudden views of snow-capped peaks. Around dusk, the road dips into a lush valley, peppers and potatoes sprouting on tidy terraces, to Cusco, the Incas' navel of the world. A couple of nights at Inkaterra La Casona, a restored 16th-century manor house, allows time to stroll through artsy San Blas and see the Sacsayhuamán ruins. Then onwards, 35 miles north of Cusco to the Explora Sacred Valley. Here, on the banks of the Urubamba River, a menu of 20 or so explorations includes trips to a salt mine, a walk through the living Inca town of Ollantaytambo and a thrilling, mainly downhill bike ride into the valley. One last climactic quest: Machu Picchu, reached by the Pullman-style *Hiram Bingham* train, with music and dancing as you roll. Walk up to the Sun Gate to take in the views and celebrate the collective knock-your-socks-off conquest.

INSIDER TIP Go easy for the first day or two to acclimatise to the thin air.

BOOK IT Journey Latin America offers a 12-day overland holiday in Peru similar to the above, with driver, from £4,612 per person, including flights. +44 20 8600 1881; journeylatinamerica.co.uk

BY CHRIS MOSS

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