



Apu's Everlasting Truth

A vision channeled through blind spots, a sunrise gated in megaliths, a mountain perspiring vibrant flora with a surreal thumbprint that left visitors shimmering. [Machu Picchu](#) was a trip of metamorphosis and discovery.



Alex, our capable guide, was native [Quechuan](#) with a friendly and informative demeanor. Leading this journey, he immersed us in rich scenery of the [Andes](#) Mountains and native culture. Following our predetermined route, we mountain biked a 2,000 meter descent of paved rural road, through a bit of rain, waterfalls, and enchanting pinnacle views. After turning in the gear, we were bussed to our afternoon outfitter in Santa Maria.

A quaint jungle lodge with a small farm served our fill of [Peruvian dishes](#) and revived our wary limbs. While relishing our assortment of morning blessings, a charismatic river-rafting guide captured our nourished enthusiasm. He charmed us from leisure to plunge the current of the [Urubamba River](#) that sculpted our mountainous cradle.

Our trek traced the ridges of the Urubamba. So, this was a welcomed acquaintance with the waterway's temper. We were nine to a raft, including the guide. Everyone geared with life vests, a reminder of the danger that lies below. With a sense of preparation, we arrived at the unknown. The Urubamba exhausted our bodies, but exhilarated our souls.



We retired the day, vexed by this sacred valley.

The next morning we left modern comforts to backpack through Peruvian jungle, boasting a sense of accomplishment. We hiked over and down 16 kilometers across the Inca Trail. Santa Theresa greeted us with natural hot springs and private beds before we hiked an additional 11 kilometers to Aguas Calientes, using a cart and pulley to cross a 70 foot gorge, at one point. Demanding our full capacity, this experience was well worth it.

We had overslept. Our goldilocks beds lured slumber that muted our alarms. A knock at the door was the final rapture bringing a hasty ritual that prepared us for our ultimate destination. We'd crossed mountains; a river, a gorge, jungle overgrowth, ancient pathways, monuments, and this would be our ascent into the sacred city.

With a light pack and heavy feet we strolled to meet friends in the mother of all lines. "What time is it?" my girlfriend groaned. I replied with a matter of fact, "4 am." Then it rained. Our raincoats were quickly on and zipped, but with no breath for the Nylon in 60% humidity our sweat sealed to our skin. The line in front of us traced the muddy road for a quarter mile, unabashedly rewarding early birds with worms. No one likes worms.

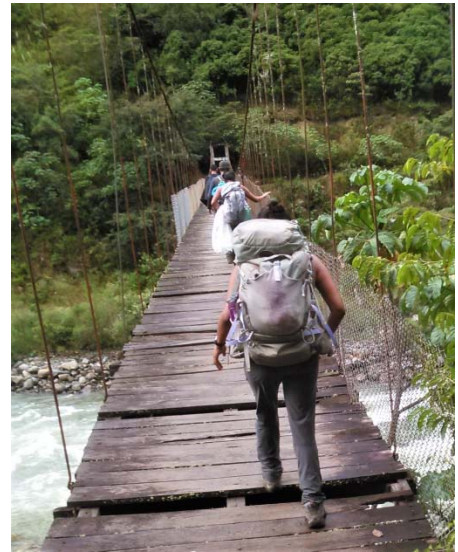
Sipping coffee we made friends with umbrellas. Eclectic tourists fed the arresting line, harboring utilities we eyed with amusement. Mystery surged from the gate as buses trickled through. This preceding caravan carried officials, guides, and servicemen fifteen minutes up a narrow switchback road delivering passengers to the greeting center of the world heritage site. Following them were tourists



cradled in leather seats of climate controlled carriages.

I cocked my neck to glimpse the entrance gate. Its simple light and tiny security kiosk were a satire of the citadel we were greeting. We boasted our permits and the complete inaccuracy of our identities printed. Inspecting the gateway to our transcendence, I audited all the comforts I deliberately left behind and weighed it against the vision of the top of Machu Picchu. My ego reveled in a sense of invincibility with no abolishment, bracing for the task ahead.

Steep overgrown jungle housed seventeen hundred wet stone stairs linking the mountain base to the greeting center. Ascending mobs gasped heavy



arrhythmic breaths. It was every man for himself, and I was nowhere near the front.

The next hour was a little determination, a little discipline, and much disappointment. It melded me with a principle of surrender to vision that proved its sophistication. These stairs could have been traded for a \$15 bus pass and leather seat, but my metamorphosis was my prize. The self-development captured in this unique obstacle, shared by millennia of complexly opposite strangers, framed a perspective on reality and reason that crystalized a truth.

There are things beyond our awareness that operate their own agenda manipulating the contents of each domain. Quechuan people described this as the spirit of the mountains. Each mountain had a spirit, or Apu. This Apu's name was Machu Picchu. His demands were clear from the start, and he demanded I climb. Climb with consideration. Find firm footing. Look ahead. Take one step at a



time, with two free hands. Be mindful of pit falls. People above, below, and beside like a line of ants heaving back to a colony. The true word never left, "climb."

Unnoticeably, foggy morning twilight sapped darkness along the trail. Still too dim to lift our eyes from the endless mountain face, the climbing never ceased. Charismatically, the first greeting platform emerged with an unpleasant chaos. Fumbling to navigate the crowd, I made it to my friends near the service stations.

In a flurry we clamored through the final gauntlet to the ruins of Machu Picchu. An ancient society's globally respected evidence lifted our cheeks in awe. We were standing on the shoulders of giants, basking in naked architecture of a uniquely advanced society raised over 2,400 meters above sea level. Their mastery over the land lay undeniable in profound stone work fusing deadly cliff-face to plateaus of reliable city foundation. This pinnacle filled us with the sensation of wonder that seeped a purest curiosity. Discovery crystalized an eternal light that shined the truth I reconciled in that ascension. In the face of adversity, my vision fueled me to continue climbing until I reached this pinnacle. Not only had the



journey sculpted a unique prism of perspective, but the reward imprinted sure confidence that I'm capable of manifesting a dream into reality.

- G James Mitchell