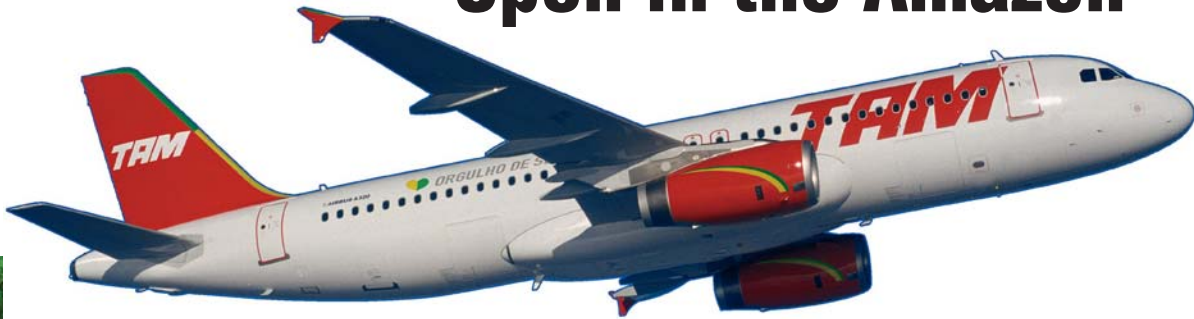


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# Peru: Beyond Machu Picchu and Cusco

Peru Travel Mart 2006 was out to correct some misconceptions.

By Mark Zussman

**O**f must-see tourist attractions on the South American continent, the Peruvian archeological site of Machu Picchu ranks way up high at the top of the list along with Rio de Janeiro (the city as a whole), Buenos Aires (the same), the Amazon River and Rain Forest, mighty Iguassu Falls and not so very many others. Go to Europe for history maybe. Go to South America for pre-history. Machu Picchu is not just breathtakingly set amidst high Andean peaks — with a view of tropical jungle below. It stimulates the most sleep-troubling musings as to why ancient people couldn't just leave the world alone, the way they found it, but instead found it necessary to lug huge boulders around to form temples, ceremonial centers, pyramids.

Macchu Picchu, in any event, was not the principal theme of the Peru Travel Mart, or PTM, 2006 that brought something on the order of 150 North American, Central American, South American, European and Asian buyers first to Lima and then off on "work-study" excursions to other Peruvian destinations in the recent month of April. PTM 2006 wasn't in any way hostile to Macchu Picchu. The Peruvians are smart cookies. They are not nuts. They are not suicidal. They are not going to choke to death the goose that lays the golden eggs.

The Peruvians were nevertheless eager to make two important points.

One, despite a widespread misconception to the contrary, Peru is not merely Machu Picchu. In particular, tour operators and travel agents do their clients a disservice if they fly them in to Lima of an evening, give



Peruvian movers and shakers (left to right): Eduardo Arrarte Fiedler, of MINCETUR and PENTUR; Elizabeth Barthelme Saco, General Manager, PromPerú; Jose Carlos Plaza, President of the Organizing Committee, PTM 2006; Michele Lettersten, Vice-President, Lima Convention and Visitors Bureau; Fredy Gamarra Elías, President, National Society of Games of Chance.

them a few hours of sleep at a downtown hotel that is in effect used as if it were an airport hotel, then whisk them off first thing in the morning to Cusco and the Machu Picchu experience.

Give them a chance to acclimatize before they're rushed off in the direction of sorroche, or altitude sickness, the Peruvians said repeatedly, either subtly or bluntly. In addition, give them a chance to know Lima. Lima is one of the world's great culinary capitals and, if visitors aren't going to get to know the city's other treasures in depth, at least let them enjoy a decent city tour. But let's return to the Lima question later.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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**PERU TRAVEL MART FROM PAGE 3****On to Ancash**

The second important point the Peruvians strove to make at their PTM 2006 is that, in this land verging on two times the size of Texas, there are interesting destinations galore in addition to Lima, gateway and capital, and Cusco/Machu Picchu. A salute, then, to Jose Carlos Plaza, the president of the PTM 2006 Organizing Committee, a shrewd man but also a courageous one, for taking a gamble on touring a rather large group of buyers not around any such familiar “secondary” destination as, say, Iquitos, Puno, the Nasca Lines, the Paracas National Reserve and the Ballestas Islands, or Ica — a destination, that is, that his buyers had at least heard of — but rather, the day after the business meeting, to a region that he, like his buyers, had to know was only beginning to gear up for anything other than backpacker and special-interest tourism and therefore was going to be something of a prove-it-to-me sell.

The region in question, north of Lima, is called Ancash. (The accent is on the first syllable, AHN-cahsh.)

And to what degree is Ancash saleable?

I wish I knew. The many Brazilians among the buyers — the Americans at this point had gone elsewhere — said, “Complicado.” And the Brazilians are game. The Brazilians are into nature and wilderness tourism in a bigger way than Americans are.

Saleable to large numbers of Americans? Again, frankly, I wish I could provide an easy answer. Best is that I describe it. You decide if you can, or cannot, sell it.

Ancash first of all is a mountainous region where the roads do their share of hairpin turning and a visitor looking out the window of his bus will from time to time catch a glimpse of the abyss just a couple of feet, or not even, beyond the asphalt or, equally likely, the packed earth. Ancash is not exactly hard to get to from Lima. Unfortunately, it’s not exactly a hop, a skip and a jump either, and there’s no airport with scheduled flights. It’s the road or it’s nothing.

**Huascarán**

One magnificent highlight of Ancash is the Huascarán National Park.

Climb, climb, and climb some more on a dirt road east of the town of Yungay, and you find yourself in due course at the edge of the gorgeous Chinancocha Lagoon at the foot of snow-covered Mount Huascarán. Mount Huascarán is the highest peak in the whole of the soaring Cordillera Blanca, or White Range, of the Andes — “white,” obviously, for the snow mantle. It is in fact the highest peak in all of big-shouldered Peru and, for



For trekking and climbing in the Peruvian Andes, there’s plenty of four-footed assistance.

skilled mountain climbers, a nice but not impossible challenge. Proceed a mile or so farther through the cut between mountains and arrive at the equally gorgeous Orconcocha Lagoon and another perspective on the nearby towering summits.

A curious point of reference from our own Land of Hollywood: Artesonraju, another of the approximately 50 peaks in the range, a short distance north, is the one that figures in the logo at the start of every movie that Paramount Pictures produces, or so it is said and so it appears.

The Huascarán Park is reached via the Callejon de Huaylas from the Departmental capital of Huaraz, and the Callejon de Huaylas is itself noteworthy as a gorgeously scenic and fertile valley between the Cordillera Blanca of the Andes on the east and the Cordillera Negra on the west. (The “negra” is for range’s snowlessness; warm winds blowing in off the Pacific inhibit glaciation.)

**Caral, Chavín**

In the course of the two days before our visit to the Huascarán Park we had inspected two impressive archeological sites, Caral and Chavín. No question, Machu Picchu, given its location, is more dramatic. But Caral and Chavín are considerably older — they are pre-Incan; Caral has been shown by carbon dating to have been the oldest real city anywhere in the Americas — and the pyramids, the other stepped ceremonial centers, the plazas, the courtyards and the crypts are quite impressive enough. Caral has been open to the public only since 2003 and the tourist traffic is still at only about the 25,000 a year level.

Our first night out from Lima was spent at the Konchukos Tambo at San Marcos. The property is a new one and it belongs to the same highly regarded Rainforest Expeditions that has run tours and operated lodges in the Peruvian Amazon since 1992. The

standard is not high luxe, which inspired a Spanish buyer to whisper to me that it wasn't for his clientele of "exigente" fat cats. But, then, pity them. Even if not luxurious, the rooms are prettily decorated and comfortable, the water is hot, the view is unbelievable and the meal that was served to us at one in the morning, when as usual we arrived long overdue, was sumptuous. Since we have been home, my wife and I have been trying to reproduce the inn's signature appetizer of fresh cheese and nuts in a spinach leaf wrap on a bed of pureed beet and passion fruit.

The second overnight was at the Andino Club Hotel in Huaraz, whose three stars seemed to me an understatement. Again, the views of not so distant mountains were breathtaking. The bed was up to the standards of any American chain, there was a hair-dryer in the bathroom and a generous balcony-terrace; the television brought in the usual CNN as well as any number of much more exotic stations.

### Flutists, Dancers

All along our route we were met by welcoming committees of local mayors, town councils, secretaries of this and that, bands of drummers and flutists and violinists and costumed Andean dancers, and, after the inevitable speeches, the bands and the dancers put on performances for us that ranged from the earnest and ragtag (and therefore profoundly touching) to the enchanting.

In some instances, since we were always running late, these welcoming groups had obviously been standing around and waiting for us, long past their usual bed-times, for many hours in the cold, and in a place called Catac, where we were running especially late, they had somehow managed to keep their welcome treat of fresh trout and Andean potatoes and huge-kerneled Andean corn agreeably hot.

This over-the-top fanfare and feasting are needless to say not standard fare for all visitors. We got it, it goes without saying, because we had been billed as important international buyers. But a good tour operator could no doubt cook up something closely approaching the extravagant welcomes we got for nearly any group. The folks up in these mountains desire visitors.

In the previously mentioned Departmental capital of Huaraz, population 80,000 according to one source and 120,000 according to another, the mayor — or, if he wasn't the mayor, some other local dignitary — spoke of his town as the Chamonix of Peru. Absurd perhaps on first hearing. But there is high-quality skiing and snowboarding and ice-climbing in the area, even if there's no ski center with three different kinds of lift. There is also trekking, rock-climbing, mountain biking and rafting.

### Après-Ski

In the après-ski department, Huaraz is home to a hipster movie theater; April programming ran from Woody Allen's "Stardust Memories" to "Capote," Werner Herzog's "Incident at Loch Ness" and a Dutch entry under the title "Cloaca," Dutch with English subtitles — you figure it out. The menu at the Crêperie Patrick ranged from choucroute to raclette and fondue and even a couscous royal. Sorry, I never got a look at the menu at another French restaurant called Le Bistro Cafe, but I can't think why it would allow itself to be outdone.

How to organize a program to Ancash? Local tour operators are numerous. They kept stuffing business cards into our hands, and local operators whose cards were still in my pocket two countries later include Infinite Adventures, Pyramid Adventures, and Monttrek Viajes y Aventura. U.S. travel agents will likely be more comfortable if they use reliable and well-known tour operators in Lima or in the U.S. at least as intermediaries.

### Ceviche, Etc.

But now let's return to Lima.

The official theme of the PTM 2006 was gastronomy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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**PERU TRAVEL MART** FROM PAGE 5

and history, and this was no mere window-dressing. On the first official evening of the event, two distinguished Lima cooking schools, one of them affiliated with Paul Bocuse, put on an unforgettable taste and flavor spectacular at the Rosa Náutica Restaurant on a pier stretching out into the South Pacific, and the next morning a program was mounted at the Rafael Larco Herrera Archeological Museum with remarks by distinguished Lima chefs, food historians and other researchers. (The Larco has a couple of unusual features. One, it is among the few distinguished museums anywhere in the world that allow visitors to view the thousands of pieces in its storage areas. This is a remarkable and slightly overwhelming experience. Two, a hall of prehistoric erotica displays ceramics that . . . well, this is a hard sentence to finish.)

No question, you eat well everywhere in South America.

In Peru, though, the richness of the fisheries, the bounteousness of the many microclimates at the country's various elevations, the thousands of years of experience and the positively Gallic commitment to experimentation, excellence and refinement have made for a cuisine the equal of any anywhere in our tired universe.

Ceviche — the dish, if not the whole sub-cuisine, that “cooks” fish and other seafoods and even at times chicken and vegetables not with heat but with a marinade of lime juice and other citrus fruits, onion and peppers — is one hallmark.

But Peruvian cuisine has also profited from the many culinary tradition that have met and mingled in the Andean land — native, European, North African, Asian. Or take the humble potato. In U.S. supermarkets you'll find a couple of varieties at best. Peru claims to have, and to use, 1,300 varieties. What can be done with exotic potatoes is a marvel.

### Las Vegas South

Lima the city: My wife and I got off a plane at about two o'clock on Easter morning. Seems gambling had been legalized since the last time I looked in, approximately a decade earlier. The ride in was along a stretch that more than anything else resembled the Las Vegas Strip. Seems the American restaurant chains had moved in in a big way, too, and it wasn't just McDonald's and KFC, either. Tony Roma was present. So was TGI Friday's. So were an awful lot of Starbucks.

What mostly filled the spaces between the gambling palaces, though, were what seemed like scores of the great Chinese dining palaces that the Peruvians calls chifas, and there were also an awful lot of Norky's, this being a chain of palace-like restaurants specializing be-



Forget that Peru's northernmost tip touches the Equator. Up in the mountains, warm clothing is a must.

MARÍA MOHANNÁ/PROOFPERU

fore all else in succulent roast chicken. The Peruvians love roast chicken, and if the late Julia Child was right, that the test of a good cook is the ability to roast a simple chicken properly, then once again all praise to the Peruvians. Norky's chicken, which we ate more than once, is crisp on the outside, moist on the inside, just the way it's supposed to be.

Lima by day is a great sprawl with a population of at least 8 million and maybe more. This is roughly a third of the population of the entire country. A lot of these people, unsurprisingly, are poor. But the upscale commercial and residential neighborhoods of Miraflores and San Isidro have some stunning architecture to look at. Barranco, yet another of the many upscale neighborhoods, slightly to the south, is pleasantly bohemian, and the shopping and dining center called LarcoMar, on a cliff overlooking the Pacific, is glamour unadulterated. Everywhere, there are monumental cactus and dazzling bougainvillea.

If U.S. travel agents and tour operators accede to the Peruvians' suggestion that the “standard” stay in Lima be extended, tourists will of course not see all the nooks and crannies, they won't even see all of the major attractions, but at least they will get a glimpse of the historic buildings in downtown Lima, one of the oldest cities in the New World, and maybe they will even get off the bus long enough to have a glance at the Basilica Cathedral, with its somewhat creepy crypt of thousands of human bones, the Torre-Tagle Palace, the Aliaga House, the National Archeological and Anthropological Museum, and the Church and Convent of Santo Domingo.

For 18 years in the middle of the 16th century, this last housed the University of San Marcos, by most reckonings the oldest in the Americas, and its library, according to U.S. buyer Carlos Fida, the president of PanAmerican Travel Services of Salt Lake City, rivals the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, Spain, in its

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

# The Hoteles Las Américas – Six Peruvian Properties for Americans to Know Better

Beyond the various entrance doors, the world is called Miraflores.

By Mark Zussman

**I**t is not strictly speaking true that in Lima, Peru, the Miraflores neighborhood is the only place to lodge demanding, and perhaps potentially culture-shocked, North American tourists. Nearby San Isidro has some fine properties. So does Lima's downtown. Miraflores nevertheless stands out for its walkability and its numerous high-end dining and shopping resources, and Miraflores is increasingly coming to have the look of a Las Américas colony.

The Hoteles Las Américas is a Peruvian-owned hotel group whose flagship property in Lima is the 151-room five-star Hotel & Suites Las Américas. The hotel has been standing since 1991. The guest profile has tended to slant more to the business side than to the leisure side, and this is not necessarily a bad thing for leisure travelers. It may in fact be a plus. Rooms are spacious and comfortable. I found myself quite transfixed by Basque-language and Catalan-language television in addition to all the more familiar cable-casters, and dining and drinking facilities were, to my eye, somewhat more numerous and elaborate than a property of the size required. Club 21, the prestige restaurant on the top floor, is the highest in the city and the view out across Lima rooftops to the Pacific Ocean is consequently unique.

The five-star Apart Hotel Las Américas, inaugurated in 1997, is, as the name suggests, an alternative for travelers seeking both spaciousness and a homey intimacy. The four-star Hotel Carrera Las



El Pueblo, just east of Lima.

Américas is an alternative for travelers on a slightly tighter budget. The Suites Las Américas, dating from 1999, with 66 suites, each of them with both downstairs and upstairs, is the high-end alternative for business travelers settling in for an extended stay, and the Residencial Las Américas, with 45 suites, is the more economical choice for business travelers on extended assignment.

## The Nabe

In all instances, Miraflores is an integral part of the package.

Walk out the front door of the flagship Hotel & Suites Las Américas, for example. The Atlantic City Casino, directly across the street, with 500 gaming machines, is supposedly the largest in the city, and heavy gamblers will be pleased to know, if they are not distressed to

know, that it never closes. I myself walked in, as quickly walked out, and headed back to the Las Américas side of the street and down to the Vivanda Supermarket at the next corner. Move over, Whole Foods, Gourmet Garage, Citarella, Trader Joe's and other U.S. purveyors of gorgeous and exotic produce and pricy import items in a high luxe environment. Vivanda, with yet another door that never closes, will fascinate other food-oriented travelers, as it fascinated me, as a museum of the raw materials that make Peruvian cuisine one of the finest and one of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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**THE HOTELES LAS AMÉRICAS** FROM PAGE 7

most innovative in the entire world.

In another direction, it's a short walk from the Hotel & Suites Las Américas to the Miraflores Town Hall. The walk, if you go by one route, takes you past the Cafe de la Paz with its English tearoom atmosphere and, by another route, past Manolo's Cafe, with its rich hot chocolate and its perfect churros and, no, no one frowns if they're dipped.

Across from the Miraflores Town Hall Park are the couple of blocks of Lima's answer to New York's Little Italy, and the cheek-by-jowl restaurants — actually, not just Italian but also Mexican and Brazilian and with a further sprinkling of establishments serving succulent Peruvian roast chicken — are both easy on the wallet and fun. Just beyond the nearby Miraflores traffic rotary, the warren of mini-malls on Petit Thouars Street will answer to the traveling shopper's need for high-quality alpaca sweaters and scarves, silver jewelry, ceramics, and even fine art and antiques.

**The Surprise**

North American travelers are not likely to get to know the Hoteles Las Américas' most unusual property until they get past the Peru-equals-Machu Picchu, Machu Picchu-equal-Peru equation. But, when some day they do, there is a nice surprise waiting at the Hotel El Pueblo at a distance of about half an hour in driving time to the east of Lima. At El Pueblo, some nearly 200 rooms are disguised as a kind of Andean highlands village with stone towers and arched doorways and passageways. There are some 39 bungalows beyond the conventional rooms, there are plenty of restaurants and bars, three swimming pools, tennis courts, squash courts, and bowling alleys.

Not surprisingly, El Pueblo has been used by upper-crust Peruvians for wedding celebrations and weekend getaways and by Peruvian business people for various kinds of congresses and meetings. Where North Americans are concerned, the question nevertheless remains: Do we ever get to know more of Peru than a little of Lima, a dash of Cusco and Machu Picchu and just a bit of this and that around the edges?

**Hoteles Las Américas, [www.hoteleslasamericas.com](http://www.hoteleslasamericas.com)**

**AITAL CHANGES NAME TO ALTA**

The Latin American Air Transport Association announced that it is changing its name to ALTA from AITAL to better reflect the broad membership that encompasses the association and to show a renewed sense of mission as it takes on an ever-increasing importance to airlines in the region.

"Today, we launch a new direction for Latin American aviation," said ALTA President Pedro Heilbron. "This new direction includes everyone and excludes no one. ALTA represents all airlines in the region, from the

smallest regional carrier to the major international airline."

"We are proud to have 29 different airline members, which together represent the leading carriers in the region, that all work together to achieve common aviation goals," said Heilbron. "The fact that ALTA has been growing and including new members every year shows that the industry supports the work it is doing."

"When you look across the region, it is the airlines of Latin America and the Caribbean that connect cultures, families, ideas and progress," said ALTA Executive Director Alex de Gunten, who has led the association since November 2003.

"For 26 years, we have worked hard as an association to represent our members in all areas important to them," said de Gunten. "That is never more important than today, where our members face rising fuel prices, increasing airport fees and government taxes, complex legal and geopolitical issues, as well as daily operational, technical and financial issues."

ALTA, which moved its headquarters to Miami, Florida, in 2004, has staff in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile and Bogotá, Colombia. The association has a number of committees working on aviation issues daily, including areas such as Operations, Airports, Fuel, Legal, Cargo, Maintenance and Aeronautical Materials (CCMA).

Member Airlines include Aeromexico, Aeropostal, AeroRepublica, Aerosur, Aires, Aserca Airlines, Avianca, Caribbean Star, Caribbean Sun, Cayman Airways, Cielos Airlines, Click, Copa Airlines, Cubana, GOL, LAB, LAN, LanEcuador, LanPeru, Mexicana, Pluna, Santa Barbara Airlines, Sky Airline, TACA, TACA Peru, TAM, TAM Mercosur, TAME and Varig. In addition, ALTA includes three Associate Airlines — Air Canada, Iberia and UPS. **ALTA (formerly AITAL), [www.alta.aero](http://www.alta.aero)**

**PERU TRAVEL MART** FROM PAGE 6

richness and its importance for scholars.

Mr. Fida, to be sure, has scores of American universities among his clients, and some American scholars will want not just to glance at this library and quickly move on. They will want to linger, maybe for weeks, maybe for months. Conclusion: Somewhere between the overnight in Lima of the now standard tour and the protracted stay of scholarly visitors, there has got to be a new happy medium. It may be the full day or two that the Peruvian authorities and the Peruvian tour operators are asking for. It may be even a touch longer.

North American travel professionals, both tour operators and travel agents, with a hankering to enrich their knowledge of Inca land should watch these pages for the forthcoming announcement of precise dates for the 14th PTM, probably again in the month of April, in 2007. Per preliminary planning, PTM 2007 will feature the city of Ica, which among its other virtues is at the center of the wine country that produces the country's distinctive pisco brandy, without which there is no pisco sour.

**Peru Travel Mart, [www.go2peru.com/ptm](http://www.go2peru.com/ptm); PromPeru, 866-661-PERU, [www.peruinfo.com](http://www.peruinfo.com)**

# Peru's InkaNatura Travel – Doing Well By Doing Good

The company that plows its “profits” back into nature conservancy holds the key to Machu Picchu’s back door and to any number of other archeological and wilderness adventures.

By Mark Zussman

Just how many not-for-profit tour operators are there in the world? The first most curious fact about Peru’s InkaNatura Travel is that it is the wholly owned marketing-and-operations arm of the Peruvian non-profit conservation group Peru Verde, or Green Peru, and Peru Verde is in turn an associate member of the international entity Tropical Nature, of Arlington, Virginia, which provides some technical counsel.

Peru Verde was founded, give or take two decades ago, by right-minded individuals from both Peru itself and from the U.S. Over the years, it has striven to protect Peru’s nature heritage and Peru’s cultural heritage, and in the process it has managed to acquire some 11,300 acres, or 18 square miles, of pristine cloud forest on the edge of the Manu National Park on the eastern rim of the Peruvian Andes. Like the park next door, the PV reserve is home to the blazingly colorful cock-of-the-rock, which is the Peruvian national bird, to the spectacled bear, to five species of monkey and to hundreds of species of birds over and above the cock-of-the-rock.

Peru Verde has also come to own, and protect, some 135 acres of lowland rainforest around a spectacular tapir lick. In addition to the tapirs, the lick is visited by deer, porcupines, peccaries and many a bird species. Peru Verde rents (and would like to raise the money to buy outright) a seven square mile plot of high altitude forest — at Malaga Pass — where a tea company would



The squirrel monkey is one of five species found in the Manu National Park.

otherwise have felled rare Polylepis trees.

The properties are all within relatively short distances of Cusco, and therefore of Machu Picchu, at least on an as-the-bird-flies basis. But this is merely to locate the properties. You do not get from Cusco to the Manu area by breezing down an Interstate.

## Mature Folks

The idea that an ecotourism program could help in furthering Peru Verde’s goals arose approximately nine years ago. Hence, InkaNatura Travel, whose programs may or may not be less expensive than those of more conventional tour operators.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

 An advertisement for Sun Breeze Hotel. The top part shows a resort building with a large sign that says "SUNBREEZE HOTEL". Below the sign is a swimming pool and a woman sitting on a lounge chair. The bottom part of the ad shows a woman sitting on a bed in a hotel room.
 

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**INKANATURA TRAVEL FROM PAGE 9**

Little does it matter. Passengers will take satisfaction in knowing that a part of what they put in goes to preserving the environments that they have passed through and enjoyed.

And who are these passengers? According to InkaNatura general manager Rodrigo Custodio, they are for the most part mature people in their fifth decade of life, or older.

Predominant nationalities are U.S., UK, Australian and German in that order. InkaNatura welcomes small groups, up to about 14 PAX. It does not welcome larger groups. Larger groups hurt the environments that Peru Verde and InkaNatura are laboring to preserve; they do not help. The vast majority of the company's passengers, accordingly, are individuals, and these individuals typically find their way to InkaNatura via their travel agents. (InkaNatura attends numerous international travel marketplaces including the Adventures in Travel Expo in New York and the Educational Travel Conference in Baltimore.) The passengers are looking for something unusual and, not infrequently, specifically for an unusual and interesting wilderness experience. They may be starry-eyed idealists, but they are not necessarily so.

To accommodate its passengers, Peru Verde and InkaNatura operate three forest lodges with a total of 118 beds. One of them, with 24 double-occupancy bungalows overlooking the majestic Madre de Dios River, provides access to the aforementioned world's largest and most heavily-trafficked tapir clay lick, the world's most heavily-trafficked large macaw and parrot clay lick, two large oxbow lakes harboring families of giant otters, two canopy platforms at 100 and 130 feet above the ground, and there are ten or so species of monkeys in the neighborhood as well. *Condé Nast Traveler Magazine* has called the wildlife experience here "the most intense" in all of Amazonia.

**More Lodges**

A second lodge, the Cock-of-the-Rock by name, with ten double-occupancy bungalows, is in effect base camp for access to the world's number-one cock-of-the-rock display ground. But there are plenty of other birds to see here, there are woolly monkeys and brown capuchin monkeys and there are orchids like crazy. The Sandoval Lake Lodge, meanwhile, with 25 double-occupancy accommodations, is the spot for people with a fancy for giant otters — but also for countless water birds, the largest concentration of red-bellied macaws in southeastern Peru, three species of large macaws, and needless to say yet more monkeys.

Thanks to an agreement with Pisco Airlines, InkaNatura has to a large extent solved the problem of

access to the Manu area. At the end of last year, Pisco acquired a brand-new 12-passenger Cessna Grand Caravan aircraft and the 40-minute flight from Cusco Airport on InkaNatura's behalf is operated every day of the week but Sunday and Tuesday. The most popular Manu programs are of four days and three nights in duration.

On the Inca Trail, the famous hiking route from Cusco to the archeological site of Machu Picchu, the Peruvian government has overcome what InkaNatura Travel's Rodrigo Custodio calls the former "total disorder" by requiring advance booking and by limiting traffic to a total of 500 persons per day, including porters. InkaNatura offers a variety of Inca Trail programs ranging from a short version of two days and one night, no camping, to what they call the Inca Trail Discovery of five days and four nights, three of the nights camping. "We cover the archeology," Mr. Custodio says. "But we also put a lot of emphasis on nature."

**The Weavers' Way**

Perhaps InkaNatura's most innovative approach to the Machu Picchu walking pilgrimage has been, however, in the development of what they call the Weavers' Way to Machu Picchu.

The trek begins in the village of Lares — passengers are driven there from Cusco — and follows along through high-altitude valleys of the snow-capped Cordillera Urubamba, where Quechua Indians, little acculturated to the modern world, herd alpacas and llamas and weave colorful shawls and ponchos to protect them from the mountain chill. Machu Picchu itself is reached on day four. Among its other virtues obviously, the Weavers' Way end-runs the government's 500-hikers-a-day restriction on the Inca Trail proper.

In addition to its operations in the Peruvian southeast, InkaNatura has been increasingly active in developing archeological tourism in Peru's far northwest, and the fortress of Kuelap, dating perhaps from the 9th century, on the shoulder of a 10,000 foot tall mountain, is said by many of those who have actually made the challenging haul to rival Machu Picchu in its majesty. The climb to this reportedly astonishing site takes three or four hours. But that's just from where you get out of your motor vehicle. Again, no Interstates in these parts and, after a heavy rain, poor roads can turn into excruciating roads.

Mr. Custodio estimates the total number of visitors to Kuelap to be on the order of 2,000 a year. InkaNatura handles about 150 of them.

InkaNatura, by the way, has a great Web site and, remember, InkaNatura loves travel agents.

**InkaNatura Travel, [postmaster@inkanatura.com.pe](mailto:postmaster@inkanatura.com.pe), [www.inkanatura.com](http://www.inkanatura.com)**

## AGENT, DIVING AND SUMMER SPECIALS AT BLUE MARLIN LODGE



Blue Marlin Lodge is offering their Summer Special Vacation for 7 nights for \$1,405 per person, all inclusive of accommodations meals, boat transfers and taxes. Travel agents can receive a weeks package for \$1,050 per person per week which is a 25 percent discount. Rates are good from June through September, 2006.

In addition they are offering diving specials from September 1-15, 2006. All inclusive package rates are \$1,295 per person and include seven nights accommodations in island guestrooms; four days two/three tank dives; breakfast, lunch and dinner daily; R/T transfers from Belize Intl to Dangriga and back; R/T boat transfers Dangriga to island and back; free Blue Marlin t-shirt; complimentary drink on arrival at lodge; and liaison assistance on arrival at the Belize Intl Airport.

Summer special rates from June 1- October 31, 2006 for 8-days/7-nights are \$1,335 (single), \$1,225 (double), and \$1,170 (triple). For 5-days/4-nights rates are \$1,025 (single), \$925 (double) and \$860 (triple). All rates are per person. Travel Agents receive a 30 percent discount on room rates.

**Blue Marlin Lodge, 800-798-1558, marlin@direcway.com, marlin@btl.net, www.bluemarlinlodge.com**

## HILTON LATIN AMERICA LAUNCHES \$10 MILLION MAKEOVER

Hilton Latin America continues to set a standard for growth in the region, with major renovations at Hilton Buenos Aires, Argentina; Hilton Cartagena, Colombia; Hilton Colón Guayaquil and Hilton Colón Quito, Ecuador. The \$10 million improvement campaign is transforming guestrooms, health clubs, meeting spaces, and public areas.

Hilton Buenos Aires is celebrating its sixth anniversary with a series of changes. This year, the hotel will begin a renovation project that includes suites, deluxe and Executive Floor rooms, and corridors. Rooms will boast new carpets, curtains, bed concept, upholstery, and wallpaper, among other improvements. 2006 kicked off with a new Health Club & Spa, offering unique treatments like "Vinoterapia" (Spanish for Wine Therapy). The hotel ended 2005 with a completely redesigned El Faro Restaurant, the introduction of Mosto Wine Bar and Panadero Bakery, and renovation of Atlantico Ballroom, Pacifico Ballroom, and the business center.

In June, Hilton Colón Guayaquil will debut an extensive remodeling of

guestrooms that includes: new carpets, curtains, lighting, soundproof windows, flat screen and 42" plasma TVs, work area, high speed and wireless Internet access, and bathroom upgrades. Public areas, convention center, ballrooms, and pool area will be completed by the end of the year.

Later this year, Hilton Colón Quito is set to debut upgraded room features including new duvets, drapes, upholstery, carpets, and flat screen and plasma TVs. The hotel will also unveil a relocated and revamped casino. Hilton Colón Quito recently opened a totally refurbished fitness center and spa, with new lockers, Turkish bath, sauna, gym, cardiovascular equipment, and reception area. The hotel also added a Kioto Sushi Bar, as well as high-speed Internet access in Executive Floor guestrooms, public areas, restaurants, and meeting rooms.

Hilton Cartagena has transformed itself with a recently completed four-year makeover. All of Hilton Cartagena's 288 rooms have been renewed with new bedding, furniture, and closet. A newly decorated lobby welcomes guests. Lighting has also been added to the hotel's exterior facade and indoor gardens. Guests will find new and enhanced dining options including 'Pizza E'Leña' terrace featuring a wood-burning oven, and 'Sushi Bar' offering delicious variety of raw fish. 'Las Chivas Cafeteria,' 'Tinajero Steak & Seafood House,' and 'The Cangrejo Bar' boast new lighting systems, décor, furniture, and bathrooms. Hilton Cartagena has also opened a new business center offering secretarial services, high-speed Internet access, and wireless Internet connection. Event planners can choose from four new meeting rooms and renovated facilities that now have marble floors, new décor, and improved air conditioning. Fitness minded guests can enjoy the hotel's refurbished tennis courts, and revamped health club

**Hilton Hotels, 800-HILTONS, www.Hilton.com**

## AFFORDABLE FAMILY VACATIONS IN BELIZE AT WINDY HILL RESORT & TOUR COMPANY

Windy Hill Resort & Tour Company, San Ignacio, Belize, is a Belizean family owned and operated property. Windy Hill offers 20 all-inclusive packages that include round-trip transfers, accommodations, meals, and tours. The package rates also include all taxes, entrance fees and guide fees. Children under 12 years old may join parents on any package for a flat rate of \$163.50 per child regardless of length of stay. The resort consists of 16 private air-conditioned cottages and nine standard rooms. Guests enjoy dining in their thatched roof restaurant where any special dietary requirements are adhered to. Their in-house tour operation is second to none in Belize. The Windy Hill tour guides are all trained and licensed by the Belize Tourism Board and enjoy being able to share the natural beauty, culture and history of their country with visitors.

Green Season Specials from May 1, 2006 – December 15, 2006 include one extra night with meals free when booking any of their 20 all-inclusive packages; one extra night free- room only when booking three nights or more; free upgrade to deluxe air conditioned cottage when booking any 5- or 6- night package (extra night with meals also); and children under 12 may join parents on any of their all-inclusive packages for \$163.50 per child (limit three children). No other discounts or offers apply to these Green Season specials.

**Windy Hill Resort & Tour Company, windyhill@hughes.net, www.windyhillresort.com, www.windyhilltours.com**

## DONALD J. TRUMP LAUNCHES FIRST LUXURY DEVELOPMENT IN PANAMA



The Trump Organization and K Group have entered into a partnership to develop Trump Ocean Club, International Hotel & Tower, in Panama City, Panama. Trump Ocean Club will be the new benchmark in high-end real estate in Panama.

The 1.8 million square foot, \$220 million project, will boast a 65-story condominium tower with approximately 300 hotel condominium units and an additional 500 condominium units, an International Casino, and Private Beach Club on Contadora Island. The Trump Ocean Club will also feature a Yacht Club and Pier, world-class wellness spa, state-of-the-art gym, pool deck, full-service meeting and event spaces, and a business center.

The Trump Ocean Club, Panama, is being built on a beachfront lot with views of the Pacific Ocean and the Panama Bay, in the district of Punta Pacifica. It is linked directly to the rest of the city by the new highway called "Corredor Sur" that guarantees accessibility to any area, including the airport, in less than 15 minutes. The project is expected to be completed by 2009.

The Trump Ocean Club, Panama, is ideal for the executive, resident or traveler that requires a residence in Panama, close to the financial and commercial sectors. It also suits the lifestyle of a native or world traveler, who

seeks the convenience of a modern city that offers a high living standard. It is also an excellent solution for the foreigner that looks for a second home or for a place to retire to.

Residents of Trump Ocean Club, Panama will be able to enjoy all the Club services that the development offers, including maid and laundry service, the only 24-hour Yacht Club in Panama and access to over 1,700 parking spaces, among other services.

**Trump Ocean Club, Panama, [www.trumpoceanclub.com](http://www.trumpoceanclub.com)**

## SUMMER SPECIALS AT BELIZE LODGE & EXCURSIONS LTD

Belize Lodge & Excursions Ltd, is offering a summer rate special: save 25 percent off their 2006 pricing for a 6-night package. Regularly \$1,800 the price is now \$1,350. The package includes: two nights Indian Creek Lodge, two nights Jungle Camp, and two nights Moho Cay Lodge. This special package rate is available May 1 - August 31 2006.

Rates include deluxe cabin, all meals, full day of excursions, taxes, entrance fees, local land and marine transfers and guides. Rate does not include air or ground transfers from Belize City to the lodge.

Highlights include a full day touring remote archaeological sites and visiting the largest indigenous Maya population in Belize; a journey through traditional Maya Villages on the way to Lubanntun (Place of Fallen Stones); a visit to Ballum Na (House of the Jaguar) that includes a jaguar exhibit; the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center and Scarlet Macaw Captive Breeding Program; a three hour canoe or kayak expedition deep into the southern Belizean jungle and down the Golden Stream; and a full day excursion to the Port Honduras Marine Reserve.

**Belize Lodge & Excursions Ltd, 888-292-246, [info@belizelodge.com](mailto:info@belizelodge.com), [www.belizelodge.com](http://www.belizelodge.com)**

## SUMMER SPECIALS AT PLEASURE COVE LODGE

Pleasure Cove Lodge is offering low summer package rates, complimentary American breakfast and a 20 percent commission to travel agents during their summer season, May 1-December 14. Rates are \$90 for a standard room, \$135 for a suite with futon, \$150 for Jude Beach House and \$180 for a private villa.

Stay for six nights and receive the seventh night free.

All Inclusive Packages in the summer season for three nights are \$305 for a standard room, \$400 for suite with futon, \$460 for Jude Beach House and \$505 for a Private Villa. Prices include all meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and beverages (soft drinks and natural fruit juices) and ground transportation to and from Dangriga Airport. Hotel tax, service/gratuities not included.

Rent the entire resort (five standard rooms, suite and villa) for \$1,650 (rooms only); \$1,818 (rooms with breakfast); \$2,778 (rooms with breakfast and dinner); or \$4,728 (all inclusive).

**Pleasure Cove Lodge, 877-207-7139, [www.pleasurecovelodge.com](http://www.pleasurecovelodge.com)**

## SEE DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE AT HOTEL BALMORAL

The Hotel Balmoral is a 4-star hotel located in the heart of downtown San Jose, Costa Rica. The Balmoral caters to both business and leisure travelers. It is within walking distance of the main business district, government agencies and restaurants, as well as cultural, commercial and historical landmarks of Costa Rica's capital. Guests especially enjoy its direct access to the pedestrian boulevard on the Central Avenue, where they can enjoy 11 blocks decorated with colonial lamps, plants and public benches.

The Balmoral offers 112 guest rooms. All rooms are air conditioned and offer cable TV, hair dryers, direct telephones and an executive desk. Room rates range from \$90-\$175 (double). All room rates include buffet breakfast and welcome cocktail. The hotel offers six meeting rooms which can accommodate up to 200 people for both business and social events. They offer special packages for weddings, seminars and graduations. Their tour desk can help organize any tour within Costa Rica.

They can also help set up car rentals, fishing tours and reconfirm airline tickets. The York restaurant prepares a variety of dishes and guests can enjoy massages, gym, sauna, room service and other amenities. Nearby to the hotel, the capital city offers theaters, discos, restaurants and casinos.

**Balmoral Hotel San Jose, 800-691-4865, [reservas@balmoral.co.cr](mailto:reservas@balmoral.co.cr), [www.balmoral.co.cr](http://www.balmoral.co.cr)**

## MEXICO'S MAGICAL TOWNS



In a land as vast as Mexico, travelers experience a special satisfaction when they stumble upon a hidden gem filled with history and culture and thanks to the Pueblos Magicos (Magical Towns) program, visitors can choose from 23 such towns scattered throughout the country's heartland.

The Tourism Secretariat's (Sectur) Pueblos Magicos program helps increase tourism to towns located near large cities or other tourist sites, reasonably accessible via roads and that are of particular historic or religious value. Founded in 2001, the Pueblos Magicos program coordinates local, state and federal efforts, channeling funds so the towns may diversify and improve their tourism infrastructure. A total of 14 government agencies contribute to the program.

The government's investment in infrastructure results in visitor-friendly destinations that retain the authentic charm of Mexico's small towns. Whereas some international tourists might have been hesitant to venture outside of

Mexico's tried-and-true destinations to discover the charm of small-town Mexico, those days are now gone.

With improvements to the roads and highways connecting the Pueblos Magicos to the tourism hubs, the assurance that the hotels located within the towns offer a high level of comfort and service and the opportunity of experiencing "real" Mexico, the 23 towns are a great option for tourists looking to add a day trip or an overnight visit to their Mexican vacation. While the primary focus of Pueblos Magicos is to develop cultural tourism, other segments, such as eco tourism, adventure tourism and rural tourism also fall under the program's canopy. As the towns develop the products offered in the different segments, sustainable tourism is cultivated.

The Pueblos Magicos program empowers the townspeople, who must initiate and manage the process. With forms to fill out, standards to achieve and agreements with which to comply, it's not easy to achieve Pueblo Magico status,

but the benefits make the process well worth the effort. Once a town is declared a Pueblo Magico, it receives funds to support the modernization of the micro, small and medium regional businesses related to the tourism industry, such as handicraft shops and restaurants. These grassroots efforts contribute to the tourism sector's vitality and creativity as well as promote the entrepreneurial spirit.

In order to maintain historical accuracy and cooperate with the beautification efforts, towns participating in the Pueblos Magicos program must comply with architectural and visual guidelines. The government supports the towns in the restoration of the urban areas to the town's glory days, which includes the installation of underground wiring.

The program also supports the towns with the advertising of their tourism products through the development and production of promotional material.

**The Mexico Tourism Board (MTB), 800-44MEXICO, www.visitmexico.com**



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## CASA DEL MAR BEACH, GOLF & SPA RESORT APPOINTS OSCAR A. ORNELAS GENERAL MANAGER



OSCAR A. ORNELAS

The Casa del Mar Beach, Golf & Spa Resort announces the appointment of Oscar A. Ornelas as General Manager. A veteran in the hospitality industry, Ornelas brings more than a decade of hotel management

experience and a proven record of success to Casa del Mar.

Ornelas has worked in various executive management positions for luxury hotels in Mexico including Pueblo Bonito Resorts (Los Cabos and Mazatlan); The Ritz-Carlton in Cancun; Villa del Palmar Resort in Los Cabos; Villa del Palmar Flamingos in Puerto Vallarta, and the upscale boutique resort operation, Exclusive Resorts, Inc. in Cabo San Lucas where he worked prior to joining Casa del Mar.

A native of Mexico, Ornela holds a bachelor's degree in arts from the State University in Mexico. His background education in hospitality management includes general management certificates from Cornell University and Washington State University; a certificate in food and beverage management from Domecq Winery Co. and a certificate in financial analysis from the Monterrey Tech in Mexico.

**Casa del Mar Beach, Golf & Spa Resort, 888-227-9621, [www.CasadelMarMexico.com](http://www.CasadelMarMexico.com)**

## LA CASA QUE CANTA SUMMER SPECIALS

La Casa Que Canta, Mexico's top-rated resort, has announced summer specials, including a

Summer Spa Package with four spa treatments at rates of up to 22 percent off high season prices.

La Casa Que Canta is a 25-suite resort ranked #1 Best Hotel in Mexico, Central and South America by Travel + Leisure in its 2005 World's Best Awards Readers' Survey for the second consecutive year. Casa has also been given the ultimate accolade by Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report as a Grand Award winner for 2005.

The Summer Spa Package includes accommodations for four to seven nights, round-trip airport transfers, two 50-minute massages, one manicure and one pedicure per room booked. Rates range from \$2,608 to \$3,774 (depending upon the number of nights selected) for a Grand Suite or from \$3,522 to \$5,160 for a Master Suite. Prices are for single or double occupancy, inclusive of taxes and service. These rates represent a reduction of up to 22 percent off high season rates for the identical accommodations, depending upon the length of stay.

The resort is also offering special summer rates at its exclusive villas. El Ensueno and El Murmullo are two ultra-private four-suite villas, each with a view of the Bay of Zihuatanejo, private chef, concierge and swimming pool. Each suite has a private outdoor plunge pool, air-conditioning, plasma screen TV and a courtesy amenity bar. Guests save up to 20 percent on stays of seven nights or more by booking a suite or the entire villa. Rates start at \$603 per night for a suite at El Ensueno and from \$597 per night for a suite at El Murmullo, inclusive of taxes and service.

All summer promotional rates are valid from June 1 to October 15, 2006.

At La Casa Que Canta, guests are met at the airport, presented with a cooling towel, and then transported directly to the hotel. Amenities include a new spa, freshwater infinity pool, saltwater pool, al fresco restaurant and bar.

The resort also offers yoga classes, cooking classes, water sports, and easy access to horseback riding, golf and tennis. All accommodations feature a complimentary mini-bar stocked with beer, sodas and water, and a bowl of fresh fruit. The resort does not accept guests under 16 years of age.

**La Casa Que Canta, 888-523-5050, [lacasaquecanta@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:lacasaquecanta@prodigy.net.mx), [www.lacasaquecanta.com](http://www.lacasaquecanta.com)**

## "LITTLE TREASURES" PROMO FOR KIDS AT TESORO RESORTS

The youngest visitors to Mexico's newest hospitality brand will have plenty to brag about when they return from vacations at any of Tesoro's three Pacific Coast properties, where new kid-oriented "Little Treasures" services ensure they get plenty of pampering.

"Lots of times kids get overlooked in family vacations where services cater to the paying customer, their parents," explains Vice-President of Operations Wayne Merritt. "The whole intention of 'Little Treasures' is to make kids feel they're number one the minute they step inside a Tesoro property."

Beginning in June, kids aged four to 12 years will receive a special check-in experience at Tesoro Los Cabos, Tesoro Manzanillo and Tesoro Ixtapa: they will sign in at kid-friendly counters at reception complete with plastic "booster" stairs for smaller tykes to climb up to fill in their own registration cards.

Little VIPs also receive a welcome package that includes a beach bag, tote or backpack, an activities coloring book full of puzzles, games and stories, multi-colored crayons, a beach toy, and some snacks. The pack comes with an exclusive invitation to join the Kids Club (available at Manzanillo and Ixtapa locations) and a special bracelet that acts as entry to the Corsarios Kids Club. The word 'corsario' refers to a brigadier or privateer of the sea and plays off the fun pirate theme of Tesoro's image.

The Corsarios Kids Club at Tesoro Manzanillo and Tesoro Ixtapa features supervised games and activities run by trained counselors. "Little Treasures" debuts a new element to the club, weekly supervised "movie nights" that give parents an extra evening off.

G-rated films appropriate to the age group of the children will play and fresh popcorn, soda and movie snacks will recreate an authentic cinematic atmosphere.

When kids register at check-in they are entered in the Corsarios Birthday Club which has them receive a postcard greeting one month prior to their big day as well as an e-greeting the day of their birthday sent to the email address filled in on their registration card.

**Tesoro Resorts, 866-99TESORO, [www.TesoroResorts.com](http://www.TesoroResorts.com)**

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