

THE 'OTHER' PERUVIAN TRAIL



One of the most powerful tourist magnets of Peru is without doubt the lost city of the Incas - Machu Picchu. Thousands of tourists seek out the four-day adventure of hiking the popular Inca Trail. It is the once-in-a-lifetime experience, which everyone is willing to wait for. And the list is long. Peruvian government is trying to protect the sacred trail and the lost city itself and thus only five hundred tourists a day are allowed to take part in the quest - including guides. Some have to actually wait months before they are able to travel to Peru.

The hike takes four days and the travelers spend a considerable time in the altitude of 4,000 m. It is seventy kilometers long and the journey is highly rewarding - especially the vistas are amazing. In 2008, the hikers will pay \$80 per person. The adventurers should be aware of the fact that hiking the Inca Trail is quite challenging. People should consider their physical abilities and state of health before coming here. Also, much equipment is needed for each trekker. Usually, each two trekkers are accompanied by three porters. Thus, out of the five hundred hikers, three are representing the trekking staff.

In spite of the limitations, the Inca Trail is still very much frequented and the crowded character may actually spoil the whole experience for some more demanding travelers. However, there is another option. The Salkantay trail is similarly rewarding and charming as its more famous competition; the greatest advantage is the fact it hasn't been discovered by the tourists - yet. It usually takes five days to complete the journey and offers breathtaking vistas over green valleys and steep mountainsides or even a cloud forest. The trail actually leads through the back of the mystical mountain. The Salkantay actually reaches an altitude of 4,600m which in fact is by 400m higher than its more popular counterpart. There are comfortable cottages on the way and the visitors may actually enjoy a soothing Jacuzzi here. The Salkantay adventure is overwhelming and impressive and eventually takes the hikers to the major attraction - Machu Picchu.

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