

Best OF BOTH Worlds

Breathtaking Palacio del Inka
Combines Peru's Rich Traditions
With Modern Comforts

BY DIANNA SMITH

Built overtop ancient Incan walls, the historical stone home once belonged to the family of Marquis Salas y Valdez, who was awarded the mansion for his loyalty to the Spanish crown.

Photo courtesy of Blue Parrotel

It's no small feat for a resort to stand out in Peru, a country rich in tradition, diversity and natural wonders.

But nestled beside a stunning Incan temple and below a backdrop of magnificent mountains, there's a property that does just that.

The opulent Palacio del Inka, which is part of Luxury Collection Hotels, completed an 18-month, \$15 million renovation last summer, creating a hotel that isn't just a place to sleep and eat during a long-awaited getaway—it enhances the vacation experience.

“The property's design exudes the ambiance of a colonial mansion from the very first moment you walk through its magical doors,” says Arturo Schwarz, general manager. “The refurbishment has given (it) a sense of place true to the historical significance of the property.”

Owned and operated by Libertador Hotels, Resorts & Spas, the hotel is nearly 36 years old, but its historical significance dates back

nearly five centuries. It's located in Cusco, a city in southeastern Peru near the Urubamba Valley of the Andes mountain range. In the 15th century, Cusco (also spelled Cuzco) was the capital of the Incan empire.

The picturesque property is just across the street from Qoricancha, also known as the former Temple of the Sun, which was dedicated in 1200 A.D. to Inti, the sun god of the Incas, and served as the central site of worship for the Incas.

Renovations included its spectacular Spanish-Colonial façade, which resonates of ancient Inca culture—with some contemporary twists. The entryway reveals legendary Peruvian stone construction held together without mortar, and the look continues into the lobby, where visitors step onto indigenous stone floors while soft light spills from a vaulted, translucent ceiling.

It also included the Mansion of the Four Busts (Casona de los Cuatro Bustos), which today serves as the nucleus of the Palacio del Inka. Built overtop ancient Incan walls, the historical stone home once belonged to the family of Marquis Salas y Valdez, who was awarded the mansion for his loyalty to the Spanish crown.

The mansion hosts 17 special suites, all with striking 13-foot, hand-painted ceilings and, Schwarz says, the “crème de la

The Palacio del Inka's new full-service spa is another big attraction, offering personalized treatments inspired by Andean culture, such as exfoliations with quinoa, Incan mud wraps and a body wrap based on 24k gold.



crème” of accommodations. Guests can sit at hand-carved Colonial-style writing desks, bathrooms are covered in aged-cream Travertine marble and pieces of art from the Cusco Art School decorate suite walls. If you choose not to stay in a suite but would like to see one, you can request a tour.

There are also three guest-room buildings that include

LEFT: Palacio del Inka Spa
OPPOSITE PAGE: (Clockwise from Top) Casona de los Cuatro Bustos' main courtyard; the exterior; the original entrance; the Presidential Suite



Photos courtesy of Libertador Hotels, Resorts & Spas and Blue Parallel





The picturesque property is just across the street from Qoricancha, also known as the former Temple of the Sun, which was dedicated in 1200 A.D. to Inti, the sun god of the Incas, and served as the central site of worship for the Incas.



PALACIO DEL INKA is located at Plazoleta Santo Domingo 259, Cusco, Peru. For more information, call +51 (84) 23 1961 or visit LIBERTADOR.COM.PE.

Photos courtesy of Libertador Hotels, Resorts & Spas

RIGHT: Inti Raymi Restaurant
BELOW: Rumi Bar

203 rooms filled with Peruvian art, handcrafted furnishings and contemporary amenities, including high-speed Internet and iPod docking stations.

Even dining at the hotel is a unique experience and not just for the cuisine, but the decor. The Inti Raymi Restaurant and Rumi Bar are the new “must-do” destinations in Cusco. The culinary specialty is Novo-Andean cuisine, a relatively new cu-



Peru is likely one of the huge draws.

Emmanuel Burgio, founder and CEO of Blue Parallel, a travel company that creates private tailor-made journeys to Peru for people in the United States, believes tourism will continue to grow because of luxury properties such as Palacio del Inka opening in Cusco, Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley area.

linary Peruvian cooking style that recreates pre-Hispanic customs using authentic local ingredients. The restaurant also serves international dishes with a local slant.

The setting is dramatic with silk and velvet curtains, regal iron chandeliers and breathtaking Solomonian columns that amaze first-time visitors. The bar, which is known for its popular Pisco Sour cocktail, features an original Incan wall, polished Peruvian walnut floors and a stone pathway.

After a memorable dining experience, the staff encourages visitors to walk four short blocks to check out Plaza De Armas, the city’s main plaza, a historical grassy square with shops and a towering church and cathedral.

“Although (the hotel) is right in the middle of everything, it’s far removed from the noise and the hustle and bustle of the main city,” Schwarz points out.

Cultural Gem

The staff here is highlighted repeatedly on TripAdvisor as “friendly” and “accommodating,” and will help you stay

as busy or as relaxed as you care to be.

Want to immerse yourself in Peruvian culture? A staffer will direct you to tours of archaeological and historical sites, including nearby Machu Picchu, considered one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. Also known as the lost city of the Incas, Machu Picchu was discovered in 1911 by an American historian and is now a major tourist attraction that lures visitors from all over the world. While Cusco is located nearby, tourists have often overlooked it. But that’s changing as more visitors realize all the city has to offer.

Besides its historical and archeological significance, Cusco offers cycling, kayaking and hiking in postcard-worthy environments, with mountains, jungles and beaches. The Palacio del Inka’s new full-service spa is another big attraction, offering personalized treatments inspired by Andean culture, such as exfoliations with quinoa, Incan mud wraps and a body wrap based on 24k gold.

Peru’s tourism industry has grown in the last decade, with the United States being its main market, along with residents of Brazil and Latin America, and it’s expected to flourish even more. South America was voted as a hot travel destination in 2014 by *Condé Nast Traveler*, and

Burgio says Peru is a fantastic destination for people of all ages, including families, and it’s a place where you could stay for weeks or just a few days. Blue Parallel has a special five-day escape to Peru that covers the Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu and Cusco as well.

“It’s enough time to visit the main highlights of the region and to take in its historical, cultural and natural beauty,” he says.

And for South Floridians especially, traveling there is getting easier.

Four major airlines now offer direct non-stop flights from South Florida’s major cities into Lima. Most recently, in late 2013, JetBlue Airlines introduced new nonstop direct flights from Fort Lauderdale that can get you to Lima in less than six hours.

And if you’re looking to escape South Florida’s humid summers, this just might be the perfect place to visit.

Cusco is one of South America’s highest cities in altitude, resulting in cooler temperatures year round, despite its fairly close proximity to the equator. And while the city’s rainy season lasts from November through April, that shouldn’t bother South Floridians. Rain or shine, we know how to enjoy a vacation. Especially if it’s in a place like Cusco. ☉