



PROJECT REPORT
MACHUPICCHU NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK VOLUNTEER TRIP
May 12 – 21, 2022

Executive Summary



ConservationVIP® Volunteers at Machu Picchu

Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) organized and led a volunteer trip to Machupicchu National Archaeological Park in May 2022 in collaboration with Peru's Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management, SERNANP). The project was authorized by Anthropologist Magda Mateos Paredes, Director of the Decentralized Directorate of Culture Cusco - Ministry of Culture, and by Ernesto Escalante Valencia, Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management, SERNANP)

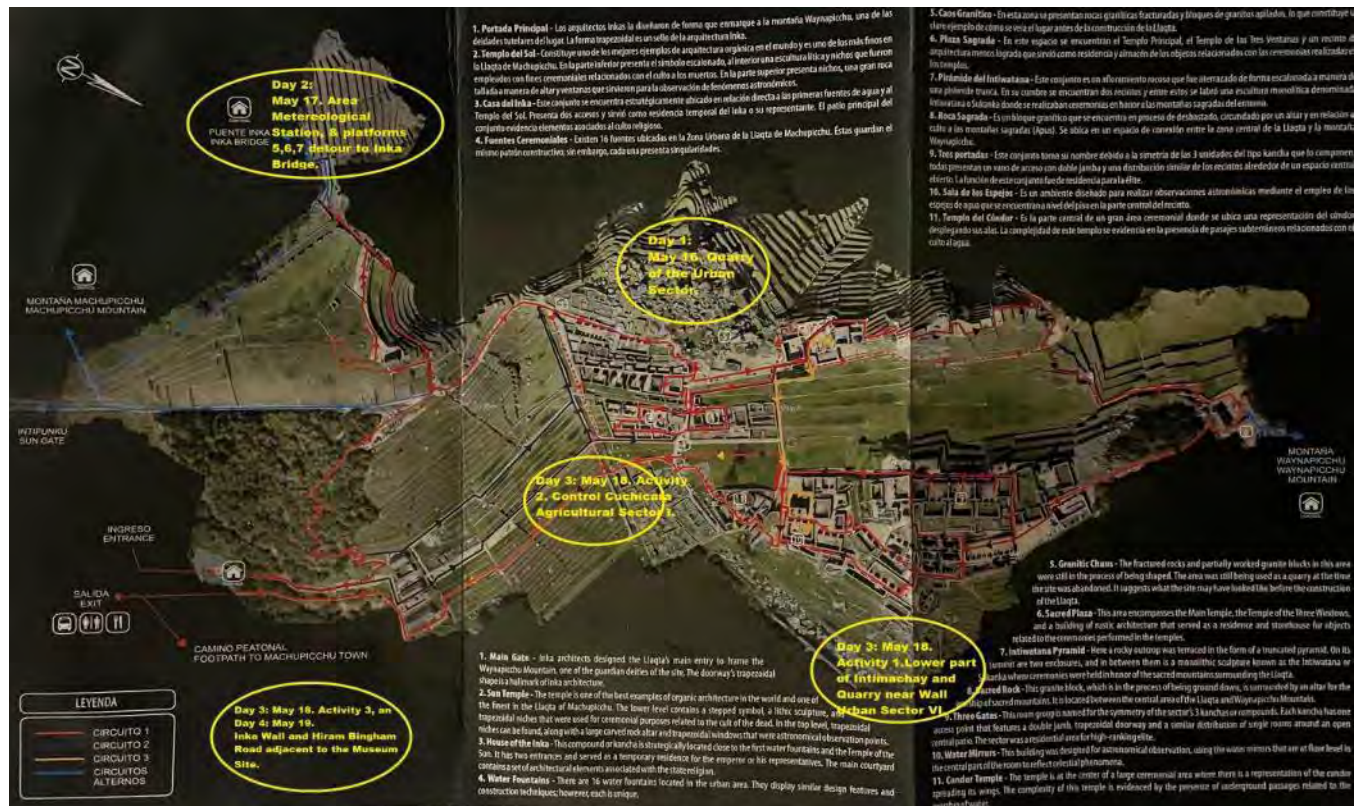
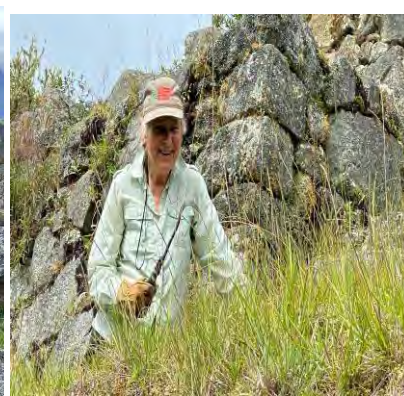
The projects were discussed with anthropologist José Bastante Abuhadba, Director of the Machupicchu National Archaeological Park, archeologist Rosa Huilcanina, Chief of Visitor and Tourist Services Office, and park biologist Sr. Julio Ochoa Estrada, and assistant park biologist Ingrid Molina Navarro.

This was the second trip of Conservationvip back to the Machupicchu destination after the pandemic lockdown. Seven volunteers, including Trip Leader Milagros Flores-Roman of ConservationVIP®, Assistant Trip Leader Todd Drew Spande, and the Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, performed 162 total hours of volunteer work related to the following projects: The primary jobs for the ConservationVIP volunteers during the May 2022 trip involved removing non-native grass and other plants in the Machu Picchu National Archaeological Park. Specifically, during the first three days volunteers worked removing non-native grasses at Llaqta of Machupicchu, areas of: urban sector quarry I subsector “F”, area surrounding the Machupicchu Meteorological Station, Platforms (5,6, and 7), hillsides near the diversion to the Inka bridge of the agricultural sector I subsector “C”, last platform in the lower part of Intimachay and the area surrounding the quarry near the wall of urban sector VI Subsector “E”, Seventh platform from the upper part of the agricultural sector I subsector “A”, and at the site of the Manuel Chávez Ballón Museum wall on the side of the parking beach, road from the site museum to the Hiram Bingham Road.

By removing non-native grasses of pasto gordura (*Melinis minutiflora*) and cuchicara (*Pseudelephantopus spiralis* Asteraceae) from multiple locations within the National Archaeological Park, ConservationVIP® volunteers provided an important service to the Ministry of Culture and SERNANP and contributed to the preservation of the natural and cultural environment. *Melinis minutiflora* is particularly adapted to grow quickly in disturbed soils and in areas recently burned by wildfires. The officials at the Machu Picchu National Archaeological Park, and biologist Julio Ochoa Estrada in particular, want to eradicate this invasive species before it can completely replace native species.

The fourth day of work at the Manuel Chávez Ballón Museum included clearing “False Kion” or false ginger. This is an invasive species that the group pulled out by the root and placed in bags. Additionally, volunteers assisted the Rangers cleaning an Inca wall in front of the museum of invasive plants that threatened damaging the wall. The area covered measured 500 meters in length x 2 meters wide.

Volunteers contributed 162 hours over a four-day period to remove Pasto Gordura (*Melinis minutiflora*), Cuchicara (*Pseudelephantopus spiralis* Asteraceae), and False “Kion”, from the citadel terraces and the Museum Manuel Ballon area. The volunteers pulled and collected 56 large sacks of non-native vegetation, under the direct supervision of park biologist Sr. Julio Ochoa, park assistant biologist Ingrid Molina Navarro, and his staff Wilber Huilca Huilca and Feliciano Incahuaman Atausinchi.



Volunteers removing non-native vegetation from Machupicchu Citadel at terraces under the quarries area

A first meeting took place prior to the trip start, with Anthropologist Magda Mateos Paredes, Director of the Decentralized Directorate of Culture Cusco - Ministry of Culture, and Anthropologist Jose Bastante Abuhadba, Director of the Machupicchu National Archaeological Park regarding the volunteers' activities and future projects. Followed by a second meeting on the same with Ernesto Escalante Valencia, Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management, SERNANP).

Trip leaders will provide this report to anthropologist José Bastante Abuhadba, Director of the Machupicchu National Archaeological Park, and Ernesto Escalante Valencia, Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management, SERNANP).

Detailed Trip Report

We began in Cusco, the capital of the Inca Civilization. Volunteers met the Trip Leader Milagros Flores Roman, Assistant Trip Leader Todd Drew Spande and Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota at our hotel in the early afternoon for orientation and a guided tour of the Cuzco Cathedral. In the evening, the volunteers enjoyed the fine dining of a traditional Peruvian dinner at the Restaurant Calle del Medio while enjoying the camaraderie of the volunteer group. The group spent the next one and one-half days acclimatizing and learning about the complex and storied culture of Peru and enjoyed free time to explore on their own, while acclimatizing to the 11,200-foot elevation.



Volunteers visiting the Cusco Cathedral



On May 13, volunteers visited several important sites including the Cuzco Regional Museum, the Qorikancha, and the ancient Inka citadel of Sacsayhuaman for educational purposes to understand the complexity of the Spanish and Inka cultures. In the evening volunteers enjoyed a fine dining at the Restaurant Inkaterra Grill.



Volunteers at the Inka Citadel of Sacsayhuaman

On May 14, volunteers visited the town of Chinchero at an elevation of 13,500 ft., an indigenous village and former palace of Emperor Topa Inca Yupanqui. There they visited the Inca terraces and remains, a Huaca (Inca shrine), and experienced a short section of the Inca Trail. They visited a weaving cooperative where they learned about traditional Andean weaving techniques and had an opportunity to purchase weavings directly from the weavers before heading to Ollantaytambo to catch the train to Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes). Upon arrival, the volunteers proceeded to check-in and enjoyed dinner at the Hotel Waman Anka Restaurant.



Volunteers at the weaving cooperative center at Chinchero



Volunteers visiting the Huacas and town of Chinchero

On May 15, Volunteers used their entrance tickets to visit Machu Picchu where they were guided by Lic. Santiago Carrasco Bellota about the Inca culture, and preservation issues related to increased visitation as they toured the Sacred City. The volunteers returned that evening to Aguas Calientes and enjoyed a relaxing dinner with traditional Peruvian Music at the Restaurant Mapacho.



Panoramic view of the Machupicchu Citadel with Apus (sacred mountains) in the background



Detail of Inka Citadel of Machupicchu Urban Sector



Volunteers entering Gate of Machupicchu Citadel



Three Volunteer Divas

Archaeological Site Volunteer Project Description

The primary job for the ConservationVIP volunteers during the May 2022 trip was to return to Machu Picchu post-pandemic to reinforce ConservationVIP's long-term commitment to working with the Ministry of Culture and SERNANP to aid in protecting the cultural and environmental resources of the Machupicchu Sanctuary.

The biologist for the Sanctuary, Sr. Julio Ochoa Estrada again requested that the volunteers remove an invasive species of grass, *Melinis minutiflora*, continuing the project which was last performed by ConservationVIP volunteers in November 2021 prior to the Covid 19 Pandemic closure of Peru. This grass is a native of Africa and has begun to out-compete native species of plants. *Melinis minutiflora* is particularly adapted to grow quickly in disturbed soils and in areas recently burned by wildfires. The grass itself becomes a significant fire hazard once it cures. The officials at the Machu Picchu Sanctuary, and biologist Julio Ochoa Estrada in particular, want to eradicate this invasive species before it can completely replace native species.



On May 16, volunteers commenced working on the terraces of the Llaqta (Citadel) enjoying one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world. The area designated for removal of the “pasto gordura” locate at the Quarry of the urban sector I subsector “F”, consisting of terraces, each one lower than the other descending to a cliff that drops approximately 1000 ft. down to the Urubamba River. The volunteers worked alongside the sanctuary staff, who provided guidance and who ensured that safe working conditions were observed by all. Removal of the “pasto gordura” must be performed by hand, to protect the Inca ruins from damage by mechanical means, and to ensure the root system is destroyed. The use of herbicides in the Machu Picchu Sanctuary is prohibited as the Sanctuary is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the home to many rare and endangered flora and fauna. A total of fourteen bags of “pasto gordura” were removed and destroyed by the park staff. Volunteers enjoyed a relaxing dinner with traditional live Peruvian Music at Restaurant Toto’s.



On May 17, the day began with rain and cold that defiantly covered the Llaqta with a unique spectacle of clouds, which formed all kinds of forms of light and shadows of the mountains and offered us a wonderfully different visual experience of Machupicchu. And as if that were not enough, he diverted our original work area and offered us the great surprise of a spectacular walk along the Inca bridge trail, currently closed to the public, and became a delight in the eyes of the volunteers who with big smiles on their faces enjoyed impressive views of the cliff, wild orchids and flowers of all kinds, and above all the experience of walking on a path framed by ancient stones full of so much history was an experience not to forget.

Volunteers worked at locations of Area surrounding the Machupicchu meteorological station. And on the platforms (5,6, and 7) and slopes close to the detour to the Inka bridge of Sector Agricola I subsector "C", where the volunteers divided into teams of two, moving down the terraced slope as each terrace was cleared of "pastor gordura". A total of sixteen bags of "pastor gordura" were removed and destroyed by the park staff. Volunteers enjoyed a relaxing fine dining at Restaurant Indio Feliz.





The challenging weather did not stop the enthusiasm of the volunteers who, with smiles on their faces, enjoyed the spectacular views of light and shadows that the day offered us.





On May 18, the group of volunteers from Conservation Volunteers International Program divided their workday into three different activities or areas of work:

- Activity 1; consisted of grass control in the last platform in the lower part of Intimachay and the area surrounding the quarry near the wall of urban sector VI subsector "E".
- Activity 2: was dedicated to control of cuchicara in the seventh platform area counting from the top of the agricultural sector I subsector "A". Once the work of activity 2 was completed, a vehicle from the Ministry of Culture transported the volunteers to the area of the Manuel Chávez Ballón Site Museum.
- Activity 3: consisted of the removal of vegetation from the Inka wall, in the area adjacent to the Manuel Chávez Ballón Site Museum.

A total of thirteen bags of non-native vegetation were removed. After an intensive day of work, the Volunteers enjoyed a second relaxing dinner with traditional live Peruvian Music at Restaurant Toto's.



On May 19, the ConservationVIP volunteers were requested by Biologist Julio Ochoa to assist in the removal of the invasive False Kion, or False Ginger from the grounds of the Machu Picchu Sanctuary Museo Manuel Chávez Ballón and Botanical Gardens, and to help the park staff clear and clean an Inca terrace wall that is located at the entrance to the Museum. Prior to commencing the work on the museum grounds, the volunteer group was invited to visit the Machu Picchu Sanctuary Museo Manuel Chávez Ballón and was then provided a guided tour of the Botanical Garden by Biologist Julio Ochoa Estrada. Thereafter the volunteer group commenced its work which resulted in plant pruning and control of false Kion clearing the road from the site museum to the Hiram Bingham Road and filled thirteen bags non-native vegetation of False Kion.

The volunteers enjoyed a farewell dinner from Machupicchu with a relaxing dinner accompanied by live typical Andean music at the Mapacho Restaurant.



During the four days of work, the volunteers collected a total of 43 sacks of "fat grass" and 13 sacks of false Kion, for a total of 56 sacks bags of non-native vegetation from 11 different areas, including quarries, terraces, platforms, slopes, and Inka walls within the citadel of Machupicchu.



During the trip, ConservationVIP® donated equipment to help with the management and protection of Machupicchu Sanctuary. Park Biologist Julio Ochoa Estrada, and his staff Wilber Huillca Huillca and Feliciano Incahuaman Atausinchi received the following items:



List of Donated Equipment:

- 10 hand scissors
- 5 short handle saws
- 3 knee protectors
- 3 short handle curves

On May 20, an unexpected change of train departure time gave us the opportunity to visit the thermal baths of Aguas Calientes and its waterfall, along with all the sculptures along the path that represent the entire Inca worldview, marveling at the handling of the stone by all these sculptor artists have been commissioned to capture their art throughout the town of Aguas Calientes. The time of arrival in Ollantaytambo to take the bus back to Cuzco offered us another surprise of a spectacular sunset where the sun bathed the mountains and “colcas” in a spectacular orange and the encounter with the sweetest girl who brought us her llamas for us to see. Cuzco awaited us with a beautiful night and that night the group departed by train from Aguas Calientes heading to Ollantaytambo and returned by bus to Cusco for a final volunteer fine dining farewell group meal and celebration of a successful trip at the Restaurant Incanto.





On May 21, The Machu Picchu Volunteer Trip ended with breakfast. The volunteers said goodbye satisfied with their dream fulfilled and ready to go home to tell all the stories.



ConservationVIP® you Rock!

Having worked in an area of so much meaning is the reason behind this program.

Safe Journey back home to our amazing volunteers.

Until we meet again!

Acknowledgments

Conservation Volunteers International Program acknowledges and thanks the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management, SERNANP), and the community of Machu Picchu Pueblo for the privilege of volunteering in Peru. We particularly thank biologist Julio Ochoa Estrada, and his staff, Wilber Huillca Huillca and Feliciano Incahuaman Atausinchi, together with park assistant biologist Ingrid Molina Navarro, who spent much of the time working shoulder-to-shoulder with the volunteers. Conservation Volunteers International Program wishes to further acknowledge the support and guidance offered by Director of the Machupicchu National Archaeological Park Jose Bastante Abuhadba, with whom ConservationVIP looks forward to continuing to work with to expand the scope of assistance that ConservationVIP can offer to this unique cultural and environmental site

Special thanks to Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, who provided excellent historical and environmental information. His work with the Peruvian ministries prior to our arrival was critical in obtaining the necessary permits to carry out our work at the Sanctuary.

Last, but not least, ConservationVIP® thanks our hardworking May 2022 Machu Picchu volunteers, for their efforts to help conserve Machu Picchu for future generations.

Milagros Flores-Román

Todd Drew Spande

Conservation Volunteers International Program