



**PROJECT REPORT
MACHUPICCHU NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK VOLUNTEER TRIP
June 6 – 15, 2024**

Executive Summary



ConservationVIP® Volunteers at Machu Picchu

Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) organized and led a volunteer trip to Machupicchu National Archaeological Park in June 2024 in collaboration with Peru's Ministry of Culture. The project was authorized by Architect Guido Walter Bayro, Director of the Decentralized Directorate of Culture Cusco - Ministry of Culture.

The projects were discussed with archeologist Regulo Gilberto Franco Jordan, Director of Conservation Area of Machupicchu National Archaeological Park, park biologist Sr. Julio Ochoa Estrada, and his staff Wilber Huilca Huilca.

Eight volunteers, including ConservationVIP® Trip Leader Dr. Milagros Flores-Roman, Assistant Trip Leader and Architect Pablo Ojeda O'Neill, and Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, performed 211 total hours of volunteer work. The primary projects for the ConservationVIP volunteers during the June 2024 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: terraces, and the Intimachay platforms, lower quarries and historic walls.

By removing non-native grasses of: pasto gordura (*Melinis minutiflora*), cuchicara (*Pseudoelephantopus spiralis* Asteraceae) from multiple locations within the National Archaeological Park, ConservationVIP® volunteers provided an important service to the Ministry of Culture and contributed to the preservation of the natural and cultural environment. Pasto gordura (*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 last day was dedicated to volunteering at the site of the Manuel Chávez Ballón museum assisting the Rangers cleaning an Inca wall in front of the museum of invasive plants that threatened to damage the wall.

During the 211 hours, the volunteers pulled and collected a total of 71 large sacks of non-native vegetation, under the direct supervision of park biologist Sr. Julio Ochoa, and his staff Wilber Huillca and Safety and Rescue Staff Antonio Sinchiroca Mora.

Trip leaders will provide copy of this report to archeologist Regulo Gilberto Franco Jordan, Director of the Machupicchu National Archaeological Park.

Detailed Trip Report

On June 6, we began in Cuzco, the capital of the Inca Civilization. The Volunteers were welcomed with an atmosphere of celebration with traditional music and dances, a sign that the Intiraymi Festival was approaching, dedicated to the Sun God. Volunteers met the Trip Leaders Dr. Milagros Flores-Roman, Architect Pablo Ojeda O'Neill, and Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota at our hotel in the early afternoon for orientation. Afterward, the volunteers enjoyed the parades of the Patron Saints of the different brotherhoods, followed by their musical bands and congregation. Later, they took a guided tour of the Cuzco Cathedral and then had free time to explore Cuzco on their own. In the evening, the volunteers enjoyed the fine dining of a traditional Peruvian dinner at the Restaurant Artisano Regocijo while enjoying the camaraderie of the volunteer group. The group spent the next one-and-one-half days learning about Peru's complex and storied culture and enjoyed free time to explore on their own while acclimatizing to the 11,200-foot elevation.



Volunteers visited the Cuzco Cathedral and enjoying Welcome traditional Peruvian dinner.

On June 7, 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 shared their first dinner together.





Volunteers at the Inka Citadel of Sacsayhuaman

On June 8, 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. At the weaving cooperative 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 Restaurant Toto's House.





Volunteers enjoying the breathtaking landscape of Chinchero and after at the weaving cooperative center.



After Chinchero the volunteers had a spectacular time on the Train to Machu Picchu with traditional music and dances.

On June 9, 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 Kaymanka.



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



Volunteers in the Llaqta of Machu Picchu





Volunteers after conquering the summit of Huchuy Picchu

Archaeological Site Volunteer Project Description

The primary job for the ConservationVIP volunteers during the June 2024 trip was to continue to reinforce ConservationVIP's long-term commitment to working with the Ministry of Culture 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 previously performed by ConservationVIP volunteers. 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 June 10, the group of volunteers from Conservation Volunteers International Program worked at the occidental terraces of the Llaqta of Machu Picchu (Citadel of Machu Picchu). Work consisted of grass control in the several platforms. A total of fifteen bags, along the platform area from the bottom of the Llamacancha sector, were removed and destroyed by the park staff. At the end of the day, back in Aguas Calientes, the Volunteers enjoyed a relaxing dinner with traditional live Peruvian Music at Restaurant Toto's House.



The challenging hot weather did not stop the enthusiasm of the volunteers who, with smiles on their faces, enjoyed working under the sun at the Llaqta of Machu Pichu.

On June 11, the day began with mist covering the Citadel of Machu Pichu along the Inca trail to Intipunku, offering a wonderfully different visual experience of Machupicchu. The designated working area for the day was at the platform area of the Llamacancha sector. Along the way it became a delight in the eyes of the volunteers experiencing walking on a path framed by ancient stones full of so much history. A total of thirteen bags of “pasto gordura” were removed and destroyed by the park staff. Volunteers enjoyed a traditional Peruvian dinner at SUNU Restaurant.



Volunteers working at the Llamacancha sector of Machu Pichu

On June 12, volunteers commenced working on the Intimachay platforms lower quarries area of the Llaqta (Citadel) enjoying one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world. The volunteers worked alongside the sanctuary staff, who provided guidance and 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 because the Sanctuary is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the home to many rare and endangered flora and fauna. A total of eighteen bags of “pasto gordura” were removed and destroyed by the park staff. At the end of the day, back in Aguas Calientes, the Volunteers enjoyed a relaxing Restaurant Indio Feliz.

On June 13, the volunteers went to the area of the Manuel Chávez Ballón 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 with a guided tour of the Botanical Garden by Biologist Julio Ochoa Estrada. Work consisted of removal of vegetation from the Inka wall, in the area adjacent to the Manuel Chávez Ballón Site Museum. A total of eighteen bags of non-native vegetation were removed. After an intensive day of work, the Volunteers celebrated their work achievement and said goodbye to Machu Pichu with an elegant farewell dinner at the Inka Wasi Restaurant.

During the four days of work, the volunteers contributed a total of 211 hours, and collected a total of 64 sacks of non-native vegetation from different areas, including quarries, terraces, platforms, slopes, and Inka walls within the citadel and Museum and Botanical Garden of Machupicchu for a total area covered of 14,700 square feet.



Volunteers before and after job on the Inka Wall at the area of the Manuel Chávez Ballón Museum

On June 14, volunteers departed Aguas Calientes on train back to Ollantaytambo where after a stroll through the spectacular ancient Inka city of cobbled streets, water channels and fountains we arrived at the Ollanta Military Fortress and strategic military zone in defense of the Inca Empire.



Panoramic view of Ollantaytambo Archaeological Park



Volunteers having a good time on the train to Ollantaytambo

After visiting Ollantaytambo, the group returned by bus to Cusco for a final farewell group meal and celebration of a successful trip. On June 15, the Machu Picchu Volunteer Trip ended with breakfast.



**Working in an area of so much meaning is the reason behind this program.
Safe Journey back home to our amazing volunteers.**

Acknowledgments

Conservation Volunteers International Program acknowledges and thanks the Ministry of Culture, 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 Antonio Sinchiroca Mora, 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 Archeologist Regulo Gilberto Franco Jordan, with whom ConservationVIP looks forward to continuing to work 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 interpretive 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 June 2024 Machu Picchu volunteers, for their efforts to help conserve Machu Picchu for future generations.

Milagros Flores-Román and Pablo Ojeda O'Neill
Trip Leaders
Conservation Volunteers International Program
Machu Picchu Destination