

INCA TRAILS EXPERIENCE TO MACHU PICCHU

28th April - 13th May 2017

DREAM IT
AND WE WILL TAKE YOU THERE





FOREWORD

For me Dream It is all about relationships, passion and sharing epic fitness-related experiences by partnering with our guides, travel partners, fitness specialists and coaches to enable us to deliver the Dream experience for our clients.

Dream It offers ambitious travel and fitness experiences in amazing global locations, providing a truly immersive cultural experience that is well researched, well executed and difficult to replicate.

Our Peru experience took 18 months to pull together and deliver and it is hard to put into words how privileged I feel to have been part of the trip with such an outstanding group of people that are now firm friends.

Kiwis tend to be amazing people to travel with and this group definitely left a wonderful impression on the local people in Peru. Activ8 Northland were outstanding in their role as group training and conditioning partner and have sent the benchmark for all Dream It trips in the future.

Special thanks also to our Dream It partners. Alyse Morgan at M3 Clinic for her support with injury prevention and biomechanics. Ady McKenzie for her advice around all things nutrition, hydration and electrolytes and to Kathmandu for kitting out our team in great gear and opening their store for our Gear Up evening.

The payback for me personally is seeing the personal growth and absolute joy of our clients throughout their experiences which we have captured in the following pages.

Michael (Mavis) Davis aka Peruvian Spirit Animal name Butterfly
Dream It Founder

CHOQUEQUIRAO TO MACHU PICCHU

TRAVELLING THE GREAT INCA ROAD IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE CHASQUIS

For this adventure we immerse in the mystical world of Incan history and travel the Great Inca Road between the ancient sites of Choquequirao and Machu Picchu. Our journey follows in the footsteps of the legendary Chasqui runners who supported the vast Incan empire delivering communications along the 38,000km Inca Road. As we trek between these two lost cities we will have opportunity to view impressive landscapes, explore high Andean villages and travel through five climate zones – including Andean Puna and Cloud Forest where endangered condors are common. Along the way we will immerse in the Andean way of life and see the mountains through the eyes of these historic messengers.



OUR CREW

All our crew were appointed spirit animal names by our guide Rob Harsh

Adelle Allbon Llama	Kerry Chestnut Walrus	Rhys McPherson Mouse	Rob Harsh Tinkerbelle (Guide)
Bronwyn Shaw Crane	Louise Miller Mongoose	Scott Coutts Platypus	Julio Camacho Armadillo (Guide)
Clint Hangar Unicorn	Marg Wooley Sea Turtle	Sharron Stevenson Cuckoo	Plus Gracie Lady Bug
Craig Hannah Porpoise	Matt Harrison Anaconda	Shayne Dunseath Python	And our horsemen, cooks and 32 horses.
Desma Hanna Snow Leopard	Mavis Butterfly	Tania Coutts Dove	
Irene McPherson Humming Bird	Megan Chestnut Beaver	Trixie Foote Capuchin Monkey	
John Woolley Panda Bear	Miranda Harrison Crow	Valerie Hanger Swan	



OUR GUIDES

ROB HARSH

Rob has been leading and guiding people in business, outdoor adventure and personal growth for twenty years. He holds a B.S. in Environmental Science and has worked as a sustainability expert since 1993. He has traveled extensively throughout the world on climbing, kayaking, mountain biking and running expeditions and has experience as a certified mountain guide and working with adaptive athletes in the outdoors for 10 years.

He has been a Certified Professional Coach and Energy Leadership Master Practitioner since 2012, and has completed additional studies in Meditation, Sound Healing, Theta Healing, Reiki, Yoga, Exercise Physiology and Sustainable Living. In 2013 he began studying Andean traditions and plant medicine in Peru, and integrates these experiences into his journeys as a way to help bridge the gap between modern knowledge and ancient wisdom.

By combining these experiences he works with both modern leadership tools and energetic practices to create personalized programs to help people raise their energy and shift the way they see themselves and the world. He creates space for people to explore beyond their comfort zones, intuitively guiding them to see beyond their limiting beliefs, and helping them move forward in achieving greater fulfillment, healing and connection in their lives.

A US expat now living in Peru, he now travels full time and shares his experiences through leading adventures, coaching and writing.



ROB'S STORY

In 2013 a dream was born when I had the opportunity to travel to Peru and explore one of the most famous “Wonders of the World”. Machu Picchu had been on my list of must see places since I first saw a picture of it when I was 22. From that day forward I became inspired to travel the globe, exploring far off exotic landscapes, and immersing myself in indigenous cultures and ancient mythology. Twenty years and twenty countries later I finally found myself in this legendary Incan city, walking amongst its huge carved stones, walls and terraces, perched high atop a mountain in the Peruvian Andes.

Seeing it with my own eyes I was overcome by the incredible beauty, and the unexplainable energy I felt walking its ancient footpaths. Of all the places I had ever visited, nothing quite compared to it. As I explored Peru more I could feel this incredible energy everywhere - in the land, the people and the many sacred Incan ruins. From that day forward I knew I had to return and share this incredible place with others.

In 2015 after my third trip, I met an incredible Peruvian guide Julio Camacho, and we began to develop an amazing journey to take people to see the real Peru, traveling along lesser known paths between the ruins of Choquequirao and Machu Picchu, visiting remote villages and walking in the footsteps of the Chasqui Runners. For a lucky few this would be an opportunity of a lifetime to experience Peru's unique culture, history and beauty.

All plans were set to finally bring a group in April 2017, when Michael from Dream It convinced a hearty bunch of Kiwi adventurers to take the plunge. But before the trip even started the unthinkable happened. In 2016 I unexpectedly found myself in the fight of my life after being diagnosed with Stage 4 Lung Cancer. All my dreams and aspirations suddenly vanished, as doctors had given me just a few months to live.

The news hit me hard, and as my condition worsened quickly, I thought this could be it. I never lost hope however, fighting my way through the many ups and downs. Then one day in December 2016 as I was walking in the forest near my house I had a vision where I was leading a group up a stone path high above Machu Picchu. The vision was so clear like it was happening right in front of me. It was in that moment that I decided, if this is it, I'm at least going to go out fighting for my dream.

So I began hiking every day in the mountains around my Colorado home, each day putting one step in front of the other, striving to go a little further and a little higher. I held that picture of my vision in my head, along with the promise that one day I would return and share Peru, supporting others in living their dreams.

Little did I know that this aspiration would change my life. Four months and many hundreds of miles later, I miraculously found myself in Cusco welcoming a group of 21 intrepid Kiwis, ready to take on the adventure of a lifetime. Over the next 12 days we would share the most incredible adventure. Laughing, eating good food, sharing stories and taking in the incredible sights and sounds of the real Peru. The group came together around the challenge of trekking through the Andes mountains to the legendary Machu Picchu. But it wasn't the destination that made this trip special, it was the journey that was experienced along the way. As we allowed ourselves to slow down and connect with the land, the people and one another, our view expanded and the feeling deepened.

Through this trip I now have honest proof that in order to achieve anything big in life you must believe in something greater than yourself, you must give more that you receive and you must trust that on the other side of fear, everything you wish for in life is waiting to be discovered.

Along the way the group came together and shared their generosity with the Peruvian people. This generosity was met with incredible smiles and songs as the group donated more than 350 pounds of school supplies to 40 children in the village of Yanama. The group also received much gratitude from our Peruvian guides, cooks and horsemen, as they were made to feel they were part of the group, playing soccer with them at 11,500 feet and sharing a well earned beer at the end of the day.



Each evening as we were pampered by our incredible crew, we'd recall the days' events, offering stories of both courage and stupidity; sharing visions of each person's animal spirit and honouring the person who most bravely embraced their own 'dorkness' through forcing them to wear the coveted rainbow head band, which hence forth will be named in honour of its first recipient, Michael “Butterfly” Davis.

There was also real courage displayed, as each person hiked further and higher than they had ever gone before, supported by the incredible Activ8 team of Matt, Shayne and Miranda.

Through their inspiration and coaching, each person was able to step beyond their comfort zones, and experience the greater possibilities that exist within each of us. Most notably it was Irene's incredible achievement of overcoming the odds that inspired each of us to dig a little deeper.

After trekking more than 75 miles, and climbing twice the height of Mount Everest, the group finally made it to Machu Picchu. The group set off early towards the summit of Mount Machu Picchu, hiking a steep stone path high above the fabled ruins. As the clouds cleared, and the city came into view, I couldn't believe my eyes - this was the exact vision I had four months earlier. As I turned to see all the smiling faces of the group looking down on the wondrous sight, I realised that I had indeed turned my dream into a reality and in the process experienced real healing.

Through this trip I now have honest proof that in order to achieve anything big in life you must believe in something greater than yourself, you must give more that you receive and you must trust that on the other side of fear, everything you wish for in life is waiting to be discovered.

Thank you to all of you for making this trip possible, it was an honour and privilege to be a part of your journey.

Rob “Tinkerbell” Harsh

JULIO CEASAR CAMACHO

Julio was born in Cusco, the great ancient capital of the Incan Civilization and his family came from the small town of Písaq in the Sacred Valley. He did his entire education in Cusco, and studied Tourism and Business at the local university in Cusco San Antonio Abad. When he was a teenager he was a boy scout, which introduced him with the outdoor world and the Andes Mountains.

Julio now works as a freelance tour guide, and runs his own outdoor company organizing trips exploring the Andean world. He is very knowledgeable about the Incan history and Andean culture. He has been leading trips for 15 years throughout the Sacred Valley to Machu Picchu, Salkantay, Ausangate, Vilcabamba, Urubamba, Choquequirao and in Cusco. His background is Mestizo native from Peru and he speaks Quechu, English and Spanish. He has two lovely children a daughter of 16 and a son of 11.

JULIO’S STORY

I always believed that there was something special behind the highest peaks. I always believed that the spirits of my ancestors were at the top of the mountains, watching us and taking care of our families.

I got a message from a friend of mine in 2014 telling me he had a friend based in Peru who was looking for a guide and someone to help him organise a trip to Peru, to explore some of the most beautiful mountains in this part of the country.

I made contact with this guy and the first time I met him there was sometime special about him. I really liked the way how he described his journeys hiking in some other parts of the world and his curiosity to know more about Peru and its ancient society. After a few years me and this man (Rob Harsh) had the chance to organise a trip to visit one of the most amazing Inca sites in Peru.

Choquequirao (Golden Cradle) was always one of the most challenging trails for all hikers and has been considered one of the most mysterious Incan sites in Peru. We began to organise this trip putting together two impressive Incan sites, being Choquequirao and Machu Picchu, in just eight days.

It was a great challenge for me and my team because logistically there were many details to cover and a lot of organisation. After many months preparing the programme we finally did it in April 2017 and I have to admit it was one of the most challenging tours that I have ever organised but it was really successful because there were many people behind the scenes who were taking care of the camp sites, tents, food etc. This group of Peruvian workers did a great job - their mission was to provide a good service for our visitors and they made it!!



I was inspired all the time especially when I saw this group of people from New Zealand enjoying the trail, getting excited for all the beauty around them and doing their best in each step they were making.

I really enjoyed the trip. The scenery is outstanding, the Inca trail between Choquequirao and Machu Picchu is well preserved and isolated and it was a great way to meet God’s creators of this unique group of mountains (Pachamama). I was inspired all the time especially when I saw this group of people from New Zealand enjoying the trail, getting excited for all the beauty around them and doing their best in each step they were making.

The end of every day of the trails was special because the energy from this group of Kiwis was enviable and makes me believe that I had been doing the right job in the right place with the right people. My highlight in this journey was meeting this group of people, each individual and hearing every personal story....special thanks to Rob, Mavis, Miranda, Matt and Shayne for your trust and of course to all my team for make an exceptional service during this 10 days hiking in Peru.

Julio “Armadillo” Camacho

OUR ITINERARY

DAY 1	ARRIVE INTO CUSCO FROM SANTIAGO, CHILE Arrive in Cusco and check into our Hotel. Group Dinner.
DAY 2	CUSCO AND TEMPLE OF THE MOON Tour Cusco and Opening Despacho Ceremony. Group Dinner.
DAY 3	CUSCO TO CACHORA TO SANTA ROSA Bus: 3.5 hours Trek distance: 12.8km Elevation change: -2,187m +1,718m Camp elevation: 2,241m
DAY 4	SANTA ROSA TO CHOQUEQUIRAO Distance: 6.4km Elevation change: -106m +518m Camp elevation: 2,882m
DAY 5	CHOQUEQUIRAO TO PINCHAUNUYOC Distance: 14.4km Elevation change -869m +457m Camp elevation 2,409m Days max elevation 3,278m
DAY 6	PINCHAUNUYOC TO MAIZAI Distance: 8km Elevation change: -564m +1,220m Camp elevation: 2,928m
DAY 7	MAIZAL TO YANAMA Distance: 9.6km Elevation change: -564 m +1,067m Camp elevation: 3,507m Days max elevation: 4,117m
DAY 8	YANAMA TO COLLIPAPAMPA Distance: 24km Elevation change: -1,800m +1,159m Camp elevation: 2,897m Days max elevation: 5,156m
DAY 9	COLLIPAPAMPA TO LUCMA Distance: 19.2km Elevation change: -884 +152 m Camp elevation: 2,013 m
DAY 10	LUCMA TO AGUAS CALIENTE Distance: 22.4km Elevation change: -1,021m +762m Hotel in Aquas Caliente: 2,074m Days max elevation: 2,806m
DAY 11	MACCHU PICCHU TOUR
DAY 12	AGUAS CALIENTE TO CUSCO Train to Ollyentaytambo. Bus tour Maras Salt mine and Chinchero Textile tour. Celebration dinner and party.
DAY 13	DEPART CUSCO FOR HOME

OUR TRAINING AND PREPARATION



DEPARTURE & TRAVEL



CUSCO



OUR SCHOOL VISIT



FREDDIES COFFEE PLANTATION



OUR FOOD



THE TRAILS







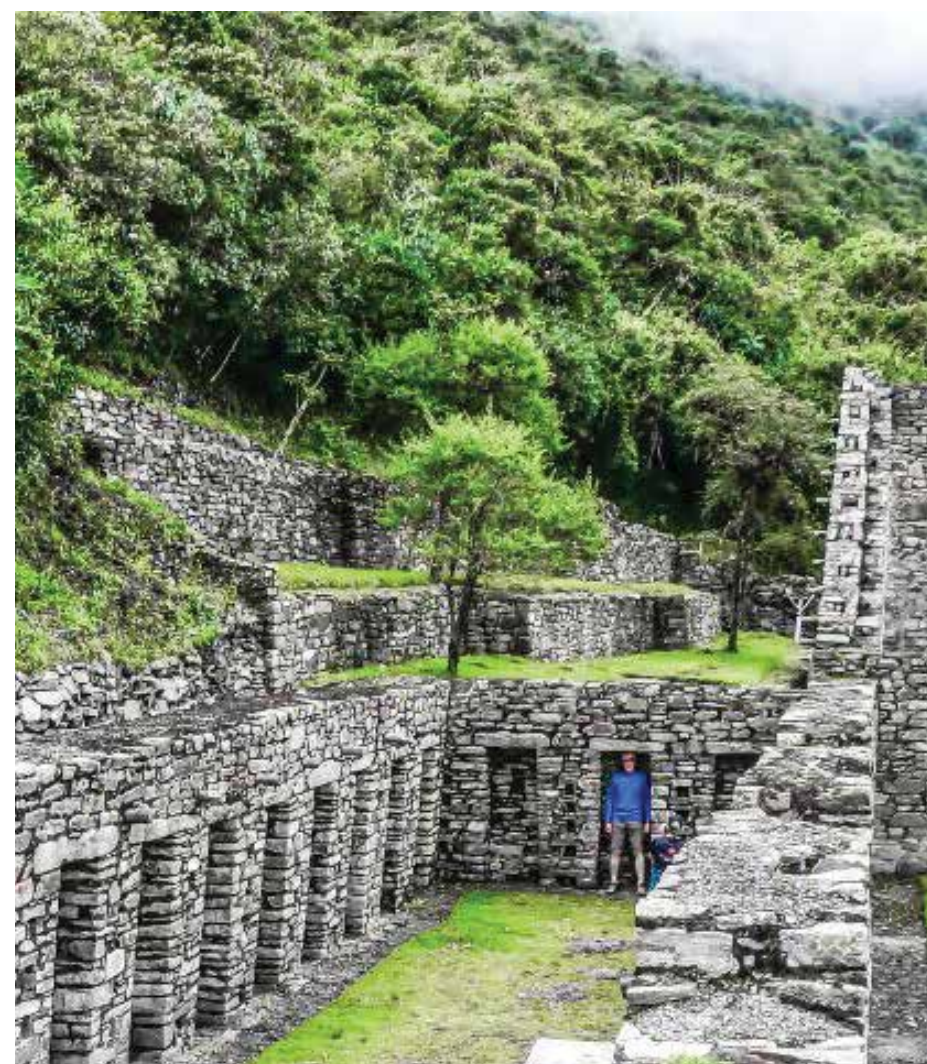




NZ V PERU FOOTBALL INTERNATIONAL



CHOQUEQUIRAO



MACHU PICCHU



IRENE'S STORY

Early in 2016 my Personal Trainer Shayne Dunseath asked me if I'd be interested in going to Peru to do the Inca Trail. I have a big mouth and tend to engage my mouth before my brain: I said yes. Then the reality sunk in. 121ks in 7 days - Irene what the hell have you signed yourself up for?!

With pig headedness running in my family there was no way I was going to pull out. Also at this time, Shayne set me another task to lose another 10kgs in weight and in his words, "If I didn't lose the weight, I wasn't allow to go". Shayne said, "Up Parihaka you go. Never in my 64 years had I walked up Parihaka. It was achieved with a lot of puffing and panting. Made it! Then Shayne told me I had to do the Dobbie Track so many times before I tried the Drummond Track. Once I had got Parihaka sorted it was out to Mt Manaia then Mt Aubrey. Freakin hills... I didn't know there were so many around Whangarei!

This is where a good friend Jenny Fairley joined in and we became walking buddies, doing Mt Manaia, Mt Aubrey, Tutukaka Lighthouse, Ocean Beach to Smugglers and many more. Then there was the Cape Brett Track. On the way in, Jenny and I had decided to catch the water taxi home the following day. That night we had a storm and because of rough weather the taxi was cancelled, so on with the shoes, "suck it up sunshine" and out we walked. 8 hours in and 8 hours out - you know how the saying goes: "Been there, done that - and never going back". "You can

stick it up your jumper" and a few other words that are unprintable were said.... that's me on the Cape Brett Track. Next was the Tongariro Crossing. Not sure whether I was getting fitter but I enjoyed this one and yes I would go back. I just loved doing the crossing. But none of this prepared me for Peru. The hills are big, so bloody big.

If there is one thing that sticks in my mind is the heat - I was not prepared for that. Sunburn on the first day going down a hill that I thought was never going to end. How far can a bleedin' hill go down? Then to stand at the bottom and know you have to go up the other side only a quarter of the way to camp... This is where I was introduced to my best friend on the trek, his name was Noisy, the donkey. I rode Noisy for a short time until it got too steep, then got off, walked over the steep part, got back on and rode the rest of the way, arriving at camp in the dark. The second day Noisy came along and helped me up the hill to camp again. The third day I walked with Shayne all the way. The fourth day I walked with Miranda all the way. The fifth day we went up and over one of the highest passes on the trip. This day I walked with Matt and Scott. This was not one of my proudest days. The language got colourful and I can only blame it on the thin air. But I made it up and over that hill without Noisy's help. It was great to see Shayne waiting for me at the top! A few hugs and lunch, then down the other side.

There is a saying that "what goes up must come down". Well, we came down alright, Shayne scaring the life out of me by standing on a rock for a photo with a sheer drop off. I wasn't going to look but it was a long way down. This was the night we made it to Yanama and a little school where we gave out books to the children and the guys played football with the kids. And yes I believe the kids won! What a great group of kids. Some had stayed to see us arrive and then walked 1.5 hours home after the game.

The following morning we went over the highest point of the track. We were given an option on this day. Some were driven to a point one hour from the top so they could walk the rest of the way to the top, others were taken to the top to start walking down immediately as driving up had not given us time to acclimatise like the walkers who had arrived at the top at a slower pace. I was one that went up in the van which made sense when I saw the condition of some of the tour group that had decided to walk it. I found it a little disconcerting when you got to the top of the pass and there was a guy sitting up there with a bottle of oxygen for those that needed it. Irene didn't need to be told twice to get down the other side.

Machu Picchu is spiritual, it has amazing architecture and it's mind blowing how this place was built, how the rocks were cut and placed to make the terraces.

This was also the day that I rode on the back of motorbike. Those that know me will know why I hate these things. After crossing a big swing bridge, Julio (one of the tour guides) said to me, "Irene jump on the back of that motorbike and rip down the valley and as you go past all those people that are always out in front of you, give them the finger!" Well, how can a girl resist? On the bike I go and I give them all the big salute as I went pass, only to get to the border pass and realise that Rhys has my passport in his backpack, so I had to sit and wait until he got there. Is there a moral to this story? Yes. Don't be a smart arse.

We arrived into Aguas Caliente and stayed for 2 nights in a hotel. What a pleasure to have a bed that you didn't have to blow up and a nice hot shower. I heard some didn't have a hot shower - I didn't care, I did! The next day we went up to Machu Picchu. Now if you haven't been, this place is a must. It's spiritual, it has amazing architecture and it's mind blowing how this place was built, how the rocks were cut and placed to make the terraces is mind blowing.

There are many stories that could be told about this trip. Would I do it again at the age of 65? I don't know. At one stage I thought the ultimate punishment for misbehaving would be to be sent back where we'd come from and I'm sure that I was walking a thin line to be sent back at times - at least going forward we never knew what was before us.



I need to thank Mavis for arranging this epic trip. Well done Butterfly. Keep up the good work.

To our guides Rob Harsh and Julio Camacho: Rob you are one amazing man, to go through what you are going through and still be able to make this trip is beyond belief. Julio, your knowledge of Peru is unbelievable and invaluable. Even if sometimes that cheeky little smile had me wondering if you weren't trying to pull an old lady's leg.

To the trainers from Activ8 Northland: Thanks for all your help Matt and Miranda Harrison. To my trainer Shayne Dunseath, you are and were freakin' awesome! I know you keep on telling me you are, but after this trip, I now believe you.

To Rhys McPherson: You were the rock that everyone needs on a trip like this, always there to have your ear bent and to tell me to pull my head in and get on with it.

To the tour group: What a great group of people and I hope you enjoyed the trip as much as I did and also came home heaps of great memories like I have.

A personal note from Mavis...

Irene is one of those very special people that makes these trips such a privilege and joy to deliver. Irene certainly had her challenges and she took this one on with great humour and absolutely smashed it. Incredibly humble and giving and always more concerned about others, she didn't realise how much she inspired the group of people we were with, including our clients, trainers and our guides. She is the absolute reason why I love putting these experiences together and what Dream It is all about. Normal everyday people achieving the extraordinary.



MIRANDA'S STORY

Dream It - these two words sum it up. Our trip to Peru was a dream come true - and felt like a dream while we were there. We could not have dreamed up a better team to go with, better guides to guide us and a better experience.

From the vistas to the food, to the hiking, to the laughs (and the cries), to the spirit animals, to the support crew and to Mavis - I still think about this trip daily. Not only was it a holiday or a 'tick off the bucket list', this trip had something different.

It touched something deep inside me that was life-changing, and I think a few of us felt this way. The tracks that we followed are those which the Chasqui Runners used to run. The mountains we climbed and the sacred places we visited all had an impact and we all had this amazing shared experience - that will never again be repeated.

Thank you for being on this journey with me and creating memories that will last forever. Remember to slow down and breathe - like we did when at the top of a mountain with an amazing view, remember to appreciate hot showers and comfy beds, remember to step out of your comfort zone and to get into a zone of living life and taking on challenges. Live your dreams and make the most of every day.



SHAYNE'S STORY



INCA ROADS: MY JOURNEY TO A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

On the 28th April 2017 my life changed forever. Before leaving to Peru with 20 clients from Activ8 a lot of people asked me, "how excited are you to go to Peru soon?". I always answered, "I'm not sure, it hasn't sunk in yet" - and it hadn't, but little did I know it was going to be the best experience and journey of my life.

We were all entering the unknown as 98% of us have never even been to South America, so we didn't know what to expect other than what people who had done the normal 4-day Inca Trail had told us. As soon as we had arrived one of our guides, Julio, told us we were in for something truly special that would be nothing like the 4-day trail, and he was overwhelmingly correct in so many ways.

The first thing you notice when arriving at our place of departure, for our hike during the whole journey all the way up to Machu Picchu is the outstanding scenery. NZ is known for amazing scenery, but what Peru has is NZ scenery on steroids. The scale of the place is just indescribably massive, and we even said throughout the trip that photos will not do this place justice - and we were right, they can't. We saw and did things that the majority of the public are not allowed to see and do, so we are incredibly grateful to Julio for doing all the things he did - what an outstanding guide. Seeing and experiencing Choquequirao (similar to Machu Picchu), staying on remote terraces on the top of a mountain and Machu Picchu were all truly amazing and something we all will never forget, but this trip was so much more than this.

The group from Activ8 (www.activ8nz.co.nz/about-us), Mavis (Dream It), our guides Julio and Rob, and the Peruvian people made this trip something I will never forget - the scenery is just a bonus. The 20 of us from Activ8 gelled straight away and there was only amazing times together throughout the whole trip. Ages ranged from 30-65 but that didn't matter, we were family without the fighting pretty much. The knowledge of our guides and what they did for us was just so thorough it was excellent. Ask anyone from our trip about the food - it was out of this world and without modern means of cooking they definitely were not cooks - they were chefs! And if anyone knows how Matt and I eat, they definitely made enough. The horsemen were special, especially with us males on the trip, we really got on well. They would wake us up in the morning with a coffee, pack down our tent, pack up and take our gear and have our tents all ready at the next destination - was 5 Star service the whole way.

One thing that I'm very proud of is the way we displayed and engraved our New Zealand culture on Peru.

We had walked 8 days and spent 10 days altogether with one of our guides Rob Harsh. Now this guy has done it all- every adventure race you can think of but what he told us next put everything into perspective for everyone. At Machu Picchu, in a small ceremony for the group, he told us he was living with and suffering from stage 4 lung cancer. This guy was basically dying, but was he giving up on life and ready to go? Hell no! He was giving 23 people from New Zealand the experience of a lifetime with a smile on his face the whole time. This guy was hurting but never made it show, he demonstrated what it's like to fight for one's life and dedicate it to helping



others achieve amazing things. We can all learn something from this- and he has found a new lease of life from coming on this trip. (You're the man Rob, you made the trip special for everyone, I hope we get to meet up again soon).

Irene McPherson, what can I say about this lady. She's 65, put in more hours training than anyone, and achieved Greatness. She trekked 8 days, ascended and descended the equivalent of Mount Everest, TWICE. Now this is awesome but this is not why she achieved greatness. Irene achieved greatness because she has opened the door for so many people her age who feel things like this are way too hard and they are way too old to do anything like this. This stops now, Irene is the ambassador for greatness regardless of age - Irene, you're my idol and I'm so so so proud of you.

One thing that I'm very proud of is the way we displayed and engraved our New Zealand culture on Peru. The no fuss, easily pleased and 'just get on with it' attitude was on display the whole trip. Throughout the trip things were tough but did anyone bitch and moan out loud and quit? No way. The big one is how we treated and appreciated what the Peruvian people did for us, especially our horsemen and chefs/waiters/tentmen. The guides told us afterwards that no other group did what we did, no other group spent a whole night socialising with them (yes, there were a lot of beers involved but they deserved it!) We didn't speak Spanish and they didn't speak English but we made it work. Seeing the looks on the kids' faces when we showed up with \$500 of school supplies for them and playing soccer with them was so rewarding in itself.

So would I recommend Peru, Inca Trails, Machu Picchu? Definitely. Would I go back? No I wouldn't - because I know we wouldn't be on the same trail and with the same extraordinary Kiwi and Peruvian people that made the experience what it is... unless it was with Dream It again!

Also a massive thank you to Mike Davis (Mavis) from Dream It who organised the whole thing. Without him, none of us would have had this life changing experience.



MATT'S STORY



FINDING HAPPINESS - THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

18 months ago I got a strange call from a man calling himself Mavis (is that even a real name?), telling me he had the opportunity of a lifetime for me and that I must meet with him asap. A bit sceptical, I meet with this stranger called Mavis and he started speaking 100 miles an hour about Activ8 and how we needed to get a group of our clients together to go on this adventure to Peru.

Fast forward a year and we had a group of 23 - 19 Activ8 clients, Shayne (my business partner), my wife/business partner Miranda, myself and Mavis. Through Dream It, Mavis' vision was to create an experience that was out of this world. That meant that we couldn't do the normal 4-day Inca trail walk - it meant we were aligned with the best guides and people in Peru to take us along an ancient path that followed in the footsteps of the legendary 'Chasqui' runners. I didn't realise how special this was going to be.

Before the trip, life was full on, organising work (we have a great team but I was nervous with the three directors being away and out of contact for two weeks), we also had to organise our two girls (age 1 and 3) down to Gisborne to be looked after by grandparents. It really snuck up on me, I was literally at work until the 40 minutes before my flight from Whangarei. This meant I never gave the trip too much thought but was generally looking forward to it.

What happened over the next 15 days was nothing short of life-changing. There were three main areas for me that made this trip something else.



Game of soccer at altitude - Horsemen vs Kiwis with local kids on both teams



THE PEOPLE WE MET

I am 100% sure we had the most amazing support crew ever assembled in Peru. Two fantastic guides Julio (local guide), Rob (American guide), 5 horsemen, 2 chefs, a waiter and a tent man. All these men were out of this world with service - we had 5 Star treatment in the middle of the Andes. Little things like waking up every morning to a cup of tea delivered to our tent, along with warm water to wash your face as well as cooking meals on mountain tops at over 4000m altitude (these were hot three course meals for 25 people, some with gluten free and vegetarian requests). Small details like our guide Rob Harsh having daily 'visions' of people within our group and their spirit animal - these moments were priceless and always provided a laugh at dinner time.

The local village people in the mountains we met along the way were amazing. These people taught me so much. They live a simple but hard life, and have the most amazing personalities. They are so happy and so excited to hang out and interact with tourists. We had an amazing afternoon at a rural school in Yanama. The kids sang for us and we had a game of football with the horsemen and local kids (this in itself was a totally new experience trying to run at altitude!)

"Happiness is not what we have, it is the perspective we put on what we have"

Coming back to New Zealand, I have made some conscious decisions on how I live my life after spending quality time with these awesome local Peruvian people. You can learn a lot about yourself by seeing how others live their lives. Little things, like everyone we met gave us a smile and friendly hello/olla and children would

come running out to give hugs and were always over-the-top happy. The more smile and hugs we give out the more joy we bring into our own lives, it is so simple, but we are either too busy or too embarrassed to pass these small joys on. Our world is becoming too fast, too impersonal. My goal is to slow down and be personal. No more HB (happy birthday) on someone's facebook page - if you care enough about them give them a bloody call, maybe even visit them.....crazy aye!



Our team with the horsemen in front row.

THE PEOPLE WE TRAVELLED WITH

As mentioned, we travelled with a group of clients. Now all the travelling I have done in the past has been with family and close friends. Travelling with such a varied group with different backgrounds, experiences, fitness levels and personalities was amazing. It was such a buzz to see how everyone helped each other out, how we mixed and made new friends.

Another highlight for me was the Kiwi culture. We mixed effortlessly with everyone we come in contact with. One night in particular will stick with me forever. As mentioned, we had the most amazing support crew. On the Horsemen's last night, we shouted a few beers for them and for the next three hours we shared laughter and tears with our new friends. They knew less than five words of English and we had less than that of Spanish. This didn't matter as we had a great time in each other's company, we communicated with gestures and actions and shit, did we laugh! This moment didn't sink in until the next day when both our guides said that was rare. Seen what? I first thought, but most groups didn't interact with the 'help' like we did, language was no issue.

Thank you to every individual in our group, you all added to an amazing experience by being you.



THE PLACES WE SAW

Okay, Machu Picchu was amazing, and the climb up Machu Picchu Mountain will be with me forever. But after 10 days walking over mountain after mountain, not seeing any other tourists, and passing through tiny farming villages based in the most unique places, it was a bit of a pain to have to share Machu Picchu with thousands of tourists. Our itinerary was awesome. We visited Choquequirao, an ancient village similar to Machu Picchu, that is still being discovered. We walked around these breathtaking terraces built for farming, some built on a cliff face - just totally mind-blowing stuff - and we had this place all to ourselves.

One morning we woke and the horsemen pulled our tents down for us (there was a tent man who normally did this). We thought nothing of it at the time, but later found out our tent man had woken at 3am to head off to clear some scrubs for the next camp site. We arrived mid afternoon after 6-8hrs of hiking to see our beautiful yellow tents all up along some ancient terraces - our views that day were second to none.



Yellow tents on ancient terraces, careful going for a wee in the night!

In Peru there seems to be no mountain ridges - where you can travel mountain to mountain - that would be too easy. Instead you have to walk up and down each one. We could see 5 or 6 spectacular mountains from this camp site (including one with a zigzag path that led to the clouds.....tomorrow's walk.)

Our photos will never do justice to what we saw.

Before I left I thought I was a happy, positive person, I loved my life. However after this trip I have 'awakened' (bloody hippy I know). But seriously, I am now happier - I believe I know how I can live a better, happier life and I am sure I can have more positive connections with more people and get more out of all my relationships with all that I may come into contact with.

To those that made this trip happen, to those that shared my experience along the trip, and to those amazing Peru men and women (sadly I cannot tell them how much they influenced me) thank you, thank you, thank you.

Bring on the next trip of a lifetime. I am fizzing already.



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