

MACHU PICCHU + PERU

Adventure reaches new heights in South America.

It may be Machu Picchu that carries Peru to the top of many wish lists – it's this year's Travel Dreams Tournament champion – but that's just the beginning. "Very few places in the world rival Peru for sheer variety of landscapes and dramatically different regions," says Geordie McDonald, a Calgary-based Virtuoso advisor. "There's so much more to discover beyond those mist-shrouded peaks in the Andes."

FIRST TIME Make a Machu Picchu pilgrimage.

Fly into Lima, McDonald recommends, and spend a few days sampling the city's culinary gems before heading to the Sacred Valley on your way to Machu Picchu. "My best advice is to spend at least one night at Machu Picchu rather than day tripping from Cuzco [a three-hour train ride away], so you really have time to explore," McDonald says. Guests at the 85-room **Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel** can access the stone city first thing in the morning via a 25-minute bus ride or a one-hour walk. Doubles from \$500, including welcome amenities, breakfast daily, and one complimentary 25-minute massage for two.



NEXT TIME Kick the exploration up a notch.



Before the Incas flourished here, several other civilizations called Peru home, including the Chachapoya, who built the sixth-century settlement of Kuelap – one of the largest pre-Inca ruins in South America. "For the more adventurous, I highly recommend a trip to northern Peru to see these massive ruins," McDonald says. "The site is seldom visited and will prove to be a treasured travel experience." **Big Five Tours & Expeditions** customizes trips to the area, including an 11-day adventure that features a Kuelap visit, a hike to a hidden waterfall, and more. Departures: Any day (through 2018) from \$600 per person per day.

From left: Machu Picchu, one of the city's photogenic llamas, and Kuelap, the former home of the Chachapoya people – aka the "Warriors of the Clouds."

GO HIGHER: "Huayna Picchu – the peak rising above Machu Picchu – offers a great vantage point," McDonald says. "However, I call this a do and a don't: It's great if you want a fantastic view over the citadel and can handle the climb, but skip Huayna if you're afraid of heights. It's very steep and intense, with many precipitous drops behind you."

