

PERU TREK



LALES VALLEY AND MACHU PICCHU 2011

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE
FIGHT CANCER



Peru is on the Western, Pacific coast of South America, bordering Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile.

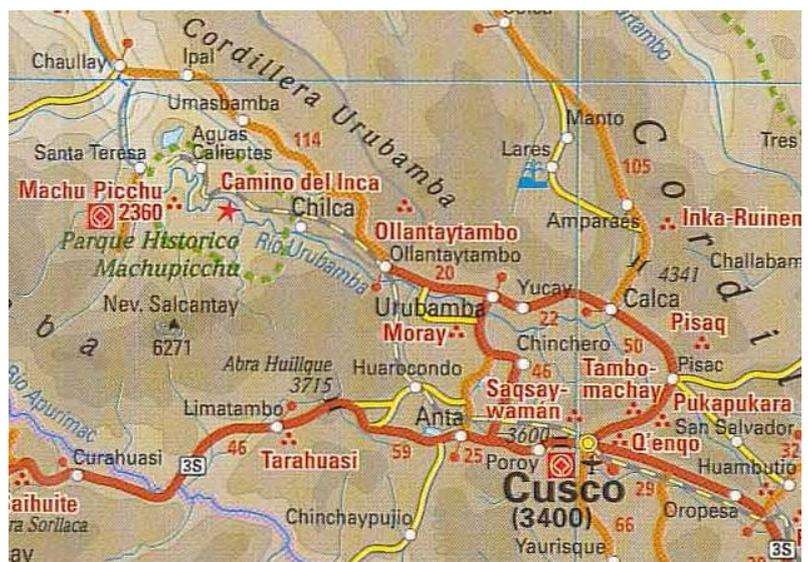
We flew from London to Madrid, then to Lima, and finally on to Cusco.

Our trek was in two parts. The first was high in the Lares valley north of Cusco, and the second was on the Inca Trail to the ancient Inca city of Machu Picchu.

All of our group of 28 people were undertaking the challenge to raise funds for Teenage Cancer Trust (registered charity number 1062559).

Before we started the main trek, we had to try to acclimatise to the high altitude – Cusco is at about 3,250 metres above sea level, high enough to feel breathless on even mild exertion when you first arrive.

So on the day after getting there, we drove for about an hour to the South and walked around some pre-Incan ruins.



The following morning we had to wake at 3am for a 4am departure in order to get on the road to Lares before part of it closed for road works from 6am to 6pm.

Lares is a small town, but the home to some natural hot springs, which is where the first part of our trek began.



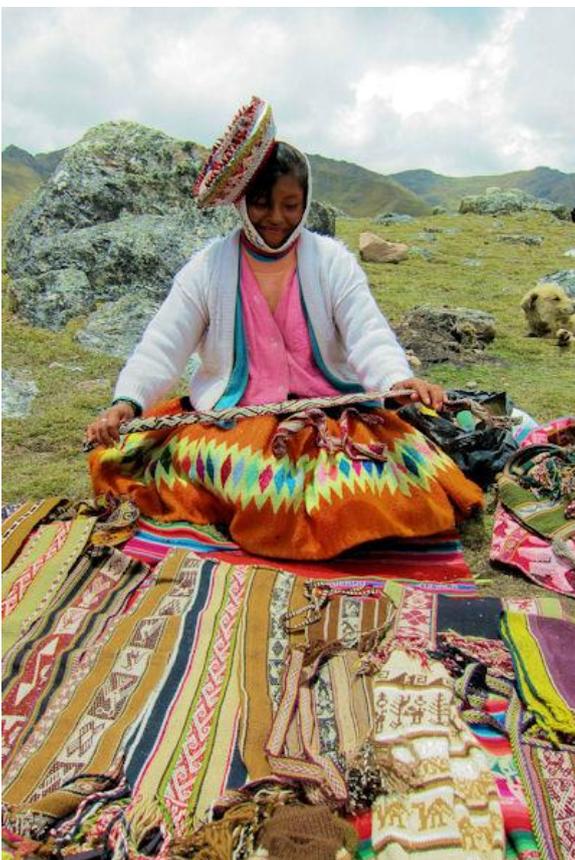
On the way we crossed a high, misty mountain pass. The hot springs were a little less inviting than we hoped, but soon we were on the way, stopping at a primary school at the first small village we came across, where the children sang to us.



After camping in the valley we had followed, the next morning we headed higher, virtually into the clouds.

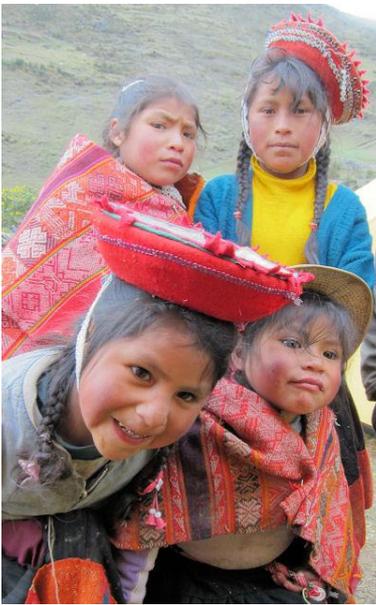
The climb out of the valley was exhausting and we took it very slowly as we struggled to get our breath.

But we were soon rewarded by the sight of stunning lake, and by the llamas and alpacas we came across on the way.



Whenever we stopped for lunch or at our campsite, people came out of nowhere to sell us their own knitted goods; we supported the local economy by buying vast quantities of hats, scarves, gloves and just about everything on offer.





At one campsite, on the outskirts of a village, we were the source of much interest and amusement to the local children.



The next day we pressed on for perhaps the greatest physical challenge of the trek - crossing a pass at an altitude of about 4,600 metres (15,090 feet). By then, four of our group had had to descend to a small town due to the effects of the altitude, but most of us made it across the pass, in the cloud, and fighting off the chill of the wind.



We were delighted to have experienced such remote and wild parts of the vast country of Peru – but now it was time to move on to the second part of the challenge: trekking part of the Inca Trail to the lost city of the Incas, Machu Picchu. We spent the night in the town of Ollantaytambo from where we got the train to drop us off at the starting point of our one day ascent to the iconic abandoned city, which was rediscovered 100 years ago, in July 1911, by Hiram Bingham, a Yale University historian.



The trail is in a national park, and the numbers using the route are strictly controlled, so we saw few other people.

The Inca Trail, and Machu Picchu itself, are at lower altitude than the first part of our trek – so now it was the heat and humidity of the forest that we had to deal with as we made our way up steep sections of the route.



Suddenly, after hours of climbing, we were at the sun gate, and our whole group looked down on the extraordinary sight.



This was my tenth trek in aid of Teenage Cancer Trust and as usual, when times got tough, I was inspired by the support you, my sponsors, have given me, by the stories of my fellow trekkers – one of whom had lost a 21-year old son to cancer – and by the sheer energy and goodwill within our group who ranged from 17 years to 73 years old. There are now 16 specialist units in NHS hospitals, and your money also gets spent on much needed specialist staff and emotional support for the 6 young people a day who are told “you have cancer”.



Thank you so much for your support. There’s more information at my website www.trekrise.com and doubtless there will be a new challenge for 2012!

Nigel

NIGEL TURNER