

# Inka Porter Project



## Environmental Guidelines for trekkers

### Trekking the Inka Trail?

#### Leave only your footprints behind you!

130,000 people walked the Inka Trail to Machu Picchu in 2004 – a 14-fold increase in the last 10 years. This heavy foot traffic on the Inka Trail, and also on other trekking routes, is taking its toll on the environment in the following ways:

- Pollution from detergents used for washing dishes and cooking utensils which contain oils and grease from cooking. These get washed into streams and rivers by rain. The local people downstream use this water untreated so it needs to be clean. The pollutants also harm, or even kill, aquatic plants, animals and fish.
- Rubbish includes food remains, packaging, toilet tissue and cigarette ends. Some rubbish is toxic and some rots but can take a long time. For example, it can take six months for orange peel to rot. As waste decomposes, it releases chemicals and these find their way into streams and rivers causing pollution. Some rubbish, like plastic, does not decompose and is unsightly and can harm domestic or wild animals if they eat it.
- Erosion of the footpaths, campsite areas and Inka remains at Machu Picchu and other sites.

Regulations are in place to minimise these impacts and, as a visitor to the Inka Trail (and other trails), you can help too by taking a few simple steps:

### When You Book

Ask your tour company what it does to minimise environmental impacts: what do they do with the rubbish? What products do they use for cleaning dishes? Do they tidy the campsites before everybody leaves? What training do they provide for their staff on environmental practices?

### What to Take

- Plastic bags for rubbish.
- Refillable water bottles and water purification tablets.
- Biodegradable soap made from natural, local products (available from the Inka Porter Project's Cusco office)

### On the Trail

#### Rubbish

- Collect rubbish in plastic bags and bring it back down with you.
- Make sure your tour guide, cook and porters take all the rubbish back down with them for disposal in proper areas.
- Don't buy disposable water bottles. Use refillable water bottles and water purification tablets.
- Only smoke in designated areas.

#### Toilets

- Always use the fixed toilets or portable toilets.
- Don't put toilet paper down the toilet.
- If you really have to defecate, and there is no nearby toilet, walk as far away from any streams as possible, dig a hole 6-8 inches/ 12-18 cm deep and 4-6 inches/ 10-12cm

in diameter. Bury and cover with leaves or grass so that it is as inconspicuous as possible. Bury toilet paper properly or take it with you in plastic bags – do not leave it fluttering around. (By doing it this way, what you leave behind will decompose in the soil, instead of getting washed away by rain into streams.)

- Wrap tampons and sanitary towels in plastic bags and take them with you. Don't bury them (they decompose too slowly).
- Urine is sterile so causes less environmental impact but excessive amounts can damage plants. Think before you pee!

### **Washing**

- Use biodegradable soap to prevent water pollution.
- Plates without any grease on them don't need cleaning with detergents; just use water.

### **Erosion**

- Keep to footpaths and designated areas – don't encroach on other areas.
- Don't touch any Inka remains or climb or sit on them. (Oils and sweat on your hands can cause damage.)

### **Wildlife**

- Leave wildlife alone. Take a photographic "souvenir" instead.
- Don't make loud noises, like shouting and playing loud music.
- Don't light fires or burn any rubbish.
- Don't cut down plants and trees.
- Don't trample on plants and flowers.
- Don't feed wildlife or leave scraps of food for them. (It encourages them to rely on human contact.)

### **Leave no trace!**

These guidelines apply equally to other trekking routes in the Andes.

Leave all trails as you find them ..... or better .... for those after you to enjoy and to avoid a detrimental effect on the Inka remains and the lives and health of the local people.

### **Recycle**

South American Explorers has a recycling centre in Cusco where you can recycle plastic bottles, tins, glass, etc.

Bell 4, 188 Choquechaca, Cusco.

Tel: (084) 245484

Email: [cuscoclub@saexplorers.org](mailto:cuscoclub@saexplorers.org)

Website: [www.saexplorers.org](http://www.saexplorers.org)

### **If you need any other information or have any questions:**

- visit our website [www.peruweb.org/porters](http://www.peruweb.org/porters)
- email us at [porters@peruweb.org](mailto:porters@peruweb.org)

### **Other information sheets available**

- *Porter welfare while on the Inka Trail*
- *Guidelines for independent trekking in the rest of Peru*
- *Questions to ask your agency when booking the Inka Trail from your home country*

## **Enjoy your trek!**