

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 7th June 2024

Young Teens on Tour in Peru

Young teens who want to spread their wings on a magical holiday of a lifetime need have no fear in deepest, darkest Peru! A paradise of high-octane adventure, natural and ancient wonders and cultural treasure awaits, all across the snow-capped Andes, dense Amazon rainforest and golden Pacific coast. No need to wait for a gap year to trek the five-century-old Inca trails to Machupicchu, immerse yourself in local traditions and experience Peru's colourful heritage and warm hospitality. Pack your rucksacks with some youthful energy, curiosity and a thirst for new experiences now!

Let's hear from a special team who took up this challenge and can share their first-hand experiences to whet your appetite. Our intrepid group of three single mums, one eleven-year-old and two thirteen-year-olds set off last Easter hungry for high altitude adventure, a little bit of animal magic and a whole lot of wild new distraction. The end of the rainy season didn't dampen their spirits as they packed for every eventuality and braced themselves for the long flight to Lima.

"We arrived in surfing heaven! And lapped up the fresh fruit virgin cocktails on the beach, while our mums sipped pisco sours into the small hours," confessed one teen. "The next day we flew to Cusco at 3,399m and tested our altitude endurance. It was child's play! At least for us – our mums may have been a little breathless." Sixty minutes later, refreshed and pumped with adrenaline, the team arrived in the heart of the Sacred Valley. The specialist travel itinerary included some pre-booked private transport mixed with fairly priced spontaneous pickups.

Through the bus windows a whole new world was unfolding as the team made their way to their hotel, the Casa Andina -Valle Sagrado Yanahuara in Urubamba at 2,870m. A low rise of local stone and wood, it blended into the picturesque valley, where baby alpacas were mowing the vibrant green lawns! *"We fed and cuddled these fluffy, cotton wool creatures twice a day! It was a thrill to explore the gardens and swing in the hammocks among the animals," exclaimed another youngster.*

Walking tour of Chinchero, Moray, Inca terraces in a meteorite crater and Maras salt flats.

To start acclimatising to their new environment and so their guide Santiago could assess the group before the trek to Machupicchu, they headed up to 3,862m. All the official guides speak very good English and are highly qualified. A degree in tourism and history is a pre-requisite for a guiding permit and guide prices are strictly controlled in Peru. *"This first encounter with the ancient Inca ruins was intoxicating!" said one mum. "The kids all found the immense scale of everything truly awe inspiring and they loved it."*

Community Day in Lamay - organised by Fanco Nergi of labaselamay.com

This was a day that surpassed all expectation and one the team will never forget. They were bused up to 3,900m where the view was simply majestic and the weather perfect. Sporting hats and factor 50 suncream, the group was escorted by a guide and an interpreter as the community spoke only Quechua. They were greeted with flowers and dressed in traditional clothing before sitting down to snack on lupin seed salad with fresh limes and indigenous potatoes. Mini chocolate eggs were exchanged and then the team were introduced to the community's animals, including Guinea pigs for consumption! *"We were glad they didn't offer us any, but they told us it tasted like chicken!" explained one youngster. "We were shown how to make dye and weave llama yarn, how to dig plants with adapted tools used by their ancestors – no longer*

flint but metal.” Although daunted by the unfamiliarity at first, the young teens soon felt quite at home among the community and thoroughly enjoyed the authentic novelty of this ecotourism experience.

Ollantaytambo – An Inca city still inhabited today.

Left to their own devices for a day, the group ordered a minibus and picked up a guide at the base of the Inca temple. Ollantaytambo’s archaeological site boasts huge ruins, just inviting you to come and climb them. The kids loved this! Surrounded by distinctive razor-sharp mountains and steep valley gorges, they explored and imagined how life might have been all those Inca and Pre-Inca years ago. A visit to the markets for souvenirs and local food was an opportunity to wonder at the standardised pricing and gentle, pressure free selling style of the local traders.

The climb to Machupicchu KM104

The day had finally arrived! Machupicchu, one of the Seven Wonders of the World and a UNESCO heritage site was only a few hours away. Everything there, from guiding to transport, is pre-organised - ideal for both adults and kids. Armed with clear briefing notes, £1.50 plastic ponchos (a godsend!), good walking boots, poles (for the adults) and thin layers, the team set off. ***“We really didn’t need any fancy technical clothing - this wasn’t a trip to Everest base camp after all. We took back packs with our lunch and a sensible amount of water for a hot day, not 6 litres as it was suggested back in the UK. Plus of course a few haribos and cocoa sweets!” said one mum.***

It was an early start, but everyone was too excited to care. The day began with a train trip like no other set along the valley floor with the steep, green mountains rising vertically up on either side. ***“The train had glass panels in the ceiling so you could really appreciate your surroundings and the staff were so happy and friendly it felt as if we were going to a party not about to start an 11k uphill trek!” observed one teen.*** It was overcast with light rain as the team headed into the cloud forest, but this soon lifted and the clouds quickly burnt away. The Inca trails with their lush green vegetation, were clear, level and very well maintained - so much easier under foot than they had all expected. It was busy from time to time as groups stopped and passed each other.

“The ultimate Lara Croft - Tomb Raider set rolled out in front of us, but for real. Humming birds, butterflies and vizcachas (a cute little cross between a rabbit and a squirrel) were everywhere!” exclaimed one youngster. The group clambered up the huge, steep steps at Winay Wayna, the Inca temple, and arrived at the Sun Gate directly above Machupicchu.

“We stood and stared and took it all in...” she added.

Four hours on as they walked the last section down to the site, the scale of the Inca city grew larger and larger until they were there right on top of it. They all sat for over an hour just taking in the view, everyone truly awestruck. The following day they were able to explore Machupicchu more thoroughly, with a guide on hand to add fascinating historic context.

The group then spent two funpacked days in the historic town of Cusco, where they could immerse themselves in the culture, architecture and change of environment. Adults and kids enjoyed the contrasts of 16th century Spanish buildings, familiar fast-food outlets, and local oddities such as snail collagen cream and wheelbarrows full of quails eggs, sugar cane and square Easter cakes. The young teens had plenty to spend their pocket money on and enjoyed the safe environment to roam freely.

The Rain Forest's Animal Magic

Next after a short internal flight to Puerto Maldonado, the team found themselves more or less at sea level in 30-degree temperatures. Everyone was ready for the next adventure! A very bumpy bus ride on non-tarmacked roads drew shrieks of laughter and took them to a motorised canoe. The mountains and hairpin bends had now given way to sub-tropical forest and dramatically different flora and fauna. The boat trip took them deep into the forest on a fast-flowing brown river, still swollen from the rainy season. Silent and transfixed by the new surroundings, the group scoured the riverbank for wild animals and within minutes the first capybara was spotted! The boat slowed down and they saw a caiman, monkeys and birds.

Stepping off the boat into the forest they reached a stilted wooden entrance to their eco-friendly hotel Posada Mazonas. An ice-cold, virgin cocktail was just the welcome they needed, for without the river breeze they had their first taste of the humidity. Their rooms had no windows just an open veranda, slatted shower room floor and a wooden safe for valuables and food they wanted to preserve from the monkeys! The basics included mosquito nets over the beds, kerosene lamps, slow ceiling fans and limited daily electricity, but there was Wi-Fi. The eating area and bar were all open to the elements so insect repellent and full cover was a must.

Ever curious, the kids put down their bags and set off back into the forest to climb the 279 steps of the watchtower to see a breathtaking sunset. ***"After dinner the Harry Potter generation sprinted out with their torches on a night walk to find big hairy tarantulas and giant night toads! Not so popular with the adults in the group," commented one mum.*** From the itinerary options led by expert guides armed with powerful binoculars and tripods, the team chose giant otter spotting in the ox-bow lake, piranha fishing, a visit to indigenous villages and jungle farms, bird watching and catamaran trips. There was also mountain biking, monkey watching, hiking and lots more available. Every question the kids posed was answered by the qualified biologists on hand. The eco lodge is a joint venture with an American investment company and 70% of the profit goes back to the community (the Infierno tribe) who own the 10,000 hectares the lodge sits in.

A City Break

To end their journey across Peru the group enjoyed a mini city break back in Lima before they flew home. ***"Lima is a capital city where we were surprised to experience no litter, rudeness, con artists, aggression, misogyny, hooligans, drunks, smokers or vapers. Our children felt safe, we felt safe even at night. As Londoners we were ready to revert back to urban high alert but there really was no need," commented one mum.*** They experienced some more of the European heritage of Peru, including ornate architecture and exquisite local shops with local prices. This was a fitting end to the trip of a lifetime for both parents and kids, five holidays in one that no-one will ever forget.

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

Children who travelled to Peru; Emily, Age 13, daughter of Deidre McEwen
 Magnus, Age 13, son of Kasey Brown
 Faris, Age 11, son of Salma Khan

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:



Michèle Lucato

M: 0044 7771 862 008

E: m.lucato@wonderberry.co.uk