



PROJECT REPORT
MACHU PICCHU SANCTUARY VOLUNTEER TRIP
June 6 to June 15, 2017



ConservationVIP Volunteers at Sacsayhuaman

Executive Summary

Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) organized and led a volunteer trip to the Historical Sanctuary of Machu Picchu in June, 2017, in collaboration with Peru's Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management, SERNANP). The project was authorized by Doctor Vidal Pino Zambrano, Director de la Direccion Desconcentrada de Cultura Cusco - Ministry of Culture, and by Ernesto Escalante Valencia, Jefe del Santuario Histórico de Machupicchu, SERNANP. The projects were discussed with anthropologist José Fernando Astete Victoria, Jefe del Parque Arqueológico Nacional de Machupicchu.

Twelve Volunteers, including the two trip leaders, Janice Ballak and Barbara Kennedy, ConservationVIP Board Members, and el Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, performed 284 hours of volunteer work related to the following project: The primary job for the ConservationVIP volunteers during the June 2017 trip was to remove an invasive

species of grass, *Melinis minutiflora*, locally know as Pasto gordura. This grass is a native of Africa and has begun to out-compete native species of plants. *Melinis minutiflora* is particularly adapted to grow quickly in disturbed soils and in areas recently burned by wildfires. The officials at the Machu Picchu Sanctuary, and biologist Julio Ochoa in particular, want to eradicate this invasive species before it is able to completely replace native species. Volunteers contributed 284 hours over a four-day period to remove *Melinis minutiflora* from the trail to the Sun Gate, trail to the Inca Bridge, on Huchu Y Picchu, and on the terraces around Huchu Y Picchu, and the lower trail to Huayna Picchu. The volunteers, Santiago, and Julio Ochoa and his assistants, pulled and collected 150 large sacks of *Melinis minutiflora*. Volunteers also lopped overhanging branches from the trails in these same areas.



Melinis minutiflora, Pasto gordura SThieking photo



ConservationVIP Volunteers and SERNANP Employees at upper terraces

During the trip, ConservationVIP donated equipment to help with the management and protection of Machupicchu Sanctuary:

1. To Miguel Zamora Salas, Coordinador de Gestión of Parque Arqueológico Nacional Machupicchu, Ministry of Culture, the group donated a medium sized Tomahawk live animal trap, a Moultrie no glow Invisible 12MP Infrared trail camera A-208, and 3 pair of Fiskars telescoping loppers.
2. The group also donated to Miguel Zamora Salas 40 pair of safety sunglasses. These safety glasses will be distributed to the park rangers who work at Machu Picchu and the Inca Trail, to help protect their eyes from sun damage which can occur at high elevation.
3. To Ernesto Escalante Valencia, Jefe del Santuario Histórico de Machupicchu, SERNANP: 1 Garrette Wade standard grafting tool, 1 Garden fruit tree pro pruning shears scissor grafting tool, and 1 Qooltek head wearing Magnifying lens. These tools will be used for a community orchard project at Milepost 82, where SERNANP and the local residents are growing avocado and peach trees.
4. In addition, volunteers donated used equipment including safety goggles, knee pads, and gloves for use in the field work.

Discussions were conducted with SERNANP and Ministry of Culture staff regarding the volunteers' activities, and future projects. Trip leaders will provide this report to Dr. Vidal Pino Zambrano, Director Ministry of Culture-Cusco, Ernesto Escalante Valencia, Jefe

del Santuario Histórico de Machupicchu, SERNANP, to Administrator of the Machu Picchu Park, Miguel Zamora Salas, and to Anthropologist Fernando Astete, Jefe del P.A.N. Machupicchu

Detailed Trip Report

Volunteers met the Trip Leaders and Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota in Cusco on the afternoon of June 6, and spent the next one and one-half days acclimatizing and learning about the complex and storied culture of Peru. They visited several important sites including the Machu Picchu Museum, Qorikancha, and Sacsayhuaman.

On June 8, volunteers traveled from Cusco by bus to Ollantaytambo, then by train to Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes). On the way, they stopped at Chinchero, an indigenous village and former palace of Emperor Topa Inca Yupanqui. There they toured the church of Our Lady of Monserrat, Inca terraces and remains, a Huaca (Inca shrine), and experienced a short section of the Inca Trail. They visited a weaving cooperative where they learned about traditional Andean weaving techniques and ate a traditional Peruvian lunch before heading to Ollantaytambo to catch the train to Aguas Calientes.

Volunteers with their entrance tickets visited the Machu Picchu Sacred City on June 9. The Volunteers began their day by hiking to Huayna Picchu. Later during the visit, the volunteers received extensive lectures by Lic. Santiago Carrasco Bellota about the Inca culture, and preservation issues related to increased visitation as they toured the Sacred City. They returned that evening to Aguas Calientes.

Archaeological Site Volunteer Project Description

The primary job for the ConservationVIP volunteers during the June 2017 trip was to remove an invasive species of grass, *Melinis minutiflora*. This grass is a native of Africa and has begun to out-compete native species of plants. *Melinis minutiflora* is particularly adapted to grow quickly in disturbed soils and in areas recently burned by wildfires. The grass itself becomes a significant fire hazard once it cures. The officials at the Machu Picchu Sanctuary, and biologist Julio Ochoa in particular, want to eradicate this invasive species before it is able to completely replace native species.

June 10, the volunteers arrived at Machu Picchu and were led to the upper terraces, while getting an orientation from Park botanist Julio Ochoa. The volunteers, along with Julio Ochoa and his 5 assistants, began removing Pasto gordura along the trail from the Guard House to the Sun Gate. One volunteer and one park employee also lopped overhanging branches from the trail.

After the volunteers returned to Aguas Calientes, they had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Miguel Zamora and Archaeologist Jose Bastante at the Ministry of Culture office. They gave the volunteers an overview of management of Machu Picchu, and expressed

appreciation for their efforts. Each volunteer was presented with a newly published book celebrating 100 years since the “discovery” of Machu Picchu by the Hiram Bingham expedition.

June 11, the volunteers continued to work on the trail between the Guard House and Sun Gate, until they completed removing *Pasto gordura* from the site. The volunteers then traveled to the Inca Bridge, and removed *Pasto gordura* from that trail.

June 12, the volunteers worked behind the Huayna Picchu check point. One group worked at Huchu Y Picchu, removing invasive grass from the trail and viewpoints. Another group removed *Pasto gordura* from along the trail and viewpoints on the way to Huayna Picchu, while a third group lopped overhanging branches along the trails. The volunteers also worked on removing *pasto gordura* from the terraces in the back of Huchu Y Picchu.

June 13, the volunteers finished removing the invasive grass from the areas they started on June 12. In the afternoon the volunteers were given some free time for all of their efforts to explore the Machu Picchu Citadel on their own, before boarding the bus. Volunteers were given the opportunity to tour the Manuel Chavez Ballon Museum at Machu Picchu as guests of Sanctuary biologist Julio Ochoa of the Ministry of Culture. The volunteers also toured the Botanical Garden located next to the museum.



Removing *Pasto gordura* from Trail to Sungate (L) and terraces

Park Administrator Zamora Salas arranged for a government bus to transport volunteers from Aguas Calientes to the Sanctuary and back each day and made sure that volunteers were able to have free access into and out of the Sanctuary in order to perform their appointed tasks. Biologist Ochoa also arranged for the gates at the Huayna Picchu control station to remain open while the volunteers worked on the trails above.

By removing *Melinis minutiflora* from multiple locations within the Sanctuary and along the Inca Trail, ConservationVIP volunteers provide a tremendous service to the Ministry

of Culture and SERNANP and contributed greatly to the preservation of the natural and cultural environment.

Return to Cusco

On Wednesday, June 14, the ConservationVIP group returned by train to Ollantaytambo where they toured the ruins of Emperor Pachacutec's palace and the Temple of the Sun. Afterwards the group returned to Cusco by bus and enjoyed a farewell dinner.

The trip adjourned after breakfast On June 15, and most volunteers returned home. A few continued their explorations of Peru and South America.

Acknowledgments

Conservation Volunteers International Program acknowledges and thanks the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management, SERNANP), and the community of Machu Picchu Pueblo for the privilege of volunteering in Peru. We particularly thank Mr. Miguel Zamora Salas, Coordinador de Gestión of Parque Arqueológico Nacional de Machupicchu, Ministry of Culture, for hosting and spending time with our Volunteers. Great thanks are also reserved for biologist Julio Ochoa, and his staff, who spent much of the time working shoulder-to-shoulder with the volunteers.

Special thanks are extended to Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, who provided excellent historical and environmental information. His work with the Peruvian ministries prior to our arrival was critical in obtaining the necessary permits to carry out our work at the Sanctuary.

Last, but not least, ConservationVIP® thanks our hardworking June 2017 Machu Picchu volunteers, for their efforts to help conserve Machu Picchu for future generations.

Janice Ballak and Barbara Kennedy,
Trip Leaders and Directors of Conservation Volunteers International Program



Break time, trail to Sungate