



**CONSERVATION  
VOLUNTEERS  
INTERNATIONAL  
PROGRAM**

**PROJECT REPORT  
MACHU PICCHU SANCTUARY VOLUNTEER TRIP  
November 6 – 15, 2019**



*ConservationVIP® Volunteers at Machu Picchu*

### **Executive Summary**

Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) organized and led a volunteer trip to the Historical Sanctuary of Machu Picchu in November 2019 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 Sr. Freddy Domingo Escobar Zamalloa, Director de la Dirección Desconcentrada de Cultura Cusco - Ministry of Culture, and by Ernesto Escalante Valencia, Jefe Parque Arqueológico Nacional de Machupicchu, SERNANP.

The projects were discussed with anthropologist José Bastante, el Administrador del Parque Sr. Miguel Zamora, and el Biólogo del parque Mr. Julio Ochoa.

Twenty volunteers, including Trip Leaders Barbara Kennedy and Milagros Flores-Roman of ConservationVIP®, and Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, performed 494.5 total hours of volunteer work on the trip.

The primary job for the ConservationVIP® volunteers during the November 2019 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 can completely replace native species.

The first and second days, volunteers worked in the upper terraces of the Llaqta or Citadel where they removed a total of 52 large sacks of pasto gordura. The third and fourth days, volunteers worked removing pasto gordura from the quarry within the Machu Picchu Citadel. In the quarry area, the volunteers removed a total of 81 large sacks of the non-native grass.

Over the four-day period, volunteers removed pasto gordura from approximately 20,200 square feet in the Upper terraces and quarry areas. The volunteers, including Lic. Santiago removed and collected a total of 133 large sacks of *Melinis minutiflora*, under the direct supervision of park biologist Sr. Julio Ochoa and his staff.



*Volunteers removing non-native vegetation from Machu Picchu Citadel Upper Terraces*

During the trip, ConservationVIP donated equipment to help with the management and protection of Machu Picchu Sanctuary. The following items were received by Mr. Miguel Zamora, park administrator:

- 20 Pairs of safety eyewear
- 24 Pairs of leather gloves

- 1 ARNES Momentum XL climbing harness
- 1 Black Diamond Carabiner
- 1 PMI rope classic rope

Prior to the official start of the volunteer trip, ConservationVIP® Trip Leaders donated to SERNANP:

- 1 Battery (for a Phantom 3 Drone previously donated by ConservationVIP®)
- 1 Carrying case/backpack for a Phantom 3 Drone

The donations were received by Jorge Luis Ramos Chique, Especialista SERNANP SHM, and Raul Padilla Perez- SHM.

Discussions were conducted with SERNANP and Ministry of Culture staff regarding the volunteers' activities, and future projects. Trip leaders will provide this report to Director Ministry of Culture-Cusco, Mr. Freddy Domingo Escobar Zamalloa, Mr. Jose Bastante, Director of Machu Picchu National Park, Mr. Ernesto Escalante Valencia Chief Machu Picchu Sanctuary/SERNANP, Administrator of the Machu Picchu Park, Mr. Miguel Zamora Salas, and park biologist Mr. Julio Ochoa.

## Detailed Trip Report

Volunteers met the Trip Leaders and local guide Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota in Cusco on the afternoon of November 6 and spent the next two days acclimatizing and learning about the complex and storied culture of Peru. They visited the Cusco Cathedral. In the evening the group enjoyed dining at a traditional Peruvian restaurant while enjoying the camaraderie of the volunteer group.



*Volunteers visiting the Cusco Cathedral*



On November 7, volunteers visited the several important sites including the Machu Picchu Museum, Qorikancha, and the ancient Inka citadel of Sacsayhuaman for educational purposes to understand the complexity of the Spanish and Inka cultures.



*Volunteers at the Inka Citadel of Sacsayhuaman*

On November 8, volunteers visited the town of 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 ruins, 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 Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes).



*Chinchero*

On November 9, volunteers used their entrance tickets to visit Machu Picchu and 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. Some volunteers hiked and conquered the Huayna Picchu Mountain; others hiked Huchuy Picchu and the Sun Gate Trail, while part of the group took a detailed tour of the lower terraces.



**Volunteers visit to Machu Picchu Citadel. Hike to Huayna Picchu**

On November 10, the first day of volunteer work began at Machu Picchu Sanctuary upper terraces. Volunteers arrived at the Citadel where they were greeted and provided with orientation on identification of the non-native grass *Melinis minutiflora* or “pasta gordura” by Park Biologist Julio Ochoa. After the orientation, volunteers were split into four groups and provided with working tools. Volunteers removed and collected a total of 24 large bags of non-native grass *Melinis minutiflora*.



**Volunteers working at the Upper Terraces of the Citadel**

On November 11, volunteers removed pasto gordura on the Upper terraces of the Llaqta (Citadel) enjoying one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world. Volunteers continued to be provided with orientation on identification of the non-native grass by park staff, were split into four groups and provided with working tools. Volunteers removed and collected a total of 28 large bags of pasto gordura.

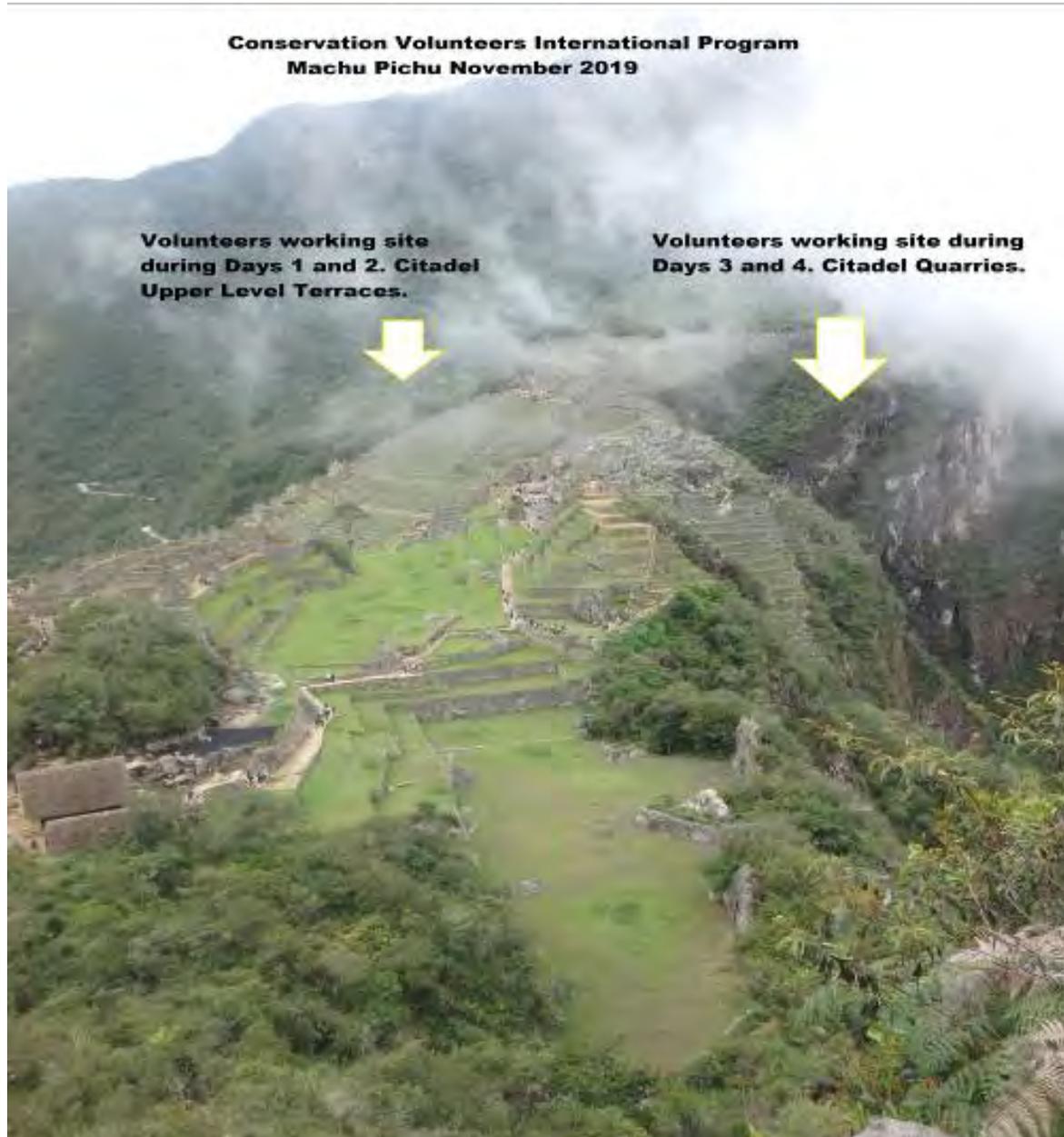


On November 12, volunteers started working in the quarry area of the Llaqta (Citadel) to remove pasto gordura. Volunteers were again provided with orientation on identification of pasto gordura by park staff, were split into four groups and provided with working tools. Volunteers removed and collected a total of 45 large bags of pasto gordura. They were also treated to a glimpse of a rarely seen spectacled bear in the Upper terraces.



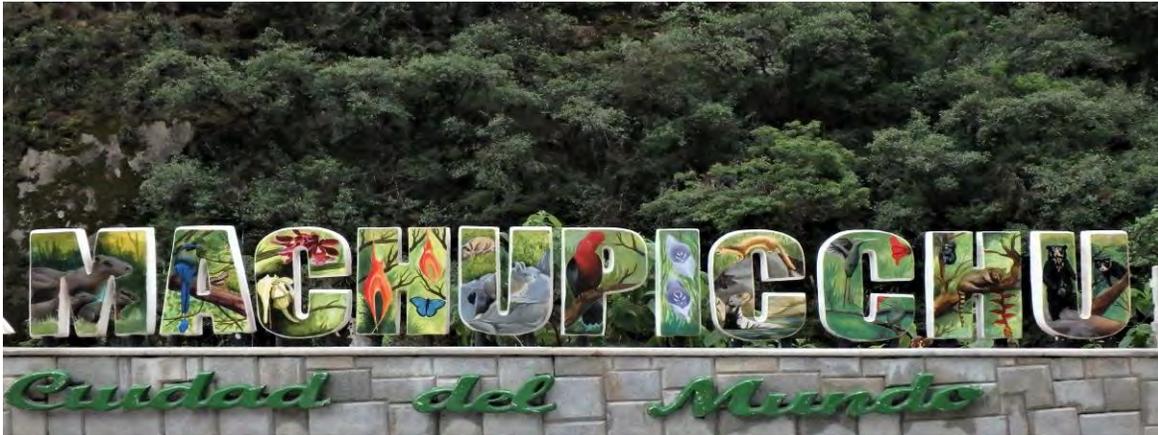
*Volunteers working at Quarries Area of the Citadel*

On November 13, the volunteers spent their fourth and last workday removing pasto gordura from the quarry. Kudos to the November 2019 ConservationVIP Machu Picchu volunteers who collected a total of 133 bags over an area about 20,200 square feet, a record amount! At the end of the day, volunteers presented the Biologist and his staff with donations of work tools and equipment they had purchased themselves.



On November 14, the volunteers departed by train from Aguas Calientes, heading to the archaeological park of Ollantaytambo where they admired the landscape of the terraces, water features, and spectacular views of mountains and the valley. They also explored the traditional village, and visited a Chichería, where they learned about the making of (and tasting) Chicha, or corn beer.

From Ollantaytambo, the group returned to Cusco via a scenic bus ride for their last night together and a farewell dinner celebrating the achievements of the group.



On November 15, The Machu Picchu Volunteer Trip ended with breakfast. Most volunteers transferred to Cusco airport for homeward-bound flights (via Lima). Others extended their stay in Cusco and remained a few more days. We wish a good trip home to all volunteers and many trips to new destinations in the future.

### **Archaeological Site Volunteer Project Logistics**

Park Administrator Miguel Zamora Salas arranged for a government truck to transport volunteers from Aguas Calientes to the Sanctuary and back for the four days the group worked there 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 providing training on identification of the “*pasto gordura*”, providing with tools and having four of his workers: Wilber, Christian, Octavio and Julian working with us during the four days.

### **Acknowledgments**

By removing *pasto gordura* (*Melinis minutiflora*) from multiple locations within the Sanctuary and along the Inca Trail, ConservationVIP® volunteers provided an important service to the Ministry of Culture and SERNANP and contributed to the preservation of the natural and cultural environment. We thank you for your hard work and for making a big difference.

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, Coordinator de Gestión of Parque Arqueológico Nacional de Machu Picchu, 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 their time working shoulder-to-shoulder with the volunteers.

Special thanks are extended to Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, who provided excellent historical, interpretive 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 November 2019 Machu Picchu volunteers, for their efforts to help conserve Machu Picchu for future generations.

Barbara Kennedy and Milagros Flores-Roman  
Trip Leaders  
Conservation Volunteers International Program