



PRESS RELEASE

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Alternative Route Offered to Machu Picchu's Lost Sister City

Denver, CO - May, 2009: For those seeking an off-the-beaten path hiking alternative in the Vilcabamba region of southern Peru there is the ancient city of Choquequirao, which at 10,150' is only 30-40% unearthed by archaeologists. This adventure is for the savvy traveler looking to experience a piece of history before it becomes well-known. With the trail not even included on most published maps, the alternative route is based from a secluded mountain lodge and gives explorers the most comfortable and scenic experience possible.

Archaeological evidence suggests the complex was constructed in the 15th century by Tupac Inca Yupanqui, son of the great Pachacuti, the builder of Machu Picchu. As Spanish conquistadors overran the capital of Cuzco in the 16th century, historians believe the Incas took refuge at Choquequirao, and held out for somewhere between 40-70 years. They were never found by their pursuers, most likely due to its remote location on an exposed ridge, with the conquistadors' detailed chronicles containing no mention of it. The citadel was discovered in 1834 by French adventurer Count De Sartiges, but abandoned shortly thereafter when it was learned that any valuable artifacts had already been looted in the 16th century when the Incas inexplicably left the site, leaving tools in place and indicating a rushed departure. Famed Yale historian Hiram Bingham visited the ruins in 1909 on his quest for the last capital of the Incas, but determined that Machu Picchu was the "Lost City." Known for their early architectural prowess, the Incas constructed temples, agricultural terraces, houses, storage facilities and aqueducts to channel water from the 17,000-foot peaks that surround the area.

As Choquequirao receives more of the world's attention, yet only 1-2% of the visitors to Machu Picchu, the tiny village of Cachora (9,500') has established itself as the most common place to embark on the two-day trek to the ruins. Southwind Adventures has begun offering an alternative route that begins at the rustic and comfortable Villa Los Loros Lodge, nestled in the dense forest of a narrow river valley at an elevation of only 7,215'. Hikers are able to make it to the ruins in a single day following the scenic Tambobamba River gorge before reaching the Apurímac River, then ascending to the archaeological complex while pack animals and porters carry gear. After two nights camping at and exploring the "Last Stronghold of the Sons of the Sun," travelers return along the same trail with lush vegetation and breathtaking views, and can take advantage of a hot shower, welcome cocktail, hearty dinner, and a well-deserved rest that night.

Southwind Adventures has been a specialist in providing upscale journeys for discerning travelers to South America's Andes, Amazon & Galápagos since 1990. Typical land cost for the new 9-day Choquequirao Exploratory Trek is \$3,075 per person based on double occupancy for a group of 4-5 passengers, not including airfare. Tom Damon, Southwind's President and a *Condé Nast Top Travel Specialist*, says "This is truly the best way to experience the enigmatic ruins of a lost civilization. The itinerary includes accommodations ranging from 5-star hotels and isolated mountain lodges to remote camping. This is for the exclusive traveler that wants a "first in" kind of experience, is active and enjoys a challenging trek, but doesn't mind comfort as well." With an expertise in designing custom journeys, the company is recognized as one of the "Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth" by *National Geographic Adventure*. www.southwindadventures.com.

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