

THE OUTTRAVELER

THE STANDARD OF GAY TRAVEL

Fall 2008

10 TRIPS THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE

The transformative nature of journeys can be subtle or profound, but these ten adventures may change the way you feel about travel altogether, with itineraries that provoke, challenge, and dare you to come back a different person.

By **MATTHEW LINK**

PERU

Take part in a shaman ritual amid the towering ruins of Machu Picchu

DETAILS: Machu Picchu is one of the truly great spiritual sites in the world. The "Lost City of the Incas," which sits atop a peak in the verdant Andes, is such a popular tourist destination that there is talk of limiting the throngs who overwhelm the ruins of this once-thriving city. The best way to connect to the sacred energy of the spot is via an authentic blessing performed by an Inca shaman. In the remains of a temple or in an overhang cave with a crystal wall, the holy man, through a ritual that mixes herbs, plants, and objects, prophesies and gives you strength for your journey.

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT: "The Inca shaman ceremony can bring up pretty strong emotions in different people. During our last ceremony a couple decided to have the shaman perform a commitment ceremony, and during their ceremony I really started tearing up. I looked around and discovered I was not alone. Throughout their history and culture, the Inca people had no issue with homosexuality. They saw homosexuality in nature, and so it never was looked upon as bad or wrong. When an Inca shaman blesses your union, you know that not only he but also his culture is specifically celebrating your relationship."

—Bryan Herb, Zoom Vacations

SIGN UP FOR THE NEXT TRIP: Chicago-based Zoom Vacations (ZoomVacations.com; 866-966-6822) organizes shaman ceremonies at Machu Picchu in conjunction with its weeklong Peruvian gay group trip that includes Lima and the ancient Incan capital of Cusco; November 22-29, 2008.