



EXPERIENCE

High style

South America's first luxury sleeper train brings the extravagance of European rail travel to Peru

Thump. Thump. Thump. Despite the fact that almost every passenger aboard the *Andean Explorer* has crowded onto the train's open-air observation car to watch the sunset dip below the Andes—many with a pisco sour or Peruvian beer in hand—there is no chatter, only total silence. Save for the sounds of the train sashaying along the tracks, each person is simply too awestruck by nature's beauty to speak.

"It's funny," train manager Christopher Mendoza later says. "That happens every time. It's always my favorite part of the trip."

South America's first luxury sleeper train is a study in quiet elegance. Built in Australia in the 1990s, the *Andean Explorer* began life as the *Great South Pacific Express*, running between Cairns and Brisbane, only to be shut down after four years. Belmond, which also operates the *Royal Scotsman* and *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express*, brought the 16-carriage vehicle to Peru in 2016. The project cost an estimated \$10 million, and the train launched last May. The *Andean Explorer* and its 24 en-suite cabins feature both period and Peruvian touches: art nouveau-style ceilings, brass luggage racks, a baby grand piano in the bar car, cast-iron railing in the observation car, and hand-woven textiles in bright Incan patterns throughout.

"When the train arrived, it was totally different," says Mendoza. "I feel so proud of it. We have the landscape—it will always be here—but we have to take care of the train and look after him. It's like a little son."

At 14,000 feet above sea level, the *Andean Explorer* offers the

Clockwise from top: The *Andean Explorer*; the bar car; an excursion to Machu Picchu



BEFORE OR AFTER



Country Club Lima Hotel Lima, Peru

A trip to Peru isn't complete without a stop in Lima. At this lavish 90-year-old property in the San Isidro district, the 83 rooms and suites blend modern convenience with grand history. countryclublimahotel.com



Palacio del Inka Cusco, Peru

Located across from the Templo del Sol, this former mansion was built on the site of an Incan palace (the ancient walls are still part of the structure). The Inti Raymi restaurant overlooks a charming courtyard. palaciodelinkahotel.com



Belmond Las Casitas Colca Canyon, Peru

For passengers desiring an extension to their journey, the luxury travel brand operates this 59-acre property a two-hour ride from the station. Each of the 22 casitas boasts a heated plunge pool. belmond.com



perfect vantage point to gaze at the undulating Peruvian highlands during one- or two-night itineraries traveling between Cusco, Puno and Arequipa. The train's picture windows offer unobstructed views of Peruvian locals and scenery,

as well as herds of vicuñas, guanacos, llamas and alpacas.

The top-notch service includes multicourse gourmet meals served in the train's posh dining cars. "We are traveling through beautiful scenery, so the food needs to complement that," says chef Diego Muñoz, whose team has been forced to adapt to its unconventional environment. "The train's movement is the biggest challenge. You can get used to the size of the kitchen. My friend in Paris has a restaurant with a smaller kitchen than the *Andean Explorer's*, but the movement is ... something else." The dishes on Muñoz's menu range from Peruvian classics (corn and queso) to contemporary adaptations (seared sea bass with *muña*-scented broad beans and citric yogurt).

This spring, the train is adding a spa car to provide treatments such as the Andean Ritual, a clay wrap of local flowers and coca leaves. For the pampered guests, it'll surely provide another moment of peace and quiet. —DERRIK J. LANG
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From above: View from a dining car; the Basilica Cathedral of Arequipa; duck breast with beet cream and wheat taboulé