

La Gran Ruta Inca (The Great Inca Highland Road)

Quick facts:

- Stretching from southernmost Colombia to central Chile and Argentina, over 7,000 kilometres, the road is considered one of the marvels of antiquity.
- By the time the Spanish arrived in 1532, the Inca Empire was the largest in the world and the Gran Ruta Inca helped unite more than 80 different ethnic and political groups in the region from the capital in Cusco.
- IUCN - the World Conservation Union's Gran Ruta Inca Initiative is endeavoring to revitalize this ancient road.
- The overall goal of the IUCN Initiative is to establish a network of protected areas to conserve and manage the international corridor associated with this archaeological treasure.
- Of the 100 ecoregions in South America, the Gran Ruta Inca traverses 15 of them. Four of these are considered of global importance for conservation.
- A revitalized Gran Ruta Inca holds dramatic potential for community-based tourism that could promote sustainable economic development.

La Gran Ruta Inca – what is it?

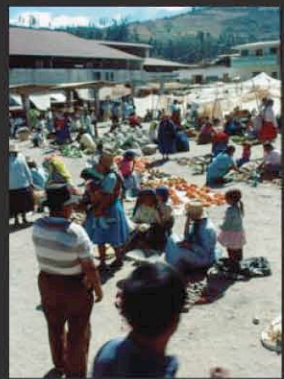
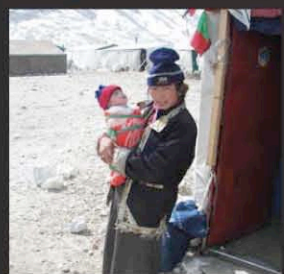
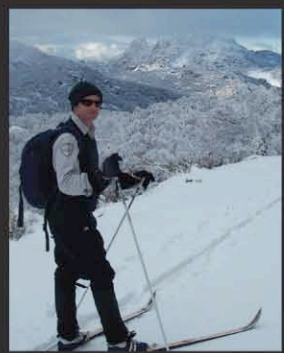
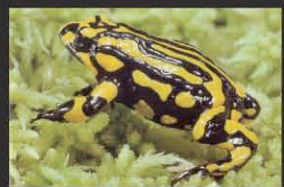
La Gran Ruta Inca, Capaq Ñan in Quechua, the Great Inca Highland Road in English, once ran for 7,000 km from the extreme south of Colombia to central Chile and western Argentina, passing through the Andes of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Some sections of the road retain their original characteristics; others have deteriorated but are still identifiable; some have been lost.

The Initiative

IUCN - the World Conservation Union's Gran Ruta Inca Initiative is endeavoring to revitalize this ancient masterwork as a unique opportunity to catalyze sustainable development.

A Regional Project Committee will guide implementation of the Project. The Committee will include the Director of the IUCN - World Conservation Union South American Office, who will Chair the Committee, and representatives of the implementing agencies, the countries, Conservation International, the Latin American and Caribbean Association of Environmental Funds, the Andean Community, the private sector, and a Technical Council.

The workshop is proudly supported by



The project goals

The overall goal of the IUCN Initiative for the Gran Ruta Inca is to establish a network of protected areas to conserve and manage the international corridor associated with this archaeological treasure of the Andes for:

- the sustainable development of Andean communities;
- the conservation of biodiversity and the headwaters of major watersheds;
- the restoration and utilization of the Gran Ruta Inca and associated archaeological sites;
- the identification and careful management of sacred natural sites;
- establishing biological corridors;
- the development of community-based tourism;
- the revitalization of Andean cultures; and,
- the establishment of intercultural spaces to explore the worldviews and values of cultures, and their future significance.

The Gran Ruta Inca's unique landscape

Natural Resources

Of the 100 ecoregions in South America, the Gran Ruta Inca traverses 15 of them. Four of these are considered of global importance for conservation. Among the species along the route are vicuña and guanaco, the spectacled Andean bear, the Andean condor, the vizcacha, and flamingos. The route directly intersects eight protected areas and passes close to five others. The route is also incredibly important for watershed maintenance and seed propagation. "*El antiguo camino de la semillas,*" the ancient seed distribution routes, have been severely disrupted. Revitalizing the Gran Ruta Inca could

encourage the revival of the ancient practice of exchanging seeds.

Communities

The Gran Ruta Inca passes through major cities and towns but in most of these places it has been covered or destroyed. The route is most intact near the thousands of indigenous villages it passes. A revitalized Gran Ruta Inca holds potential for community-based tourism that could promote sustainable economic development.

Cultural Treasures

Archeological sites and living manifestations of Andean culture are found in great quantity along the Gran Ruta Inca. There are hundreds of major archeological sites along the route. But there are also thousands of minor sites that have not been mapped or inventoried. The route also passes hundreds of communities where ancient customs and traditions are still thriving.

The Sacred Dimension

The sacred dimension of nature is a central element of Andean cosmology. This sacred dimension has been one of the principle evolutionary threads of Incan culture, and was the foundation of these societies' relationship with their environment. The route undoubtedly had an important impact on Incan understanding of the sacred landscape. Developing the Gran Ruta Inca with respect for local perspectives and traditions will inevitably lead to the recovery of ancient conservation practices, and highlight the landscape's sacred dimension.

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http://www.iucn.org/en/projects/peru_inca.htm