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Visit at Inkaterra 'La Casona' / Cusco

Vinalu Special Reports Peru / Cusco

VINALU SPECIAL REPORTS PERU/ CUSCO

(PART II)

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OUTSTANDING & VIBRANT CUSCO

Vinalu's special reports continue on the Latin American continent, this time with a discovery of top culinary gems in Lima and Cusco, with the support of the wellknown Peruvian winemaker and connoisseur of the fine dining scene Pepe Moquillazza and the prominent photographer and vintner Julio Donoso (see also Vinalu 62).



Viva El Peru



Over the roofs of Cusco from Ciciolina restaurant



Cusco Plaza de Armas



After some of our exciting visits to Lima (more in Vinalu 70), we are delighted to explore Cusco, for 200 years the center of the Inca imperium and classified by the Unesco as a Cultural Heritage, with an outstanding universal value. The imperial city of the Incas, located at 3400 meters over the sea level, with astonishing, aesthetic and remarkable ancient stone structures was preserved in its basic structures, when it was conquered by the Spanish in the 16th century. They built monasteries and manor houses, mostly in baroque style with local adaptations, over the ruins, which makes the style of Cusco unique, with its architectural mixture of different periods and different cultures. Today Cusco, with its significant past and with its beautiful legends, is probably the most vibrant spot in the Andes and an axis of exploration to Machu Picchu. A high spirited place, where international travellers love to meet to recount their adventurous stories over a glass of wine or pisco...

INKATERRA 'LA CASONA' IN CUSCO, A NATIONAL MONUMENT

The Inkaterra 'La Casona', a luxury hotel and first member of the Relais & Châteaux association in Peru, belongs to the Peruvian Inkaterra hotel brand, which has been at the forefront of ecotourism and sustainable development in Peru. With the idea of preserving biodiversity and local cultures in harmony with the environment and with working on projects such as the studies of wildlife in the rainforest, mainly for conservation reasons or as the promotion of Peru as a top birdwatching destination with the organization of the exceptional 'Birding Rally'. Inkaterra has been awarded many times by the best guides, also for its eco friendly travels and for its support for agriculture with low greenhouse gas emissions. Another good reason for us to choose the Inkaterra 'La Casona' for our stay in Cusco (editor's note: Vinalu is planned to present other Inkaterra hotels of the association during this year).

The Inkaterra 'La Casona' hotel, established in a 16th century historical manor house, with its typical style of balconies and classified as a National Historic Monument, is located on the traditional Plaza de las Nazarenas, steps away from the Museo de Arte Precolombino and the Museo Inca, surrounded by cobblestoned streets. The land on which the property is situated was in the past time part of the Warakos Academy, the training ground of the elite army of the Incas.

After this, many famous figures and illustrious guests have inhabited the site. The most prominent was Simon Bolívar, known as 'El Libertador', due to his important role he had in the liberation of South America from Spain.

In 1999, Inkaterra bought the property and after a careful restoration period, also to keep its historical heritage, the hotel



*with the Inca emperor
Pachacutec statue*



The photographer Julio Donoso at work



Ready for a shoe polish



,Zapata's' The last dinner





Beautiful arcades in the Museo Arzobispal



Peaceful patio at Inkaterra La Casona

opened in 2008 as a suite boutique hotel, with many antiques, that decorate the interior, with Spanish colonial furniture and with original murals.

On arrival, you knock at a heavy wooden door, someone will open you and you will find yourselves in an enchanting patio, giving to exquisite suits and captivated by the smell of dried eucalyptus bunches and fans, placed on antique tables. We are welcomed with a cup of coca tea.

The crushed coca leaves are used in Peru to treat altitude sickness and to get easier acclimatized to the altitude.

AMUSE-BOUCHES IN LA CASONA

Later in the day, we have an interview with the executive chef de cuisine Javier, who studied gastronomy in Cusco, before he started in the 'La Casona' 6 years ago, when he was 25. Originating from a Quechuan family, a group of indigene people, he is familiar with the traditional food in Peru. As he explains, the many festivities in Cusco are always celebrated with popular food, as salted goat meat, guinea pig and rare varieties of potatoes. Potatoes, with a high cultural importance in Peru, are deeply valued as a part of Peruvian heritage and so some kinds of potatoes are only served on specific occasions; they can even be brought as a gift. For the Cusco festivities the guinea pig is prepared in a traditional way, with salt & pepper, orange, lemon and rosmarin and barbecued. And as Javier says: The best friend of the Guinea pig is the potato. Listo.

We enjoy some of the signature dishes in La Casona, as the wild smoked delicate trout from the Titicaca sea, with caper bush, olive oil and rosmarin, avocado, aioli and lime cream on Andean bread toast and the crispy, tasteful confitado of guinea pig, roasted in its own juice for twelve hours, on yellow potatoe purée, with piementa de Molle, a pink peppercorn and with the traditional Chupa, a bread with garlic and



with antique furniture



and eucalyptus fans





Chef de cuisine Javier



Table dressed for the amuse bouches



Trucha ahumada , smoked trout



Cuy confitado, roasted guinea pig



served with Boya Rose 2019



Rich breakfast buffet



Jennifer serves the coca tea



Delicious eggs Benedict



and pancakes with wild honey

rosmarin. This time, because of our tight program, served only in amuse-bouches size. With the gastronomic appetizers, we tasted the 'Boya' Rosé 2019, from Viña Garces Silva from Valle de Leyda / Chile made of 95% Pinot Noir and 5% of Grenache, with a light rose colour, mineral on the nose and with red currants and a nice freshness on the palate. The day after we enjoyed a lovely breakfast with a classical egg Benedict and delicious pancakes with fruits and wild honey. Our conclusion: We agree with the 'FIVE C' motto of Relais et Châteaux 'Caractère, courtoisie, calme, charme et cuisine' (meaning caracter, courtesy, calm, charm and cuisine).

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