

Vinalu®

'Luxembourg's first Online Wine Magazine'

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*Explora lodge, adventure and
excellent cuisine*

*Maxus e-Terron
Test drive*

*Vinalu Special Reports
Valle Sagrado de los Incas*

VINALU SPECIAL REPORTS VALLE
SAGRADO /PERU

THE ROAD BOOK FROM CUSCO TO MACHU PICCHU (PART I)

by Liliane Turmes, Helen Latour & good friends

A scenic view of Valle Sagrado



A MEMORABLE TRIP FROM CUSCO TO VALLE SAGRADO DE LOS INCAS

The lovely Sacred Valley, irrigated by the Urubamba river, with an abundant vegetation and fertility of the land and with a mild climate, has a fascinating heritage of archeological sites of the Incas. The magnificent 'Cordillera de los Andes' defines almost every aspect of the Sacred Valley's identity. Because of the lower elevation, with warmer temperatures than in nearby areas, the Incas settled here and made of it the most important place for the cultivation of white corn, potatoes and coca. And so the Sacred Valley is considered as the cradle of the Inca Empire.

After a memorable trip from Cusco, with breathtaking views, we arrive at the Explora lodge in Valle Sagrado, a remoted 32 ha estate, seamlessly integrated with its outstanding bright wooden design in the cornfields and the quinoa plantations and surrounded by the majestic Andes mountains. We are captivated by the many shades of blue skies and by the bright shining sun interacting with spectacular cloud formations, changing the colour of the Andes from very light to dramatic dark in minutes. What a picture!



The cornfield plantation at Explora lodge



Open window to the Andes





Explora lodge with an outstanding architecture



a stylish interior design



an extravagant bar



and with an elegant restaurant



GO DEEPER WITH EXPLORA

Good friends, familiar with the brand, point out, that in addition to their remoted beautiful lodges and the in-depth explorations, the focus of Explora is the protection of fragile territories with ecological value, with long time projects of reforestation and conservation and with social programs to help the communities on the fields. Having this philosophy and the motto of Explora in mind, to go deeper, to expand perspectives, surpass limits, explore to embrace new cultures, we are obviously very curious to discover this fusion of commitment, adventure, culture and luxury.



Acclimatization in the shadow at the pool



with a Golden Inca Kola



and with a fresh rosé from Lapostolle on the terrace



EXPLORE THE ZONES

Beforehand we all have a serious briefing with Juliano, the hiking expert, introducing us to the kind of 'tailor made' hikes. In fact the design of the explorations is outlined in four different exploration zones, meaning also how many days of acclimatization are necessary for the chosen zone, as altitude sickness can hit anyone who climbs too high too quickly. And depending on the level of hiking and climbing, a special training with ropes is foreseen, mainly for the Janca zone, the highest part of the Peruvian Andes, with peaks reaching 6768 meters above the sea level. Obviously, this zone requires a special acclimatization and sporting ability, due to the area's extremely low temperatures and lack of oxygen and also because of its mostly steep terrain. Technical knowledge and experience to climb these titans, that reach into the clouds are a must. But, as they say here, it is a vital experience of Heaven on Earth...

Let's come back to the starting zone for all the explorations, the Quechua zone, the area where the lodge, considered as the base from which to discover the surrounding territories and cultural landscapes, is located. And as it is very important to drink a lot of water in high altitudes in order to control mountain sickness, we are given a light aluminium drinking bottle, filled with fresh water for the trek and advised to take the right equipment to be prepared for rain, which can occur at any time.



Welcome to



the Inca terraces of Moray



and to Salinas de Maras

EXPLORATION TO MORAY & MARAS

We opt for the one day 'Suní zone' overland tour exploration, which comprises the most memorable panoramic views, with winding paths perched high and deep gorges, the crossing of small lively villages, four wheel drives over dust roads to the impressive natural amphitheater of Moray, the well preserved circular ruins of the agricultural terraces, the experimental crop center of the Incas. The archaeological site of Moray is believed to have been a sort of experimenting with crops and techniques at different altitudes, as each level of the terraces has its own microclimate. On this high plateau at 3500 m of altitude, vendors sell local snacks and we cannot resist to try one huge slice of yellow potatoe, fried in a big pan and covered with 'flor de sal', the natural pink salt from the neighbouring village of Maras. Simple & tasteful!

Our exploration continues to Maras, with its incredible 3000 salt ponds, looking from the windy view point like snow covered fields, carved by the predecessors of the Incas and still operated today. The salt was an important mineral for the Incas, as they used it not only for consumption, but as well for storage and for human mummifications. The ponds are connected through underground canals, that fill the pools with water, with streams being closed when the ponds are full, the strong sun slowly evaporates the water, leaving behind the crystalized salt, which is then extracted with wooden rakes by the local families.



The show table



Chef Manuel Vela: Vamos for the menu



Trout tartar with Greek yogurt

FINE CREATIVE CUISINE

For the culinary discovery at Explora, we meet the chef de cuisine Manuel Vela, working together with Virgilio Martínez, famous chef of the 'Central' in Lima, World's Best Restaurant in 2023, who is also participating in the gastronomic design at Explora Sacred Valley. Before talking about his professional experiences, Vela takes us to the showtable with ingredients and vegetables of the season, used in his kitchen, like the big purple corn from the garden behind the lodge, yellow and black mashua tubers for the pickle recipes, ayrampo seeds, a plant belonging to the cactus family, with a sweet jammy taste, also used for colouring dishes, yellow and orange chillies, aromatic herbs and different kinds of quinoa.

Vela studied Haute Cuisine at the Instituto 'Le Cordon Bleu' in Lima, a highly internationally recognized university for gastronomy and management, worked in Belmond in Valle Sagrado, with 2 Michelin star chef Jorge González at the Ritz in Madrid and with Rudolfo Guzmán at 'Boragó in Santiago de Chile (author's note: see report in Vinalu number 63). After years of classical training, he started 2021 as a sous-chef in Explora Sacred Valley and since shortly he took over as an executive chef. For Vela 'A dream came true'.



*Slowly cooked delicious
ossobucco beef*



served with black yuca



and colourful vegetables

Our gourmet experience starts with a delicate mild trout tartar, with sweet tropical cherimoya fruit, floral yellow chili, covered with creamy Greek yogurt, topped with corn and decorated with cilantro flowers. A great and surprising combination of different flavors and textures. With the main dish, a super soft beef ossobucco, cooked in its juice for 18 hours at 80° low temperature, with hydrated herbs and wild muña, the Peruvian mint and with chicha, the ancient beer made from corn, giving a nice yeasty taste. Excellent with the side dishes, the sweet black yuca, an edible root with a nutty flavor similar to chestnuts, refined with a syrup of purple corn and with the fresh yellow, orange and black carrots salad on mashed avocado. The dessert in different layers, a practice often used in Peruvian cuisine, at the base with a cream of corn, covered with an aromatic mango sauce and crispy delightful meringue.

The chef suggests a Boya Pinot Noir 2021, a fruity wine with a pleasant acidity from Leyda Valley in Chile to accompany the dishes.



*Great
corncream
dessert*



*with a fruity Boya
Pinot Noir*

A VOYAGE WITH ICONIC HIRAM BINGHAM TRAIN TO MACHU PICCHU

With a little help from our friends, we get a reservation for a journey on the legendary, glamorous Hiram Bingham train from Ollantaytambo in Urubamba to Aguas Calientes, the train station for Machu Picchu. It is considered THE train in Peru, named after the famous explorer and photographer Hiram Bingham. He worked with George Eastman of Eastman Kodak and National Geographic at the beginning of last century and after many articles and books about the Incas, he published in the 1940s his fantastic book 'The Lost City of the Incas' about the discovery of the Inca citadel (more about this fascinating personage in the next Vinalu edition on Machu Picchu). The train was launched in 1999 by the president of Peru Rail SA and Orient-Express hotels, with an old world charm and vintage carriages with wooden furnishing and polished brass details, with a bar and a sophisticated restaurant car, with classical elegance and finely laid tables and with an amazing open balcony in the Observation Car, where you can enjoy the magnificent Andean landscape on the way to Machu Picchu.



Waiting for the train at Ollantaytambo station



Good music on the platform



THE train arriving



*Famous Hiram Bingham to
Machu Picchu*



Classical elegance



A creamy pisco sour



before reaching Machu Picchu



Maxus e-Terron:

Electric Monster Pickup

Text Sully Prudhomme, pictures SAIC Motors

We've previously had the chance to take a close look at a Maxus pickup, specifically the T90 EV, which was introduced primarily as a launch model to explore the European market. SAIC Motors, the Chinese manufacturer of light commercial vehicles, ranks 7th globally among the largest car manufacturers and offers a range of electric light-duty vehicles for everyday use.

At the IAA Transportation in Hannover, the fully electric successor model, the e-Terron, was introduced for the first time. Thanks to the use of two electric motors, the e-Terron now features all-wheel drive. We recently had the opportunity to take this monster truck on a short trip through the Belgian Ardennes. While the e-Terron might seem somewhat oversized on the narrow, winding roads, you quickly get used to the spaciousness of the double cab. Two freestanding screens, a floating center console, and ventilated and heated seats for winter use are features that both business customers and private drivers will appreciate. With a range of over 400 kilometers, a sleek design, and a wealth of technologies that make everyday life easier, this model sets new standards in its class. The distinctive design with a closed front and LED headlights gives the e-Terron 9 a futuristic look. Its aerodynamic lines combine elegance with efficiency.

The e-Terron can certainly be seen as a workhorse, designed for heavy-duty use, effortlessly towing a trailer weighing 3,500 kg and with a payload capacity of 650 kg. Such capabilities require a stable foundation; the semi-monocoque construction combines the benefits of a body-on-frame design with modern car manufacturing, ensuring a good balance between robustness and comfort. However, due to its characteristics, the pickup is not particularly aerodynamic, but this doesn't detract from the driving experience, especially considering the performance under the hood, which easily compensates for this.

The Maxus e-Terron 9 is powered by two electric motors, delivering a total system output of 442 horsepower and accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in 5.8 seconds. The front wheels receive 170 horsepower, while the rear wheels get an additional 272 horsepower boost. The truck offers several driving modes, including Normal, Sand, Mud, and Individual, as well as an adjustable air suspension that adapts to the driving speed. The battery installed has a capacity of 102 kWh and features an effective energy recovery system, which, according to the manufacturer, provides an



18% improved range over competitors in winter conditions. As with all electric vehicles, the acceleration is breathtaking due to the immediate availability of maximum torque; the truck reaches 100 km/h in just 5 seconds. If you don't want to test this with every traffic light start (though it's tempting), you can travel up to 480 km (WLTP) on a full charge. The consumption is around 26.7 kWh/100 km. The lithium iron phosphate battery supports fast DC charging at 115 kW (20-80% in 40 minutes).

We thank the Belux importer Astara for providing the vehicle. The Maxus e-Terron starts at €73,008.00 including VAT and is available at Autopolis Luxembourg.



Impressum

Based on an idea by Romain Batya



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