



Bright ideas

Responsible travel can make a trip more colourful, finds Kerry Cook



LEFT: Meeting children in the Lares Valley

RIGHT: Parwa Restaurant, Peru



GAdventures' Inca Discovery Plus – Lares Trek starts at £1,099 for a nine-day return trip from Lima, including hotel and camping accommodation, internal flights and some meals. gadventures.co.uk

It's been a whirlwind year for 30-year-old travel consultant Kerry Cook of Chester agency Deva Travel. Since being named Responsible Travel Ambassador for G Adventures last October, she's been whisked off to Peru to see the company's community projects, has spread the word with colleagues and organised a client event to promote responsible travel. Here, Kerry offers her tips on how to make sustainability part of the client conversation

“A lot of people want to travel responsibly but don't know how to do it. They think it's just about being environmentally friendly, or that they'll be roughing it because it's adventure travel – but it's not like that at all.

Responsible travel is about giving to the community, not taking away. Since coming back from Peru, I've talked about it with clients and the response has been really positive. I'm usually the one to bring it up, but once people know more about it, they're keen to find a way to help others while having a good experience themselves.

► **LOCAL LIFE**

I went to Peru with G Adventures and visited two community projects – a women's weaving collective in Ccaccacollo and a restaurant – both set up by the Planeterra Foundation. They are both very much off the tourist track, about a two-hour drive from Cusco, so it's hugely important to them that they have tourism as a stream of revenue.

It's not about handouts. Planeterra helps local people set up, but once a venture becomes a business in its own right, it's up to them to make it thrive.

Tourism is the second-biggest industry in Peru, but it's still not touching everybody, so to see these projects in action and the difference they are making is the icing on the cake.

It's great to meet local people, to know you can buy products labelled with the name of the person who made them, and that the money goes straight back into their pockets.

I was amazed at how enterprising the people in the Parwa Restaurant were too. The restaurant itself has five micro-businesses within it – two



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families supply the chicken and the eggs, some local women make snacks for tourists travelling through on long bus journeys – and they have even used income from the restaurant to build a mini-IT centre with computers for the villagers to use, so they're being educated as well.

► **SELLING SUSTAINABILITY**

When people come to us and ask for advice, I draw on experiences like this to show how they could enrich their visit, even if it's just as an element of a wider trip, and I've sold more as a result. If someone's going to South Africa, I ask if they've thought about a day trip to a local community; or if they're off to Costa Rica, I show how they can do a completely tailor-made trip but also visit a few eco-projects.

Sometimes people just want to book an all-inclusive holiday to Mexico, but they can still do excursions to go and meet a local family. You're not just going to a place to see the scenery or the wildlife, it's the human connections that are really memorable.

This Peruvian experience has been of real benefit, even if just as a conversation starter. The response has been so positive that we're holding a client event with G Adventures, Rainbow Travel and InsideAsia to talk about adventure travel and destinations, and get people thinking a bit more about responsible travel. **TW**