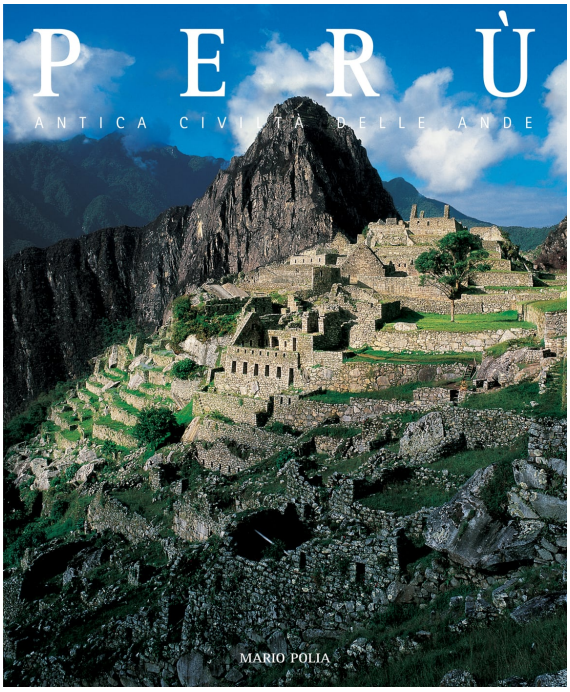
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Peru

An Ancient Andean Civilization

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- Cradle of Inca civilisation, and land of the mountains from which the tributaries to the Amazon spring, Peru is a world of strong traditions entwined with deep spiritual values. The result is a country of vibrant contrasts, in which history and nature make a fascinating combination

Peru is a silent and mysterious world, a land of solemn and impressive landscapes, sometimes terrifying but in harmony with the forces of nature and the universe. It is also the land of the proud, often silent but always resolute descendants of the noble, ancient people who built a formidable civilisation: the Incas. Invincible warriors and able politicians, these new ‘owners of the earth’ founded their capital at Cuzco and, little by little, subjected the surrounding peoples, assimilating their culture and arts and expanding in all directions. Only the Spanish under Francisco Pizarro succeeded in severing their roots and consigning to oblivion the riches of El Dorado and the marvelous treasures hidden among the arid highlands and snowy peaks. Here, among the dense sub-equatorial forests on the eastern slopes that face toward the Amazonian basin, archaeological sites of great interest have been found, from early raw-brick pyramids to mysterious cities built of stone. Peru has the highest railway line in the world; it runs along the backbone of South America with stations perched at heights over 15,400 feet. It is also where the spirits of the Andes live, the apu, and the shamans of Peru with their ancient medicine, who still represent the strength of the ancient American people.

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