

12 December 2018

Wheelchairs no barrier to adventure on the Inca Trail Partnership between Wheel the World and PEAK DMC opens Peru's Sacred Valley up to travellers with disabilities



(L-R) Álvaro Silberstein, Co-Founder & CEO at Wheel the World, Gary Cohen, PEAK DMC Regional General Manager for South America and Isabel Aguirre, Product Manager at Wheel the World.

Álvaro Silberstein, 33, and Isabel Aguirre, 36, both from Chile, have become the first quadriplegic and paraplegic respectively to traverse an 11-kilometre section of the Inca Trail in wheelchairs.

The one-day trek to Machu Picchu was undertaken last month to promote accessible travel in the region, with Silberstein and Aguirre part of a 14-person group participating on an eight-day tour of Peru which also explored Cusco and the Sacred Valley.

The tour was designed by leading global experiential travel operator PEAK DMC in collaboration with accessible travel company Wheel the World, of which Silberstein is co-founder and CEO.

“Completing the one-day Inca Trail was both beautiful and hard – at many exhausted moments we wondered if we would make it but reaching the Sun Gate and seeing Machu Picchu from on high was probably the most beautiful moment in my life,” says Silberstein.

One such exhausting moment was climbing the 320 near-vertical steps near the Wiñay Wayna ruins, which at 2650 metres altitude is a formidable challenge for even the fittest hikers, says Gary Cohen, PEAK DMC Regional General Manager for South America.

“The climb was undoubtedly the toughest moment of the trek. We really had to pull together as a team and dig as deep as we could to find the energy to get it done. It was totally worth it though, as once we passed this section we knew we were truly going to make it to Machu Picchu.”

The eight-day tour also included other activities such as a 10 km cycling trip through the beautiful Sacred Valley, kayaking on the tranquil waters of Piuray Lake and an excursion exploring the ruins of Sacsayhuaman. All active experiences were made possible by special adaptive equipment such as the Joëlette chair, provided by Wheel the World and which will be made available for travellers on future departures.

“Our mission at Wheel the World is to allow people with disabilities to be able to explore every single corner of the globe, so we were thrilled to partner with PEAK DMC to bring accessible adventure to Peru,” says Silberstein. “They’re the perfect tour operator for us – not only bringing destination expertise but an amazing team of tour leaders and suppliers. We hope to replicate this model all around the world in the future.”

For Cohen, participating in the trip is an experience he’ll never forget.

“In my 10 years in the adventure travel industry, I’ve never done anything as challenging or rewarding as this. Alvaro and Isabel have turned their tragedies into incredible triumphs, inspiring everyone they meet. Adventure is for everyone and they are breaking down the barriers to prove it. I’m immensely proud of the partnership we’ve formed between PEAK DMC and Wheel the World and can’t wait to see where it takes us next.”

A documentary on the trip will be released online in early 2019. Following this initial trip, PEAK DMC and Wheel the World have developed a [private group tour itinerary](#) exploring Cusco and the Sacred Valley, giving travellers with accessibility requirements the chance to visit historic and cultural sites, and take part in cycling and kayaking. Find out more at gowheeltheworld.com.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For further information, please contact: Phil Harper or Olivia Lewis at peak@finnpartners.com or call +44 (0) 207 326 9880

Interviews available with Gary Cohen, Regional General Manager for South America at PEAK DMC and Álvaro Silberstein, Co-Founder and CEO of Wheel the World.

If required, more images are available to download here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kYd9kk9pKmHrsVFCz8dhzqk2XHYYr7D7> - please credit Wheel the World.

About PEAK DMC

For more than ten years PEAK DMC has been creating sustainable, experience-rich destination management solutions for the world’s leading travel brands in more than 90 countries worldwide. Delivering consistency across products and destinations, PEAK DMC’s business structure combines local expertise with global knowledge, with a focus on safety and responsible travel.

For more information, visit: www.peakdmc.com

About Wheel the World

Wheel the World is an award-winning travel benefit corporation with the purpose of empowering people with disabilities to explore the world without limits. The company investigates popular/inspiring destinations, assesses for what requirements and equipment is required to develop

accessibility, and builds alliances with local tour operators, guides and other travel providers to develop accessible trips that are offered through gowheeltheworld.com. Open inclusive routes have so far been developed in Patagonia, Easter Island, San Pedro de Atacama, Cochamó, Santiago, Oaxaca - Mexico and now Peru; with a view to expand the trips to all the Americas in 2019.

With thanks to:

This trip was made possible with the generous support of local tourism businesses including Inca Rail, Casa Andina Hotels, Habitats Peru Travel, San Agustín Hotels and the Piuray Outdoor Center, with additional sponsorship from Columbia, Misiones de Rengo and Jetsmart Airlines.