#### Machu Picchu

Though the Incas are no more, their culture can still be seen in the ruins of their great cities and architecture. Rising from the Sacred Valley of the Incas, Machu Picchu is the Incas' stunning hilltop citadel, a complex of vine-shrouded temples, baths and stairways. Machu Picchu constitutes the end of the Inca Trail, connecting it to Cuzco, the former Inca capital. The trail sprawls across three mountain passes and dense tropic jungle. Machu Picchu is enshrouded in mystery, which attracts much speculation on its cultural significance. It is not believed to be a city itself, but rather a religious retreat or royal estate. Its inaccessibility further supports this belief. For the same reason, Machu Picchu has fortunately survived in all its former magnificence. When the conquistadors invaded other Incan cities, they typically destroyed them, using their stone bricks to build cathedrals and marketplaces for the Spaniards. The conquistadors never discovered Machu Picchu, however. It was forgotten for 400 years, an unblemished icon of Incan innovation and culture.