

# CUZCO

## GOING TRAVELLING?

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## It's not all panpipes and ponchos – traditional and modern sounds comfortably rub shoulders in Cuzco. David Orr went along to sample its delights

**T**ourists wandering between the bars and clubs of Cuzco's central plaza or soaking up the 'panpipes and poncho' bands of the restaurants might seem like a recent phenomenon amidst the perfectly-preserved ancient Inca stonework and colonial Spanish buildings. The city has in fact been making impressive efforts to attract visitors since at least 1933, when Cuzco (meaning 'navel of the world') was named the 'Archaeological Capital of South America.' The vitality of the country's native heritage has given it a vibrant roots scene which mingles with the more mainstream styles of Latin America to produce a musical panorama which neither economic disasters nor music piracy have been able to weaken.

Cuzco, with the nearby ruins of Machu Picchu, makes the city once again the symbolic heartland of Peru. A national movement to revalue the native culture was spearheaded by the local indigenists in the 1930s, and led to the revival of many folk dances and musical traditions. Regular festivals punctuate

life in Cuzco, and especially in the run-up to Inti Raymi, the June celebration commemorating the Inca past. If you are there at a time of year when there are no festivals – quite a difficult achievement – the Cuzco Centre for Native Art will give you a taste at its daily shows. Try visiting the *chicherias* (local bars) or smaller local festivals in the neighbouring towns where *huayno*, *saya* and *carnavales* are the music of choice.

Good music can nevertheless be easily heard in the city centre with live performances of everything from Andean/rock fusion to *tecnocumbia* pop. Generally you won't find the big names of world music in Cuzco, unless you are there during the Cusqueña Festival. Cuzco's a place to keep your ears open for lesser-known musicians, some of whom can be wonderful performers.

Restaurants on or near the Plaza de Armas virtually guarantee that a band of musicians – at least one of whom will be playing the panpipes – will wander in to serenade you at some point during your meal, though

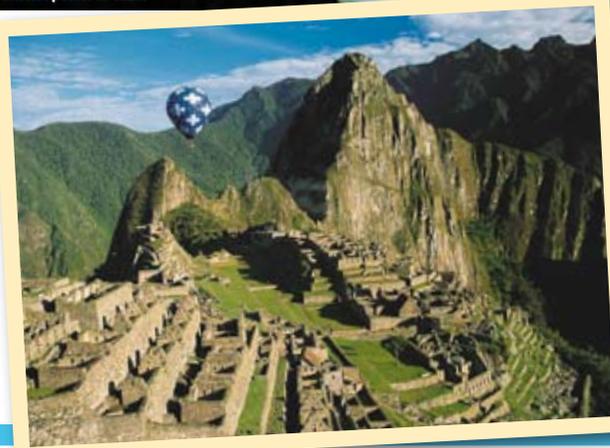
their repertoire is unlikely to be very original.

Discos and nightclubs arrived in Cuzco in the 70s, centred on the Plaza de Armas. From the early days when only two locales, Abraxas and Hatuchay, fought it out for custom, the square and surrounding streets are now packed with pubs and clubs. There you will be reminded that apart from its own musical traditions salsa, *merengue* and *cumbia* mix with European, Middle Eastern and American sounds. Mama Africa has an enviable position on the plaza itself, but the likes of Ukuku's, Kamikase and Muki are all within a block of the centre, and just as animated. Of course, at over 3,300m the dancing may get a bit strenuous. But you can acclimatise to altitude, and the excitement is infectious – worry about it in the morning! Cuzco is an exciting crossroads of contemporary and traditional sounds, with only one minor drawback – by the time you leave, you could well be more sick of hearing 'El Condor Pasa' than you have ever been of any song in your life...



The Iglesia de la Compañía on the Plaza de Armas. Below: the nearby Inca ruins of Machu Picchu. Below right: a concert poster in Cuzco

RIGHT: CARLOS SALA/PROMPER/BELOW: ALEJANDRO BALAGUER/PROMPER/ALL OTHER PHOTOS: DAVID ORR



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## FESTIVALS

### Fiesta Cusqueña de la Cerveza

This annual festival of Peruvian and international music, sponsored by the brewery of the only beer that counts locally, Cusqueña, has been running since 1991 and is the biggest chance Cuzco has to let its hair down all year. It has built quite a reputation and attracts musicians from all over Latin America. Until now it has always taken place in the weeks leading up to the celebration of the solstice on June 24, known as Inti Raymi, but the timing of this year's presidential elections for June has led to a comprehensive rethink. At the time of going to press it is not known when it will be rescheduled.

**Held annually, dates to be confirmed**

### The Paucartambo Festival

Paucartambo is not actually in Cuzco itself, but about 110km away – in the Andes this means around four hours bus ride along roads ranging from the uncomfortable to the downright inhospitable and dangerous. The annual celebration of the Virgin of Carmen makes the trip worthwhile, as dancers playing the roles of various stock characters from history and accompanying musicians mingle with the crowds over four days. People come from all over the region and yet it retains its atmosphere and traditions. At night, small but energetic brass bands emerge to keep the party going. Not to be missed!

**Held annually on July 15-18**



The Paucartambo Festival – an annual celebration including traditional music and costume



The June procession of the saints, accompanied by musicians

## FOLKLORE AND TRADITIONAL MUSIC & DANCE

### Centro Qosqo de Arte Nativo

Folklore is celebrated nightly at this centre, established in 1924 to promote native art, as performers in traditional costume present the region's dances. The show has been running for over 25 years and until his recent death featured the virtuoso *charango* player Julio Benavente Diaz, who recorded an international release for Ocora. The performance is complemented by a museum showing Cuzco's regional traditional costumes. **Cuzco Centre for Native Art, Avenida el Sol 604**

**Inti Raymi** also puts on folk dances every evening.

**Calle Saphy 605**

## LIVE MUSIC AND NIGHTCLUBS

### Mama Africa

Opened in 1995 intending to shake up the Cuzco music scene. It's the one club that everyone who goes out in the city centre will visit sooner or later. Credit must go to the atmosphere and the music, a good mix of pop, Latin, rock and reggae.

**Portal de Harinas, 191. +51 84 246 544, www.mamaafricaclub.com**

### Ukuku's

Known as the place for live music, with a band playing every night after 10.30pm. The music ranges from Andean rock to Afro-Peruvian with an after concert club.

**Plateros, 316. +51 84 242 951**

### Kamikaze

Claims on its flyers to have been '*bringing nutters together for two decades*.' Regular live bands and frequented more by Peruvians than foreigners.

**Plaza Regocijo, 274. +51 84 233 865**

### Muki's

Next to Cuzco's oldest convent, but it doesn't let this stop it from being one of the more lively discos. Named after a mythical dwarf who haunts the mines of Peru, the cavern-like décor is complete with kitsch stalactites. The music is mostly pop and Latin with occasional live bands.

**Santa Catalina Angosta, 114. +51 84 253 498, www.CuscoPeru.com/elmuki**

### Garabato

One of the more versatile venues in Cuzco, serving food, showing movies nightly and boasting a lively dance floor and relaxed lounge. Live groups on stage at weekends.

**Espaderos, 135. +51 84 257 740**

### Caos

The most modern sound system and lighting of any venue in Cuzco. What it lacks in traditional charm, it makes up for in its contemporary feel and space. There are sometimes live concerts by rock groups from Peru or neighbouring countries.

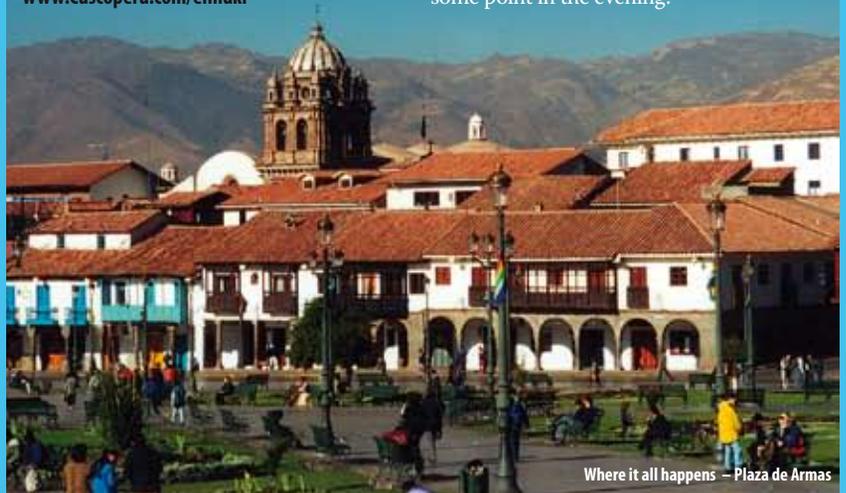
**Avenida el Sol, 948. +51 84 253 564, www.caosdiversion.com**

### Teatro Municipal

Here they host the concerts that rate as big cultural events. Keep an eye on the local paper or ask for the programme.

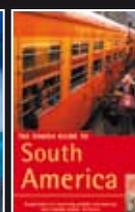
**Mesón de la Estrella, 149**

Groups playing more traditional Andean music (the 'panpipes and poncho' bands) are unlikely to be found in any of these venues; rather their shows take place in the city's restaurants, over dinner. Some of the better performances currently take place in **Kachwa** (Calle Tecsecocha, 415), **Pacha Papa** (Plaza San Blas, 120), **Tunupa** (Portal Confiturias, 233) or **El Truco** (Plaza Regocijo, 261), but the chances are that in any restaurant around the Plaza de Armas a group will perform a couple of songs at some point in the evening.



Where it all happens – Plaza de Armas

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