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## Fact Sheet

### “The Great Inka Road” Exhibition

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian’s first major bilingual exhibition “**The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire**” opens June 26, 2015 and continues through June 1, 2018.

Construction of the Inka Road stands as one of the monumental engineering achievements in history. A network more than 24,000 miles long, crossing mountains and tropical lowlands, rivers and deserts, the Inka Road linked Cusco, the administrative capital and spiritual center of the Inka world, to the farthest reaches of its empire. The road continues to serve contemporary Andean communities across Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as a sacred space and symbol of cultural continuity. In 2014, the United Nations cultural agency, UNESCO, recognized the Inka Road as a World Heritage site.

“The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire” explores the foundations of the Inka Road in earlier Andean cultures, technologies that made building the road possible, the cosmology and political organization of the Inka world, and the legacy of the Inka Empire during the colonial period and in the present day. The co-curators are Ramiro Matos (Quechua) and José Barreiro (Taíno).

#### Exhibition Facts

- 8,540-square-foot exhibition in third level gallery
- Visitor will experience the history of the Inka Empire in 11 sections:
  - Introduction to the Inka Road
  - Ancestors of the Inka: The Beginnings of the Road
  - Creation Stories and the First Inka Roads: Sacred Roads

- Cusco: The Heart of the Inka Universe
  - Expansion into the Suyus: A Road for Integration
  - Chinchaysuyu: Suspension Bridges
  - Antisuyu: Amazon Rainforest
  - Collasuyu: Llamas and Alpacas
  - Contisuyu: Ocean Resources
  - Invasion: The Colonial Road
  - The Tawantinsuyu Today: The Road Links Us to the Past
- More than 140 objects from the museum’s collection and one loan, including a ceramic Chavín stirrup spout bottle (the oldest item in the exhibition, ca. 800–100 B.C.), impressive gold ornaments, necklaces made from the *Spondylus* shells from the Lambayeque region, stone carvings, silver pendants and figurines and various textiles including tunics made from camelid hair, illustrate important concepts in Andean cosmology, the principles of duality, reciprocity and integration of infrastructure and spirituality.
  - Three museum-produced original videos:
    - **Inka Road Flyover** – This map animation will show a section of the Inka Road system and visitors will be able to grasp the magnitude, complexity and enormous scale of the road system.
    - **Purification Ritual** – Demetrio Roca Wallparimachi demonstrates the cultural continuity via his story of how he washed himself before entering the city of Cusco as a boy.
    - **The Living Road** – Video shows the continuity of Inka culture and traditions today, how the road binds communities together and the traditions of the ancestors live on.
  - Four electronic interactive media stations:
    - **Inka Origin Story** – Flip book interactive will allow visitors to explore the Inka Origin story through animated cells and graphics will bring the story to life.
    - **The Cusco Experience** - This multi-user dynamic experience of the Inka city of Cusco before the arrival of the Spanish will allow visitors to unlock deeper content. 3-D renderings of the city and interiors at the time of the Inka will be a central part of the user experience along with video elements presenting the city today with interpretation, images from the city today and 3-D scans of existing architecture.

- **Chaski Manager Game** – The player manages the Chaski relay runners, deciding how to deploy resources to meet the competing needs of communicating information, supply distribution and road maintenance.
- **Engineering an Empire** - This interactive experience will present detailed visual information about the engineering innovations of the Inka and serves as an advance organizer for the adjacent suyu galleries.

## **Publication**

The exhibition is accompanied by a hard cover book, also titled *The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire*, which is edited by Ramiro Matos and José Barreiro and features 23 essays on four main themes: the Andean landscape and the city of Cusco; Inka engineering; the four regional divisions of the empire and the ways the Inka road system linked them; and the “living” road from the colonial era to the present. Beautifully designed and featuring more than 175 full-color photographs and maps, the book offers fascinating view of an enduring symbol of Andean peoples’ strength and adaptability. For more information about the book, or to purchase a copy (\$40.00), visit [www.nmaistore.si.edu](http://www.nmaistore.si.edu) or call 800-242-NMAI (6624).

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