



The team on our hike of the Inca Trail in Peru in November 2014.

# Inspiration From the Inca Trail

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Published on September 8, 2017



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Recently, I revisited the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the first American Philosopher. His book [Self-Reliance and Other Essays](#) inspired me line after line.

Many people have heard of the Philosopher's Stone, the magical stone capable of turning base metals into gold. Alchemists call this transmutation. A Philosopher's Stone contradicts the purpose of Philosophy.

**"Philosophy is an attempt to reduce the flux of the world to arrive at unchanging truth." - *Source***

One of the core beliefs of Ralph Waldo Emerson was that people and nature are inherently good. In order to inspire you to experience nature and yourself as Ralph Waldo has inspired me, I have picked out a pivotal moment from my 4 day hike on the Inca Trail. The stairs in this section are considered the "5th scariest stairs in the World."



View of the fifth "scariest stairs in the world" from the top (November 2014)

***"What lies behind us and what lies  
before us are tiny matters compared to  
what lies within us"— Ralph Waldo  
Emerson***

### **Inca Stairs, Peru**

At Machu Picchu, 600 feet or so of steep, slippery, cloud-covered granite rocks the Inca carved more than 500 years ago into the side of Huayna Picchu (the peak in everyone's photos) lead to the rarely visited Moon Temple—and a spectacular view of the ruins.

The park limits the climb to the first 400 visitors each morning and has added some metallic chains in the worst parts, so hold on because on one side is a sheer, damp wall and on the other, a straight drop into the Urubamba river. [Source](#)



*View of Machu Picchu from the Moon Temple on the Inca Trail in Peru  
(November 2014)*

**"Though we travel the world over to find  
the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or  
we find it not." – *Ralph Waldo Emerson***

**Climbing the stairs was worth the effort!**

If you want to know more about the science behind cosmic "transmutation" whereby base metals are transformed into gold, check out this fantastic article: [The Mysterious Origin of Our Galaxy's Gold](#).

If you are into scary stairs: [Worlds Scariest Stairs](#)

If you are considering a career change, WikiHow provides steps on how to "[Become-a-Philosopher](#)"

Get inspired again at [My Website and Blog](#)

Read my other LinkedIn article: [Curiosity, Imagination, and Sales](#)



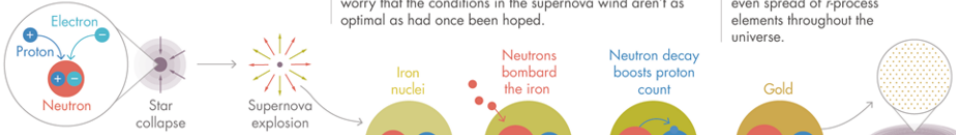
To make a heavy element such as gold, you need three things: seed nuclei such as iron, a flood of neutrons, and an explosion that scatters the material out into the cosmos. Where might this happen? Astrophysicists have two main ideas.

Supernova Explosions

1 When a massive star can no longer create enough energy, its atmosphere collapses. Protons and electrons combine to form neutrons. The gravitational rebound blows the material outward.

2 Seed nuclei such as iron, with its 26 protons, rapidly catch neutrons in the "r process." Some of these neutrons decay into protons and electrons (which escape), increasing the atomic number to form new elements. Yet some scientists worry that the conditions in the supernova wind aren't as optimal as had once been hoped.

3 These events produce a moon's worth of gold and occur about once per century per galaxy, leading to a relatively even spread of r-process elements throughout the universe.



Orbiting Neutron Stars

1 As two neutron stars collide, neutrons and seed nuclei splash out. Everything is heated to billions of degrees.



2 Hot neutrons combine with the seed nuclei via the r process, forming heavy elements in about a second.

3 A neutron star collision produces thousands of times more gold than a supernova, but occurs far less often, which should lead to a universe clumpy with heavy elements.



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