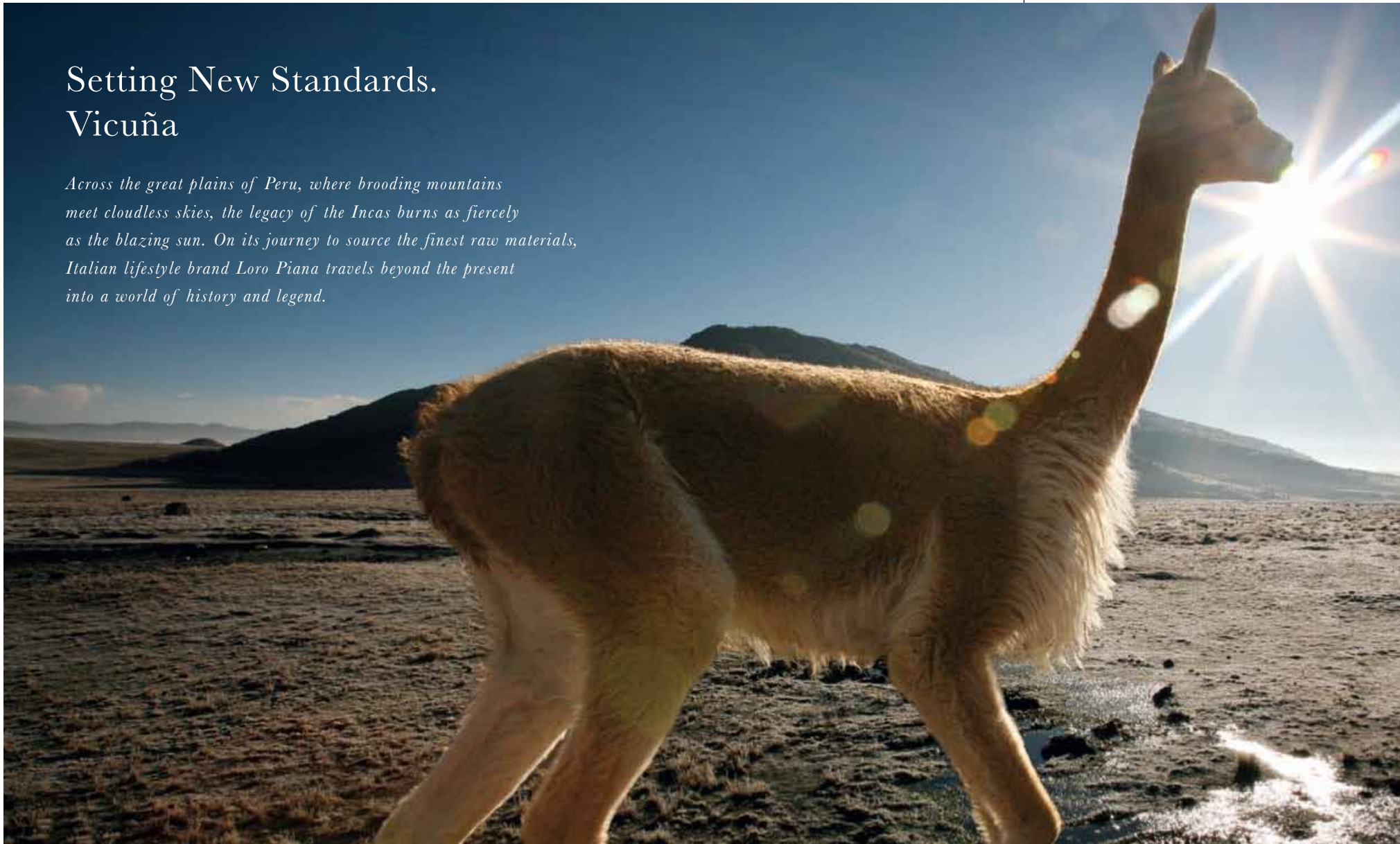


Setting New Standards. Vicuña

Across the great plains of Peru, where brooding mountains meet cloudless skies, the legacy of the Incas burns as fiercely as the blazing sun. On its journey to source the finest raw materials, Italian lifestyle brand Loro Piana travels beyond the present into a world of history and legend.



Precious Vicuña roam in the Franco Loro Piana Natural Reserve



A Peruvian Vicuña

Beloved by discerning customers around the world, Loro Piana is the creator of a comprehensive range of lifestyle goods. Manufactured using the finest raw materials and drawing on a classical Italian heritage, products are crafted to perfection in Italy. With more than 130 stores spanning the globe from the fashion capitals Paris, London and New York to energetic emerging cities like Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong, Loro Piana combines six generations of textile expertise and family tradition with its unique philosophy of striving for excellence.

Nowhere is this dedication to uncompromising quality clearer than the distances Loro Piana travels to source nature's rarest fibres.

The journey for Vicuña begins four thousand metres above sea level, in one of the most starkly beautiful settings on earth: the great plains of Peru. Majestic, snow-capped peaks watch over an almost lunar landscape, blistered by the sun's rays by day and cloaked in freezing shadow

by night, while the air itself is rare and fleeting, making every breath a small victory.

Yet this harsh grey terrain is also home to a treasure more prized than the Inca's fabled gold. For thousands of years, the Queen of the Andes - the shy and graceful Vicuña - has wandered the plains untamed by man's hand, a thick, lustrous fleece its only protection against the harsh extremes of Peru's scorching summers and bitter winters.

Every two years, as the fierce Andean sun fades into temperate fall, a mile-long chain of colourfully-clad campesinos gather to herd throngs of Vicuña down the hillside. Amid the clouds of swirling dust and thundering hooves, the sharp whistles and cries of the campesinos guide the animals into pens built according to thousand-year-old traditions, where they are gently shorn and released in a burst of joyful celebration.

This time-honoured ceremony, the chakku, dates back to the Incan era, yet it is still the way that Loro Piana collects its precious Vicuña fibre today. The journey to preserve a legendary practice and the animals at its core has not been an easy one, interspersed with bloody bouts of destruction that brought the Vicuña close to extinction.

Revered as a mystical creature by the Inca and protected from hunting, the Vicuña's precious golden coat was once strictly reserved for royalty. But this tranquil existence was shattered with the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, whose indiscriminate plunder heralded decades of poaching, bringing the Vicuña close to extinction. As numbers dwindled, international trade in Vicuña products was banned, while a 6,500-hectare reserve in Pampa Galeras was created to safeguard the remaining few.

Loro Piana's own story has been entwined with the Vicuña's ever since the 1950s, when Franco

Loro Piana first began his quest for the finest raw materials. During the international ban, Loro Piana never lost sight of its dream to share this 'fibre of the gods' with the rest of the world, and by sharing and supporting research on conservation with the local Andean communities over the years, the company won the respect and trust of the Peruvian government. In 1994, Loro Piana was awarded the exclusive rights to trade in Vicuña fibre under a ground-breaking agreement.

Since then, Loro Piana has continued to champion cruelty-free, time-honoured shearing methods, which protect the Vicuña, offer the local campesinos an honest livelihood, and most importantly bring together entire villages in a celebration of nature's gifts. In 2008, the Dr Franco Loro Piana Reserve was created, testament to thirty years of the company's journey to safeguard one of the world's finest raw materials.

Today, Vicuña fibre is the most precious of all Loro Piana's materials, boasting an extraordinary balance of lightness, warmth and incomparable softness. With each animal yielding a mere 250 grams of golden down every two years, its rarity is unparalleled: six ultra-fine fleeces are needed to craft a single sweater, thirty for a coat. Once spun and woven, the material is taken to Italy, where it is transformed into lifestyle goods and bespoke items in a true test of Loro Piana's passion and skill.

Through special dyes that maintain the fibre's incredible softness and the pioneering Storm System® treatment to render the fabric wind and waterproof, Loro Piana has harnessed Vicuña's extraordinary potential in its diverse range of lifestyle goods. From sumptuous knitwear to outerwear, accessories, robes and blankets as well as an exclusive bespoke service, Loro Piana's Vicuña caters to the most discerning consumers the world over looking for unequalled quality.



Chakku, a time-honored ceremony to gather Vicuña fibre



Loro Piana Icer Coat, knitwear and scarf made from Vicuña fibre



The fine Vicuña fibre being meticulously examined