

## LIFE

## How to Visit Machu Picchu Solo & Last Minute Without A Tour Group

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Flipping through my history book in elementary school, I'd stop on the page with photos of Machu Picchu thinking, "I HAVE to see this with my own eyes one day," without even knowing exactly where "this" was. Peru's Machu Picchu stands as one of the most renowned New Wonders of the World—an architectural marvel and cultural enigma. A true bucket-list destination (though I cringe at that term... it's also pretty darn fitting).

Embodying my preferred travel style, I opted to get to Machu Picchu sans tour group. It's not that I can't appreciate the guidance of a tour operator — like I did on this homestay in Peru — I just love the accomplished feeling of DIY travel experiences. And I mean... the Incas *literally* sought refuge from Spanish invaders at Machu Picchu because they knew they wouldn't be found. Meaning it's not an easy destination to get to. But for solo travelers like myself, empowering ourselves through self-planning is half the joy of travel.

Below is your guide for organizing an independent expedition to Machu Picchu — from securing your park, train, and bus tickets (trust me, it's not as simple as

it seems) to our top accommodation suggestion, all tailored with Uproxx flair. My advice? Ditch the rushed day trip from Cusco and spend a night in charming Machu Picchu Pueblo — it's totally worth it!

## Machu Picchu Admission Ticket



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I snagged my Machu Picchu ticket online just 48 hours before my visit – risky business during peak season (June, July, and August), but this was in January, so tickets were plentiful both online and in person. Even on the day before!

Since earlier this year, tensions over Machu Picchu ticketing prompted the



government to cancel their outsourcing agreement (a win for the people), you can still purchase tickets online through the [official website](#) or trusted resale websites. You can also purchase Machu Picchu tickets in person at the Ministry of Culture office in Cusco or Aguas Calientes. There, tickets are \$41 – about \$25 cheaper than online.

## Train to Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes)

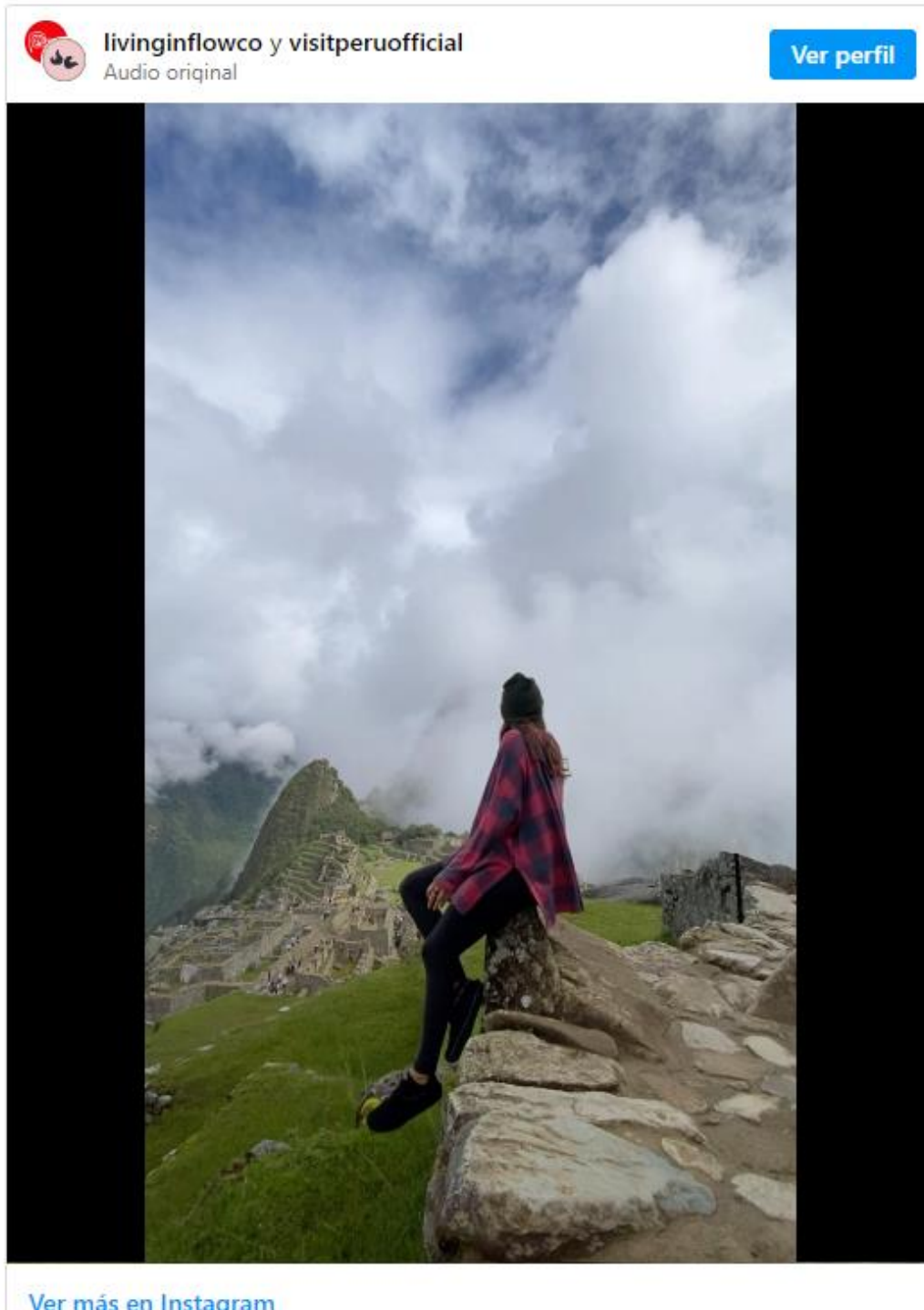


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Once you have your entrance ticket, you'll need to get your train ticket. (The only other way to reach the site is by trekking, which is not covered in this guide.) If you buy your train ticket online, get yourself to the in-person ticket office 30 minutes before train departure time. Validating your digital ticket in person is a mandatory step to board the train!

Have your passport and receipt in hand and get ready to weave through some *major* crowds of people. I encountered some unexpected delays after leaving a rural homestay three hours away and managed to make with just minutes to spare. It was sort of a miracle I arrived on time to validate my ticket... Picture me sprinting down a dirt hill with a giant tote bag to catch a tuk-tuk to the main road.

My train ride to Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes) from Ollantaytambo was about \$52 on the [PeruRail Expedition](#) line, but prices vary depending on train type, time, and date. If you want a luxury train, check out [Inca Rail](#) and [A Belmont Train](#).



Remember that while trains depart from Cusco directly to Aguas Calientes in the high season, you'll need to purchase a "bimodal" ticket the rest of the year. The bimodal ticket includes both train and bus transportation to and from Cusco. Interestingly, this ticket results in less time on the train and more on a bus.



# Machu Picchu Bus



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The final step to reach Machu Picchu is the bus from Machu Picchu Pueblo (formerly Aguas Calientes), to the citadel. You can grab your bus ticket [online](#) or at the Consettur ticketing office in Cusco or Aguas Calientes. The ride takes just 15-20 minutes and costs \$24 round trip.

Aside from its charm and history, I loved staying the night in Aguas Calientes because it allowed me ample time to get my ducks in a row. As a destination that sees over one million tourists a year, the bus can get booked up with rides for the following day pretty quickly!

## Extra Machu Picchu Tips

Consider visiting Machu Picchu during the shoulder or off-season for a more relaxed experience. Not only does it help support local economies, but you'll



be able to score last-minute tickets, encounter fewer crowds, and feel good about easing over-tourism at this UNESCO site. Just don't forget to brush up on some history before you go! If you want a guided tour, certified guides are readily available at the gates just before you enter the Machu Picchu citadel.

Optimal route advice from the ticket booth staff led me to "Walking Circuit 2." I suggest buying tickets for all circuits and following the numbered signage for route two. As for the best time of day to visit Machu Picchu – the morning clouds usually clear up around 10-11 am.

Lastly, I discovered that there's definitely a preferred side of the train with better views. Fortunately, I lucked out with that side both times! While specific seats can't be requested online, you can inquire in person for seats on the river side, identified by the second set of four numbers (e.g., seats 5-8, 13-16). I didn't try this, but it's worth a shot!

## **Where to Stay: Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes)**



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## Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel



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Machu Picchu isn't a spot we stumble upon every day. It's one of those once-in-a-lifetime destinations. Given the effort and epicness of getting there, why not immerse yourself in style? That's what went through my head during my stay at Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel's Suites Inkaterra. Relaxing in my secluded jacuzzi below the misty peaks of the Andes, I couldn't help but melt into the grandeur of this solo adventure.

A tear may or may not have been shed.



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58 Me gusta



Agrega un comentario...



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Farm to table meals at Inkaterra are served in the elegant dining room overlooking the Vilcanota River – with a hearty breakfast buffet and served dinner included in your stay. If you have time, take one of the included excursions like the nighttime Incan constellation walk. And don't miss a deep tissue massage at Onno Spa after a day of hiking around Machu Picchu.

Some of their year-long deals (full list [here](#)):

- Book two nights, get the third night free
- Get 20% off your stay when you stay minimum two nights

*Nightly rates start at \$397, [book here](#).*



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