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# Machu Picchu Travel Guide: Discover The Legendary Inca City Above The Clouds



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Discover **THE NEW WORLD WONDER**, **Machu Picchu**, an ancient citadel set among the clouds and built by the Inca Emperor Pachacutec in the 15th century, is the ultimate bucket-list destination for travelers on their **luxury trip to**

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whole, with around one million people making the journey here every year. In 2007, Machu Picchu earned a spot among the New Seven Wonders of the World.

## Best Time to Visit



Machu Picchu, one of the **Seven Wonders of the Modern World**, the way it appears in classic photographs – with clear blue skies as a backdrop to sun-lit stone ruins – is best experienced between May and October. These months align with the region’s dry season and are the most popular time to visit Machu Picchu.

Peak season and the busiest time to visit Machu Picchu are June, July, and August. These months align with the heart of the region’s dry season, the most sunshine, and summertime in the northern hemisphere. From June to August, large crowds can make it a little hard to move around sectors of the Historic Sanctuary and long lines at the main entrance are common.

## Things to See and Do

### Hike Huayna Picchu



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Overlooking the entire site is the towering peak of Huayna Picchu which lies on a scenic trail that takes you up a jungle-covered mountainside. Take a few hours out of your day and hike up to the top to find extraordinary views of Machu Picchu and the surrounding jungle – testament to the ingenuity and industry of the Inca. The steepest staircases are at the end of the hike, near the summit. In spite of its difficulty, this trail is in high demand and it's limited to only 400 hikers per day, so you often have to book several months in advance to get a spot to do this epic journey.

### **Hike The Inca Trail To Get To Machu Picchu**



The journey to the citadel of Machu Picchu has often been described by nature lovers and history enthusiasts as the best part of visiting the region. The Classic Inca Trail route is a 3 to 5 day hike, and on average, it takes 4 days and 3 nights to reach Machu Picchu. There is also a shorter route to Machu Picchu, which starts at Kilometer 104 on the Trail and only takes one day to hike to the citadel. On the route, visitors can experience various attractions such as Ollantaytambo, a town and archaeological site left behind by the Incas, or Sayacamara, maze-like ancient paths on an

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The Temple of the Condor is one of the most striking sights at Machu Picchu. Two huge boulders on the hillside have been carefully carved into the wings of a condor, whose torso and head are carved into the floor. The Temple of the Sun was a sacred precinct built by the Incas to pay tribute and give offerings to the sun. Standing just outside the Temple of the Sun, we can see the extent of Machu Picchu's farming terraces. Though the Inca were expert agriculturists, the citadel suffered from a small supply of food and fresh water, which had to be imported at great effort.

### **Soak in the thermal hot springs in Aguas Calientes**

After a long day of adventures, hiking and exploring the ancient citadel of Machu Picchu, take some time to soak in the relaxing thermal hot springs in Aguas Calientes, the surrounding town of Machu Picchu named after these incredible hot springs. The lush, green mountains surrounding them are the perfect scenery to relax in. The hot springs have three large pools and three other small pools. Temperatures vary from 100 degrees Fahrenheit to 114 degrees Fahrenheit. The establishment also has changing rooms, showers, clothes storage, and bar service for a full spa session post-hike.

### **Best Hotels in Machu Picchu**

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**Belmond Sanctuary Lodge:** Boasting the enviable status of being the only accommodation to actually be set at the entrance of Machu Picchu, the Belmond Sanctuary Lodge is a very convenient and suitably luxurious place to stay. Guests have the opportunity to enjoy a leisurely breakfast on the terrace while gazing at the orchid gardens before completing a short stroll into the national park. There are 32 guestrooms to choose from, most of which come with their own patio areas where guests can dine in style. The onsite Tampu restaurant offers excellent Peruvian cuisine such as stuffed alpaca and fish ceviches, while guests who are especially hungry after a day of exploring the ruins can indulge in the Tinkuy buffet restaurant. A range of activities are available on the site from yoga and al fresco massages to Pisco tasting sessions in the bar.

**Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel:** Set on the bank of a gently flowing river in the charming town of Aguas Calientes, the Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel offers rustic-chic guestrooms as well as excellent in-house guides. The hotel is set in a densely wooded reserve at the foot of the misty mountains and serves as a real haven for nature lovers. The hotel complex consists of low-slung colonial-style buildings, which are connected by a series of rough cobbled footpaths, while the interiors are elegant with subdued lighting and décor and splashes of color provided by Andean and tartan alpaca blankets. True luxury lovers will want to make sure that they book one of the huge villa rooms, which come complete with wood-burning fires, large dining areas and cozy living spaces. The onsite Café Inkaterra has a roof thatches with palm leaves and provides guests with views over the railway line as they enjoy dishes such as causas, lomo saltado and alpaca meat.

**Sumaq Machu Picchu Hotel:** This elegant establishment has a reputation for being one of the finest hotels in the whole of Peru due to its sumptuous guestrooms and gourmet dining opportunities. The hotel can be found on

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**El MaPi By Inkaterra:** El MaPi is one of Aguas Calientes' newest and trendiest hotels, a fresh and modern mid-range refuge with great food and a trendy bar. Central but surprisingly serene, with décor that is minimalistic but functional. There are dozens of bars and restaurants on the hotel's doorstep to suit all budgets and the train station is less than a five minute walk away. Amazonian vines, eucalyptus beams and charcoal painted halls effortlessly merge the hotel's cool interiors with its green and humid exteriors. There are moss covered walls and drooping green leaves throughout – and the sleek, white-washed lobby has a particularly fresh and sophisticated ambience. The hotel has 122 standard double rooms that have white washed walls, pine doors and mostly turquoise furnishings.

### Machu Picchu's Best Restaurants



Though eating at the site of Machu Picchu is prohibited, the surrounding area has a diverse range of gastronomy due to the Incas' ability to farm and harvest even in the harshest conditions. They developed resilient breeds of crops such as potatoes, quinoa, and corn. They built cisterns and irrigation canals that snaked and angled down and around the mountains. And they cut terraces into the hillsides, progressively steeper, from the valleys up the slopes. Products like potatoes, yucas, sweet potato, oca, olluco, and many others complete the everyday diet of the ancient inhabitants and play a



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the freshest ingredients, while also helping in the development of various villages. The result is a menu with delicious choices using a variety of locally sourced products that have been grown and harvested with the peoples' love of their land.

**Indio Feliz:** The restaurant features a pirate theme; upon entering, you will want to take a moment to explore the different rooms. Entirely painted by hand, you will find many unique portraits, paintings, and designs that cover every possible inch of space on the walls and ceiling. The rooms are comfortable, some even feature a fireplace for those chilly Machu Picchu evenings. A French-Peruvian fusion, Indio Feliz serves a variety of creative Peruvian dishes. Some of the most notable dishes here are the french onion soup which comes with a bowl of Andean cheese on the side, the beef brochettes and the orange pie for dessert.

**Chullpi Machupicchu:** Chullpi Machupicchu is a distinguished Peruvian haute cuisine restaurant, celebrated for its innovative menu that emphasizes local ingredients and culinary creativity. The ambiance is refined yet inviting, making it the perfect spot to savor an exquisite meal after a day of exploring the historic site. The chefs at Chullpi masterfully blend traditional Peruvian flavors with modern techniques, resulting in a dining experience that is both unique and unforgettable. The restaurant's commitment to quality is evident in every dish, from the starters to the main courses. However, what truly sets Chullpi apart is its array of heavenly desserts. Whether it's a twist on a classic Peruvian sweet or an entirely new creation, the desserts at Chullpi are not to be missed and provide the perfect conclusion to a memorable meal.

**Café Inkaterra:** Nestled within the lush landscapes of Aguas Calientes, Café Inkaterra offers a serene escape where guests can enjoy a delightful array of dishes in a picturesque setting. The café is part of the Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, known for its rustic charm and commitment to sustainability. The menu at Café Inkaterra features a blend of traditional Peruvian flavors and contemporary culinary techniques, ensuring that

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**Chullos Craft Beer & Homemade Food:** Founded in 2016, Chullos Craft Beer & Homemade Food has quickly become a beloved spot in the heart of Machu Picchu Pueblo. This cozy restaurant and bar offers a warm, welcoming atmosphere where visitors can enjoy creative and innovative cuisine. The menu features a range of homemade dishes, each crafted with care and attention to detail. One of the highlights is the Achorada burger, which pairs perfectly with one of Chullos' own craft beers brewed on-site. Whether you're looking for a hearty meal or a refreshing drink, Chullos provides the perfect setting to relax and unwind, making it a must-visit for anyone exploring the area.

**Inka Happiness:** Inka Happiness is a charming establishment run by a local family dedicated to preserving the cultural and culinary traditions of Peru. This cozy spot offers a heavenly selection of food and drinks, all served with a side of good music and friendly service. The menu features a variety of traditional Peruvian dishes, each prepared with love and a commitment to quality. The warm, inviting atmosphere makes it an ideal place to relax and enjoy a meal, whether you're a solo traveler or part of a group. Inka Happiness is more than just a restaurant; it's a celebration of Peruvian heritage and hospitality.

**El Bar – El Mapi Hotel:** Located within the El Mapi Hotel, El Bar offers a stylish and sophisticated setting for guests to



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**La Boulangerie de Paris:** La Boulangerie de Paris brings a touch of French charm to the heart of Aguas Calientes. This delightful bakery and café pay tribute to the best of French baking and pastry-making traditions. The ambiance is reminiscent of a traditional Parisian bistro, complete with hand-painted décor and a warm, inviting atmosphere. Guests can indulge in a wide range of freshly baked goods, from croissants and baguettes to tarts and éclairs. The café also offers a selection of freshly brewed coffees and teas, making it the perfect spot for a leisurely breakfast or an afternoon treat.

**Coffee Trotter:** Coffee Trotter is a haven for coffee lovers and food enthusiasts alike. Known for its high-quality coffee and fresh-squeezed juices, this café offers an exceptional culinary experience in Aguas Calientes. The menu features a variety of exquisite dishes, including delicious desserts, cakes, and hearty breakfasts. The cozy, welcoming atmosphere makes it an ideal place to start your day with a flavorful cup of coffee or to unwind in the afternoon with a sweet treat. Whether you're looking for a quick snack or a leisurely meal, Coffee Trotter promises a delightful experience.

## Where to Buy Souvenirs



**Mercado de Artesanías:** The Mercado de Artesanías in Aguas Calientes is a classic market that offers a vibrant shopping experience. Here, visitors can find a wide array

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piece of Machu Picchu to take with you.

**Arte Joyeria Rumiwasi:** Arte Joyeria Rumiwasi is a small artisanal shop that specializes in handcrafted silver jewelry and natural stones. Each piece of jewelry is meticulously crafted, reflecting the skill and artistry of local artisans. The shop offers a variety of unique designs, from traditional Incan motifs to contemporary styles. Whether you're looking for a special piece of jewelry to commemorate your visit to Machu Picchu or a beautiful gift for a loved one, Arte Joyeria Rumiwasi provides a wonderful selection of high-quality, locally made items.

### Must-Visit Neighborhoods



**Aguas Calientes:** Aguas Calientes, also known as Machu Picchu Pueblo, is the primary gateway to the ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu. Nestled in a lush valley and surrounded by towering mountains, this charming town offers a range of accommodations, dining options, and activities for visitors. The town is renowned for its thermal hot springs, where travelers can relax and soak in the warm, mineral-rich waters after a day of exploring. Aguas Calientes is also home to a variety of shops and markets, where you can find local crafts and souvenirs. With its unique blend of natural beauty and cultural richness, Aguas Calientes is a must-visit destination for anyone traveling to Machu Picchu.

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**By Train:** The most popular and scenic way to reach Machu Picchu is by train from Cusco or the Sacred Valley. PeruRail and IncaRail operate regular services to Aguas Calientes, the town closest to Machu Picchu.

**By Bus:** From Aguas Calientes, buses run frequently to the entrance of Machu Picchu. The bus ride takes about 30 minutes.

**By Foot:** For the adventurous, the Inca Trail and other trekking routes offer a challenging but rewarding journey to Machu Picchu, providing a unique perspective on the landscape and historical sites along the way.

Machu Picchu stands as a testament to the ingenuity and craftsmanship of the Inca civilization. From its awe-inspiring ruins set against the backdrop of the Andean mountains to the rich cultural experiences in the surrounding area, a visit to **Machu Picchu** is a journey through history, nature, and mystery. Embrace the adventure, marvel at the ancient engineering, and create unforgettable memories in this legendary city above the clouds. Pack your bags and let Machu Picchu's wonder captivate you on your next adventure!