

(Travel)

## Inkaterra Is The Eco-Stay Preserving Andean Culture In The Sacred Valley



by **ERYN GORDON**  
23 hours ago

A special getaway.



**A**lthough abandoned for about six hundred years, Machu Picchu is teeming with life. Biodiversity bursts with orchids, ember-orange bird-of-paradise flowers, plus a few thousand daily visitors making the trek up the epic mountain. Before the citadel's rediscovery over a hundred years ago, it had spent centuries in silence, save for the occasional visit paid by looters or locals. But in recent years, Machu Picchu has been experiencing a little too much activity. Due to issues with over-tourism, UNESCO added the city to the list of World Heritage Sites in Danger in 2016. Now, more than eight years later, experiencing the ancient ruins wouldn't be possible without preservation — from the archaeologists who excavate new layers each year to its recertification as the only carbon-neutral World Wonder. A sizable percentage of the annual 1.5 million visitors pass through Aguas Calientes, the town at the base of the ruins. This is where you will find eco-lodge Inkaterra leading the area's most ambitious preservation efforts.

Indeed, the ambitious property demonstrates that there is much more to the organization than simply accommodating tourists on their route through Peru's Sacred Valley. Machu Picchu's carbon neutral certification was made possible by Inkaterra, from building a biodiesel plant to setting up waste separation points with local businesses. Ahead, the lowdown on the innovative hotel making sustainability a top priority.





FEBRUARY/Moment/Getty Images

## The Gateway To Machu Picchu

Aguas Calientes is a town that reminds its visitors that they are never too far from the wild. It sits 2,000 feet below Machu Picchu and is wedged between the mountains of the Sacred Valley. Unlike its ancient upstairs neighbor, Aguas Calientes is surprisingly quite new. It seems that the town was built in preparation for the 10,000 weekly tourists it now welcomes. The buildings display flashing advertisements announcing souvenirs, guided tours to the ruins, and lomo saltado, a popular Peruvian dish.

Still, you get the sense that there is something undoubtedly bygone beyond the flashing signs and gift shops. This municipality is divided into sections by the mountainous tributaries leading to the Vilcanota River. Traveling from restaurant to hotel requires multiple journeys over pedestrian bridges that are suspended over rushing waters.

This area of Peru is known as the Cloud Forest, a moniker describing the way treetops are often shrouded beneath a layer of mist. The setting is atmospheric, almost as if you're walking through the passages of a dream.

## Inkaterra: Experiential Accommodation

A stay at Inkaterra starts by crossing a bridge suspended above one of the aforementioned cascading mountain streams. As clean, paved cement sidewalks of Aguas Calientes end, you see the terracotta roofs of what appears to be a hidden village ahead. The hotel is situated on the outskirts of town, at the edge of the jungle. Stone-paved footpaths lined with a thick cover of ferns connect the tucked-away bungalows.

While Aguas Calientes is a more modern stopping point for tourists, Inkaterra is an escape into nature. From the construction of the hotel to the daily operations, a simple goal remains: to minimize environmental impact. Yes, this statement is often claimed on company missions, though rarely performed beyond promise. However, preservation is its ethos as the world's first climate-positive hotel brand recognized by the United Nations.



[@inkaterrahotels](#)

## A Bridge Between Nature & Civilization

Although Inkaterra is part of Aguas Calientes, you feel like you've entered another time period once you cross the footbridge. This was not by mistake. The winner of the 2023 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Award has a staunch position alongside environmental preservation. A representative of the hotel stated, "The brand operates research and conservation programs that focus on flora, fauna, and sustainable agriculture, especially in the Peruvian Amazon and Andean regions."

There are 3.12 miles of trails that explore the hotel's biodiverse scenery, including 372 native orchid species and a tea plantation. Coordinate a nature trek with a guide who will point out tanagers, a native bird species with azure feathers; budding flowers; and citronella plants for those pesky mosquitos.

In 2019, a new species of native orchid (*Epidendrum Guislainae Hågsater*, eponymous to the hotel's designer) was found on the property.

## Connecting Past & Present

Although we don't know the exact purpose of Machu Picchu, scholars believe it served Inca nobility as a place of worship. At this height, where the mountain peaks are nearly pyramidal and the cloud cover low, a beam of sunlight certainly does feel holy. If not for the cellphone in your pocket, you might hear the wind whistle and mistake it for a flute player.

Inkaterra pays homage to its environment with a design not unlike an Andean village. The hotel consists of 85 cottages ("casitas") that were constructed from stone, adobe, stucco, eucalyptus beams, and artist handiwork. Denise Guislain is responsible for the rustic vision of Inkaterra. The interior designer oversaw the construction of four hotel locations but knew this particular spot would represent the ancient Inca culture to a high volume of visitors passing through the valley.



In the main building, the walls are decorated with pre-Columbian artwork, including pottery and q'aytu awaspa, a centuries-old Andean weaving technique. This space welcomes guests for a communal high tea before dinner service. After, you can choose to sit by the fire or pick out a leather-bound book to your liking in the reading room.

## ... And Sustainability & Comfort

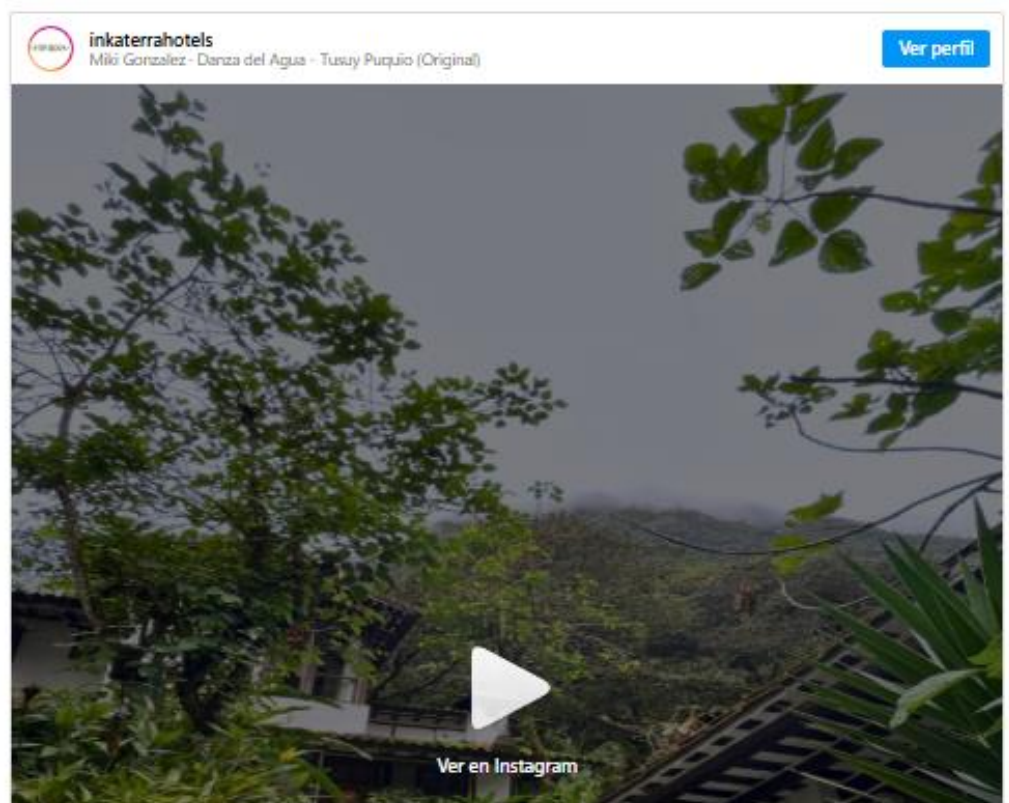
Inkaterra sees its placement at the base of Machu Picchu as a unique responsibility. Not only must it serve a surplus of international visitors; it must respect Urumbamba Valley.

The affiliated nonprofit, Inkaterra Asociación leads preservation efforts by managing 30,000 acres of Amazonian forests, organic production, and the funding necessary for ongoing research.

“Inkaterra’s eco-stay philosophy is expressed through our continuous efforts to preserve biodiversity and local heritage,” says a representative of the hotel.

Luckily, travelers don’t need to exchange comfort during their stay at the eco-lodge. The water flowing from your hotel room tap comes from the natural springs of Urumbamba Valley, and the toiletries in the bathroom are infused with the same tea leaves grown on the property. After a day of exploring the ancient ruins of Machu Picchu, I was invited back to my casita by the temptation of an alpaca wool throw and the warmth of a crackling fireplace.

As part of most hotel packages, guests can enjoy a breakfast buffet towering with succulent fruits. For a made-to-order favorite, try the quinoa pancakes served with a side of Andean chocolate. Enjoy meals under the Amazonian palm-thatched roof of the main dining room, which looks out to the Vilcanota River.





[Ver más en Instagram](#)



178 Me gusta

Agrega un comentario...



## What To Do In Aguas Calientes

Inkaterra suggests visitors plan their trip to Machu Picchu outside of the rainy season. The best time to visit is between April and October, but September will offer you cooler weather and fewer crowds.

Aguas Calientes gets its name (literally “hot waters”) for the thermal baths near the town center. Days are spent exploring the Urumbamba River and all the unique hiking spots beyond the Inca trail. Head northwest along the Urumbamba to Los Jardines de Mandor, where you can extend your discovery of orchids and birds.

Check out Mercado Artesanal, a craft market near the central bridges of downtown. For nightlife, stay in town and check out El MaPi, Inkaterra’s sister hotel in Aguas Calientes. This location is more contemporary, a little less eco-centric. The bar has a liveliness that survives the late night hours.

---