



An opulent, cozy base to explore Peru's highlands

GEMMA PRICE

SACRED VALLEY OF THE INCAS, PERU — Special to The Globe and Mail
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Comments

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Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba

Sacred Valley of the Incas

12 rooms from \$682, includes breakfast

You can count the serious luxury hotel options within Peru's remote highland Sacred Valley of the Incas on one hand. The new Inkaterra's Hacienda Urubamba, however, combines luxe sustainable tourism with a quintessentially Andean hospitality experience. It opened in April with 12 cozy rooms in the main casa (later this year 24 private casitas will be available) on 40 hectares of land. It's a great base from which to explore and meditate on the surrounding countryside, whether it's breakfast overlooking the on-site ecofarm or swaddled in blankets in front of a roaring fire for a nightcap.

LOCATION, LOCATION

The property is about one hour's drive east of the ruins at Machu Picchu and 90 minutes west of the highland city of Cusco, which is where you fly in. Guests can drive themselves into the Sacred Valley of the Incas (the hotel is found at kilometre 62 of the Cusco-Urubamba-Pisac-Calca Highway) or hire a local taxi. A train is also available from either Machu Picchu or outside Cusco city. At an altitude of 9,515 feet (2,900 metres), Hacienda Urubamba is all about the views of open space and sky.

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HIGHLIGHTS



Inkaterra's Hacienda Urubamba

DESIGN

Every Inkaterra resort has a distinct concept inspired by the property's history and setting. The land occupied by Hacienda Urubamba was formerly a colonial cattle farm, so the decor has a colonial ranch aesthetic. The cavernous bar and lounge area feature oversized leather couches and armchairs upholstered in traditional fabric woven by Andean people. Cowskin rugs are scattered on terracotta tiled floors. Tapestries and pre-Columbian textiles bedeck the walls and in one corner of the central open-air courtyard, a row of cowboy hat-capped Western saddles are arranged on low-slung wooden horses. Along the front of the property, floor-to-ceiling windows in the dining room, lobby and lounge provide uninterrupted vistas of the brilliantly green valley and rugged surrounding mountains.



Inside the rooms, fireplaces, heated towel racks and heated stone floors are welcome touches during the chilly highland evenings, and the nightly turndown service is extremely thorough, complete with a hot water bottle inserted into the bed.



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BEST AMENITY

I loved the five daily complimentary excursions run by qualified guides: You can opt to start with a 90-minute early-morning bird-watching tour and end with a twilight, lamp-lit mountain walk.

IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING

I'd make the 5:30 afternoon tea bigger, and bump it forward an hour or two – it's a nice touch, but some more sandwiches and little cakes wouldn't go amiss.

WHOM YOU'LL MEET

As the terrain requires outdoorsy attire, guests dress extremely casually. This relaxed vibe, and the hotel's cozy setting, lends itself to getting-to-know-you chats over a glass of wine or a pisco sour.

EAT IN OR EAT OUT?

The hotel's secluded setting means eating in is your only option, but this is a definite plus. Inside the dining room, soaring ceilings, a huge fireplace, walls hung with masks and farming implements give the feeling of attending a castle feast. Meals are prix fixe and locally sourced, with vegetables grown in the organic, carbon-neutral plantation on-property. My favourite dish was fresh trout from the nearby Pumahuanca valley, served over black olive sauce with baby octopus and asparagus, and capped by a cloud of fragrant eucalyptus smoke.



Floor-to-ceiling windows along the front of the Hacienda Urubamba, above, provide uninterrupted vistas of the brilliantly green valley and rugged surrounding mountains. The prix fixe meals, such as the fresh trout served over black olive sauce with baby octopus and asparagus, left, are locally sourced.

ROOM WITH A VIEW

All rooms look over the valley and mountains but Room 10 has the most by way of floor space, decorative detail and furniture. Room 12, perched on the top of the roof, is the smallest, but is also the highest and so commands the best views.

