



INKATERRA: SUSTAINABLE AT ITS CORE

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At a time when hotels are working hard to implement [eco-friendly initiatives](#) and be more sustainable, Inkaterra Hotels has managed to achieve a rare feat — become the first ever “climate positive” hotel brand in the world.

After measuring Inkaterra’s CO2 footprint, elaborate mitigation plan with a 5% per year reduction target by 2030 and offset, GreenInitiative — a certification company endorsed by the United Nations — declared the Lima, Peru-based eco-tourism company as climate positive, which means “any activity that furthers the achievement of carbon neutrality, providing an environmental benefit by removing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.” The announcement, which coincided with the 2021 Climate Change Conference (COP 26), comes as a validation of Inkaterra’s 46 years of efforts placing scientific research, biodiversity conservation and sustainability at the very core of its business, according to Inkaterra Founder and President Jose Koechlin and Head of Content Gabriel Meseth.

“Inkaterra has pioneered ecotourism in Peru since 1975. For us, hospitality is a means to our end, which is sustainable development. Therefore, we work under a holistic approach where we produce scientific research as a basis for biodiversity conservation and the wellbeing of local communities,” Koechlin and Meseth told HOTELS.

Since 2011, the company has earned the Rainforest Alliance Verification in Sustainable Tourism, the Relais & Châteaux 2013 Environment Trophy, the 2012 Tourism for Tomorrow Award for Conservation, and the 2012 Green Choice Sustainable Tourism Award. It currently operates Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica, Inkaterra Hacienda Concepción and Inkaterra Guides Field Station in the Amazon of Southern Peru, Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel in the cloud forest of Machu Picchu, Inkaterra Hacienda

Urubamba in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, Inkaterra La Casona in Cusco, and El MaPi in Machu Picchu Pueblo.

The company is one of the leading organizations pledging to cut global tourism emissions by at least a half over the next decade and reach Net Zero emissions as soon as possible and before 2050, in accordance with the Paris Agreement.



The

EcoCenter at Inkaterra's Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel Carbon-free future of Machu Picchu

In partnership with the Municipality of Machu Picchu, AJE Group, the National Service of Protected Natural Areas, Bosques Amazónicos and other key players, Inkaterra is working to transform Machu Picchu as the first carbon neutral destination in the world. Supported by the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Inkaterra plans to implement the Paris Agreement guidelines here as well.

“The action includes nurturing of one million trees across the Machu Picchu national reserve, and an innovative waste management strategy which advances a circular economy in Peru's iconic destination and generating biodiesel which is used as a substitute for diesel,” Meseth explained.

Through a waste management strategy and a reforestation plan to nurture one million trees across the Machu Picchu national reserve, Peru's most iconic destination has become the first city in Latin America to achieve a circular economy. Machu Picchu was

bestowed with GreenInitiative's "carbon neutral" certification, which earned the hospitality company international recognition.

"Machu Picchu successfully met the requirements necessary to achieve carbon neutral certification in September. This accomplishment has had a catalytic role promoting low carbon emissions public and private investments that are geared to building tourism better in Machu Picchu," Meseth said.

Triggered by a waste management crisis, which required a quick, affordable and replicable strategy, the alliance first installed a compacting machine in the municipality for the daily processing of seven tons of plastic waste, which helped cut down on the volume of plastic by 70%. This was followed by the oil to biodiesel and glycerin transformation plant, which was inaugurated in 2018 at the Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel. It prevented more than a thousand gallons of vegetable oil waste from reaching the Vilcanota River.

The most recent action was the donation of a glass processing machine to turn bottles into sand, avoiding natural disasters due to sand extraction from the Vilcanota riverbed. "Over three tons of glass have been processed since its implementation in July 2021," Meseth said.

Replicable model

Machu Picchu's carbon-free status was a success story about the goals that can be achieved when public and private sectors work together, said Koechlin, adding that Inkaterra's approach for climate action and biodiversity can be implemented in other destinations worldwide.

"Inkaterra expertise is available for anyone who needs it," Koechlin added. "Over time we have been able to develop methodologies and tools that are suitable for being apply in other destinations seeking to building tourism back better, as part of their post COVID-19 recovery strategies.

"Since 1978, we produce flora and fauna inventories to measure our own impact over natural areas. At Inkaterra areas, we have registered 904 bird species (almost as much as Costa Rica's total bird diversity), 362 ant species (world record sponsored by Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson), 100 mammal species, 1,266 vascular plant species, 372 native orchid species (the world's largest native orchid collection, according to the American Orchid Society). A total of 29 species new to science were found at Inkaterra and described by fellow researchers."



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Other initiatives

Inkaterra’s plans to achieve the climate positive status include Peru’s first land concession for research and ecotourism purposes in the Madre de Dios region of the Amazon rainforest, which has been sustainably managed by Inkaterra since 1978. The company established three “eco-lodges” inspired by local architecture and built with native materials and developed several initiatives to restore carbon sinking capacity and conserve biodiversity. In collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution and ForestFriends, Inkaterra aims to restore more than 5,000 hectares by 2025.

The hospitality company is also developing Cabo Blanco in Northern Peru, an erstwhile game fishing mecca. The company plans to establish a new beach hotel here, which will offer travelers a “privileged spot” surrounded by waves for surfers and kitesurfers while developing new diving routes.

“Here, Inkaterra is restoring native flora in the tropical dry forest, including the endangered carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*), essential to the conservation of various endemic bird species such as the Peruvian plantcutter (*Phytotoma raimondii*), the tumbes swallow (*Tachycineta stolzmannii*), the rufous flycatcher (*Myiarchus semirufus*), the tumbes tyrant

(*Tumbezia salvini*) or the red-masked parakeet (*Psittacara erythrogenis*). Inkaterra has registered 86 bird species in this outstanding hotspot for birders,” Koechlin said.

Commitment to Peru

Inkaterra has been conserving Peru’s biodiversity and the wellbeing of local communities for more than four decades.

“We are encouraging conservation and carbon-free travel through the international exhibition ‘Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru.’ It is the most innovative strategy to promote tourism and investments in Peru,” Koechlin said. “The natural environment and native cultures are our industry’s most precious resources, and their conservancy is the only way to ensure the future of travel.”

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