## Inkaterra La Casona: A Place of Conquistadors and Kings





The pretty central courtyard inside Inkaterra La Casona. Photo Credit: Tony Dunnell

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Foregoing the preamble, Inkaterra La Casona is, to date, the most impressive hotel I've stayed at in Peru.

With just 11 suites, it's an intimate place with a beguiling atmosphere. Antiques from the Old World and the New decorate every hallway and every room, with ceramics, textiles and retablos emphasizing the weight of history that permeates each nook and cranny of this boutique hotel. The central courtyard, meanwhile, is a fine example of colonial architecture, surrounded by stone arches and ornate wooden balconies on two levels.

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Back in the 1500s, this colonial casa -- built on Inca foundations -- was home to <u>Diego de Almagro</u>, a renowned Spanish conquistador and close companion of <u>Francisco Pizarro</u>. The two men later became bitter rivals, fighting over control of Cusco in a battle that Pizarro would ultimately win, and that saw Almagro garroted and decapitated.

Some 300 years later, La Casona played host to famous South American liberator Simón Bolívar following his victory at the Battle of Ayacucho, a decisive encounter in Peru's War of Independence against Spain.

In recent years, notable guests have included King Willem-Alexander and the Dutch royal family, Antonio Banderas and Bono. Mick Jagger also stayed at La Casona, which comes as no surprise to me as he seems to have stayed at every luxury hotel I visit, including the <a href="Gran Hotel Bolivar">Gran Hotel Bolivar</a> in Lima and the <a href="Casa Fitzcarraldo in Iquitos">Casa Fitzcarraldo in Iquitos</a>.

If staying at the preferred hotel of kings, Hollywood stars and knighted rock legends sounds expensive, well, you'd be right.

With rooms between US\$418 and \$649 per night, Inkaterra La Casona is one of the most expensive hotels in Cusco. But if you're looking for a special place to stay in the former Inca capital, La Casona has few rivals (arguably its closest rival, the Belmond Hotel Monasterio, is just yards away on the opposite side of Plaza Las Nazarenas).