



EXPERIENCE INKATERRA: PERU'S ECO-TOURISM STAR PERFORMER

When you're journeying to Peru, to walk in the footsteps of the Incas, elevate your experience immeasurably by savouring the local hospitality and enriching eco-focused of Inkaterra hotels.

The small Peruvian hotel group has knotted up four decades as a pioneering operator of sustainable tourism initiatives. Inkaterra is dedicated to helping preserve and nourish Peru's geography, nature, customs and culture while sharing them with the world.

As far back as 1975, long before it became fashionable, Inkaterra embarked on developing conservation programmes to safeguard the Amazon Rainforest and the health of the ecosystem.

INKATERRA HACIENDA URUBAMBA

That deep-seated sense of reverence for nature and culture suffuses all its properties, including its latest property, the Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba.



During my recent trip to Peru, the expert team at World Journeys arranged my accommodation with this distinguished Peruvian hotel group.

[World Journeys](#) impressed upon me the incomparable benefit of not just staying in Cusco, but taking the time to explore the Sacred Valley (Urubamba Valley), and overnighting in [Macchu Pichu](#).

High in the Peruvian Andes, the verdant Urubamba Valley threads a pathway between imperial Cusco and the sentinel peaks that shield the Lost City of Machu Picchu.

Nestled on a slope in the heart of the Urubamba Valley, Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba has a seductive sense of Andean wilderness about it, while celebrating the essence of the region's indigenous and Spanish-colonial influences.



This luxury lodge only opened in April, so it's a novelty to savour a property before most of the world has discovered it.

Brilliantly combining colonial design with contemporary flair and locally-sourced materials, you'll be royally spoiled by the charming staff in this divine sanctuary of comfort, surrounded by mountains, rolling countryside and wildflowers.

You'll have no trouble avoiding the insidious threat of altitude sickness, or soroche as the Andeans call it, because this pampered haven is purpose-built with relaxation in mind. It is not the place to rush about. Guest accommodations are irresistibly divine.

My corner suite offered a panoramic view across the countryside and an open fireplace, which we roared into life shortly after arriving, as we enjoyed a complimentary bottle of Pisco.

No creature comforts are spared – I slept on 100% Pima cotton sheets, you'll enjoy free Wi-Fi, iPad for in-house use, complimentary mini-bar, and flat screen TV with cable channels. In addition to the outstanding dining experiences which use organic ingredients harvested from their on-site farm, the hotel offers all manner of special treats including a daily afternoon tea time with snacks, complimentary cocktail hour and a stack of complimentary excursions.



The twilight mountain walk is an easy ramble as the sun dips, to take in the magical light show across the Sacred Valley and to gain some insights into the importance of astronomy in the Andean world.

If you want to try your hand at crafting a local drink, steeped in history, head along to the Chicha de Jora session.

This corn beer has been consumed throughout the Andes for millennia and is prepared by germinating maize, extracting the malt sugars, boiling the wort, and fermenting it in large vessels (traditionally huge earthenware vats) for several days.

It is traditionally made with Jora corn, an indigenous variety of the Andes. You'll get a first-hand experience with all aspects of the preparation process before finally tasting your own Inca drink.

If you're an early riser, join a dawn bird watching walk, taking in various valley trails to survey a wide range of feathered friends, from hawks to hummingbirds.

You can also take a guided tour of the Inkaterra Ecological Farm. Learn about the harvesting of crops throughout the year, their uses and natural properties for medicinal benefit and nourishment. This newcomer property to the Sacred Valley will linger long in your holiday memories.

INKATERRA MACCHU PICHU

After travelling by train through the green folds and cloud forest of the Peruvian Andes, Inkaterra Macchu Pichu is a wondrously serene retreat, after you've scaled the heights and sights of the Lost City.



Artfully designed to look like a village of whitewashed adobe casitas, this place is power-packed with natural wonders.

For starters, there are 372 native orchid species, over 200 species of birds, and 111 kinds of butterflies fluttering among its verdant finery.

Spread across 12 acres, you've got several kilometres of walking trails and stone pathways looping through the cloud forest from your front door.

With 81 magnificently appointed casitas (little houses) discreetly scattered among the trees, a glass-walled restaurant, and a diverse range of excursions led by exceptional guides, the lodge is not just a base for exploring Macchu Pichu, but easily qualifies as being a destination in its right.

World Journeys had warned me how sensational the lodge is – I just wish I could have stayed there longer!

Situated next to the train station, and just a short hop from the humming pedestrian-only town of Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes), you'll feel remarkably cocooned deep in the cloud forest, at this hotel. **All of your senses are in for a treat here.**



I will never forget basking in the warm embrace of the natural hot springs at twilight, listening to the orchestra of forest birdlife as the steam rose to meet the forest mists.

The masterly designed property pays homage to the vibrant culture of the Andes, through its architecture, carvings and textiles and authentic local cuisine.

I plumped for roasted guinea pig, which is certainly an acquired taste, as I gazed upon the marvellous view of the rushing Urubamba river.

I slumbered in splendid accommodation, my casita featured a massive king bed, dining area and open wood-burning fireplace, which we soon cranked up.

The indulgent marble bathroom offered a walk-in rain shower, separate bath, bespoke robes and Andean slippers crafted from recycled materials.

You won't be lacking in contemporary toys, with complimentary Wi-Fi, plasma TV with cable channels, DVD player, iPod speakers and minibar.

SPECTACLED BEARS

After resting up, don't waste the opportunity to enjoy some of the 14 guided excursions offered by the hotel. If you struggled to spot any Andean spectacled bears, of Paddington fame, on the train ride through the cloud forest – you're struck it lucky.



The Inkaterra Macchu Pichu boasts its own bear refuge, which is designed to rescue ill or injured bears and reintroduce them to their natural habitat, after being rehabilitated.

Once common throughout the Andes, the spectacled bear, which is the only type of bear in South America, is now critically endangered.

Another highly memorable excursion is to meander through the orchid garden to admire some of the hotel's 372 different native orchid species in their natural habitat. (A world record according to the American Orchid Society.)

Discover this extraordinary plant family, which has captured the human imagination for centuries.

The hotel guides also lead walks along the property's trails, illustrating the beauty and fragility of this ecosystem.

The nature stroll winds past wonderful waterfalls, cloud forest ferns, bromeliads and orchids, a colourful variety of birds, and the working tea plantation.



Be sure to get your guide to tell you the legend of a lovesick Inca princess whose sadness was transformed into colourful teardrop petals. Enriching, romantic and restorative, the Inkaterra Macchu Pichu is a truly exceptional experience.

World Journeys are proven, trusted professionals at bringing the magic of Peru alive, with outstanding on-the-ground support from Condor Travel, and signature accommodation with [Inkaterra](#).

If Cusco, the Sacred Valley and Macchu Pichu is on your bucket-list, let the exceptional team at World Journeys make it happen. [World Journeys website](#).

By Mike Yardley. (September 30, 2015.)