

Must-Visit Destinations In Latin America

10 Latin American Destinations You Absolutely Have To Visit Before Turning 30



Andrew Villagomez

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*Disclosure: Andrew Villagomez personally traveled to a majority of these locations over the years as a journalist and blogger while on media trips hosted by Superfeet, Inkaterra, Mai10 and the tourism organizations for **Puerto Rico**, **Mexico City**, **Colombia**, **Chile**, and **Argentina**. All opinions are his own.*

Traveling is a luxury worth investing in. The world is a big place and while we may never get to experience it all, there are a few wonders out there that make for a good start. From the underrated gems to the more popular destinations, Latin America is a region that has it all.

With Spanish being the main or second language spoken throughout the continent, it's easier to deal with the language barrier. And the colorful diversity across landscapes, cultures and cuisines makes for memorable moments and experiences.

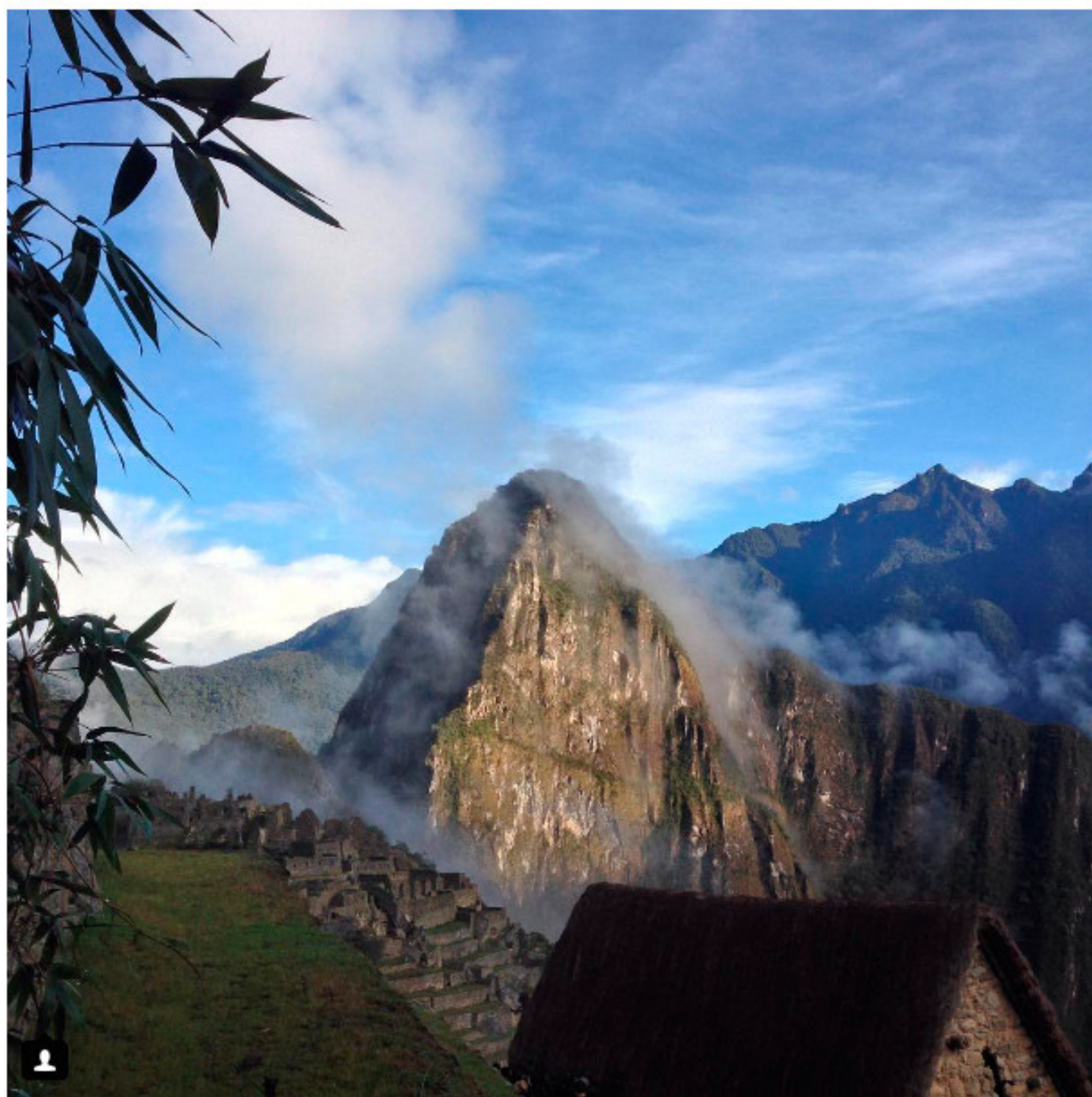
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6. MACHU PICCHU



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Peru has it all! OK, I am Peruvian so I am a little bit biased -- but the fact is Peru now boasts an internationally-beloved cuisine, a vibrant capital, surfing and desert adventures, the Amazon rainforest, Cusco and the Inca Trail, and the mesmerizing Machu Picchu -- a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

If you're in decent shape, you should easily get adjusted to the elevations -- but don't make the mistake of starting in Cusco before going to the lost city of the Inca Empire, as Cusco is about 3,000 feet higher than Machu Picchu.

I traveled to Machu Picchu with **Inkaterra**, a luxury Peruvian hotel chain with several properties (including one located in the Andean cloud forest at the base of Machu Picchu).

The best way of making the journey is to stay in The Sacred Valley of the Incas for a couple nights and get used to the altitude. You'll be flying into Cusco regardless, but if you head right over to The Sacred Valley, your chance of suffering from altitude sickness will be lower. You can then either start your trek (which takes about three days) or drive back to Cusco and take a train to Machu Picchu.

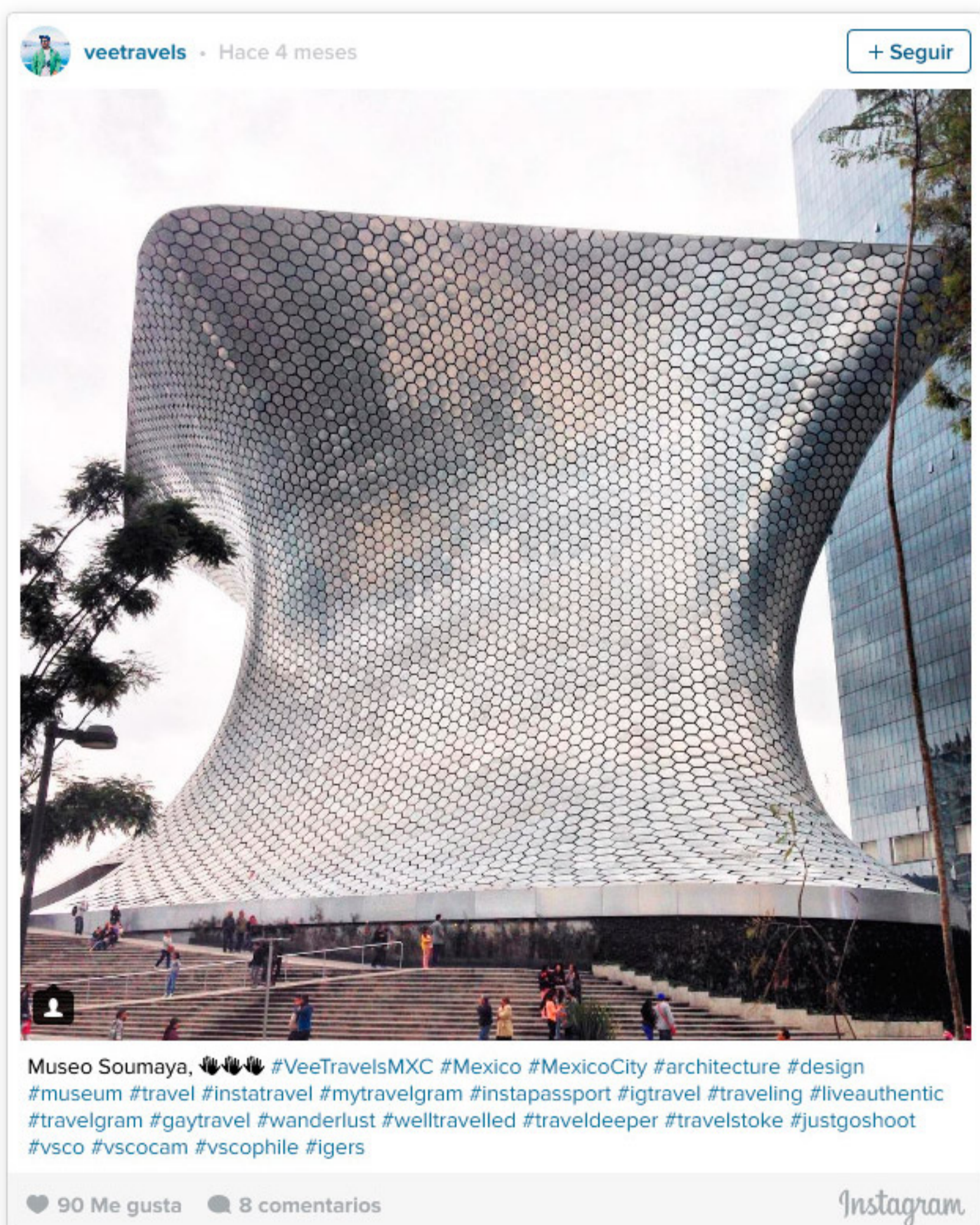
5. VALLE NEVADO



If you are a skier, Valle Nevado, Chile has to be on your radar.

Stay at the Valle Nevado Ski Resort for an adventurous Andean escape. Just under a two-hour drive from Santiago, Valle Nevado is located over 9,000 feet above sea level -- and it's one of the biggest ski surfaces of South America. There are three hotels, eight restaurants, apartments for rent and other amenities to make it easier for you to enjoy the powder and wilderness.

I decided to add it to this list during an afternoon of skiing -- when the clouds were so full and white you could barely see the skis in front of you. Quite a surreal experience.



A cosmopolitan and culturally-diverse destination, Mexico City offers endless options for the urban traveler -- from amazing food (Mexican cuisine is on the UNESCO World Heritage list) that includes dishes made with insects (don't knock it until you've tried it) to more museums and art galleries than New York City (350, to be exact).

There's also a ton of free things to do, including visiting the Angel of Independence monument, the colorful Coyoacán neighborhood or the historic center.