



## How To Get To Machu Picchu



Machu Picchu had long topped our adventure bucket list. We had fantasized about retracing the steps of Hiram Bingham III up the Inca Trail through the Sun Gate and onto the Incan city of Machu Picchu. There are many ways to check this escapade off of your bucket list and it can be confusing to figure out how exactly to navigate this new wonder of the world. It's time to leave the logistics up to us and start planning your picturesque passage to Peru. Read on to find out how to get to Machu Picchu!

### Fast Facts:

- Best time to visit: April to October
- Currency: Peruvian Sol
- Main Airports: Lima & Cusco



### **The Background of Machu Picchu**

Tucked away in the Andes Mountains, Machu Picchu is believed to have been a Sacred religious site for the Incans in the 15th century. With over 600 terraces and thousands of steps built into the side of a mountain, it's no wonder this Incan archeological masterpiece is one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Despite the invasion of the Spanish into Peru in the 16th century, Machu Picchu was not discovered by the Western world until 1911.





## How to Get to Machu Picchu

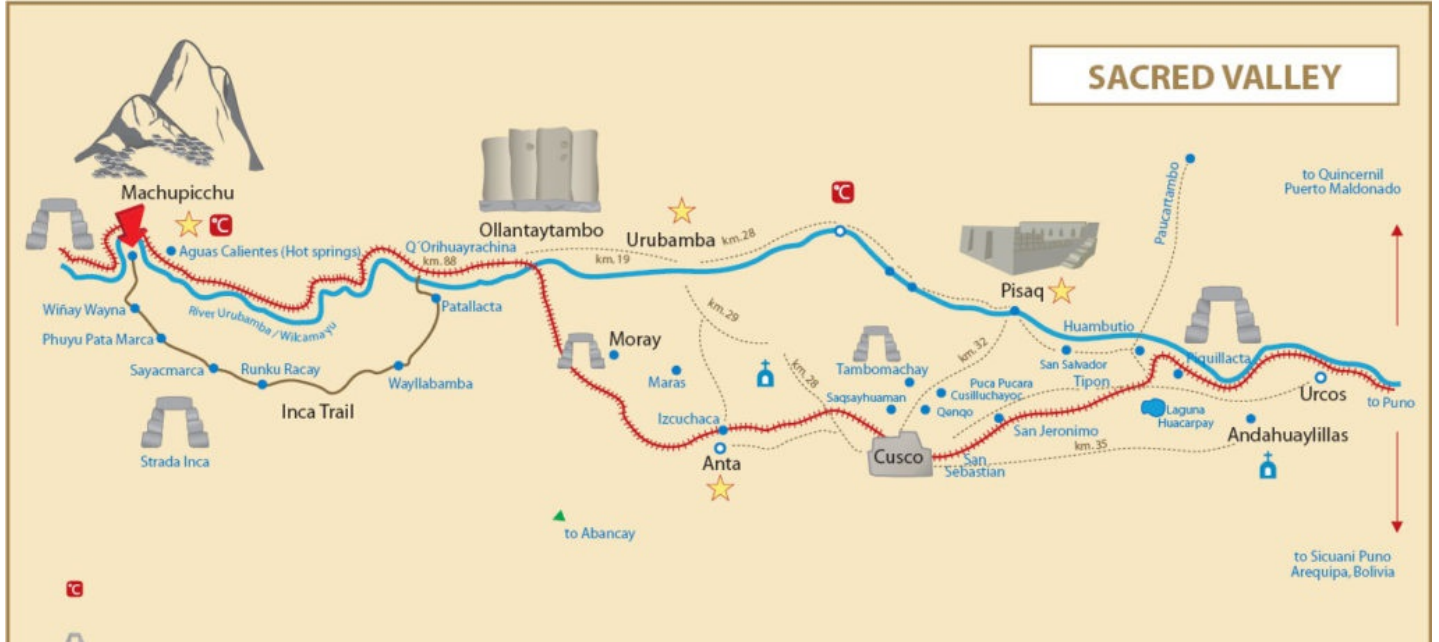
Machu Picchu is located in the town of Aguas Calientes, situated around three hours outside of the city of Cusco. If you're flying in internationally, you'll first fly into Lima (LIM) and then onto Cusco. Avianca and LATAM are the main carriers that fly that route, but there are other local Peruvian airlines that fly to Cusco as well.

Once you land in Cusco, we recommend spending a few days acclimatizing to the altitude (Cusco sits at 11,000 ft. above sea level). Don't plan any heavy activities for these few days in Cusco as the altitude is *intense*.

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### Our recommendation:

- 3 Days in Cusco
- 1-2 Days in the Sacred Valley
- 2 Days in Aguas Calientes



Map from [livinginperu.com](http://livinginperu.com)

### What is the Difference Between Cusco, The Sacred Valley and Aguas Calientes?

*Cusco* is the main entry point to the Andes Mountains. This is a city filled with history, architecture, archeological sites and great dining. It's also located at a steep 11,000 feet. Cusco is where most visitors to Machu Picchu start and/or end their journey. It's a great place to acclimatize.

**Hotel Recommendation:** [The Belmond Monasterio](#) – This hotel oozes old world elegance without any pretentiousness. Their lush and cozy beds make acclimating to the altitude so much sweeter.





*The Sacred Valley* is located in between Cusco and Aguas Calientes. Located at ~6,000 ft. above sea level, it's a beautiful respite after gasping for air in Cusco! The Sacred Valley is a lush landscape and incredible hikes to warm you up for Machu Picchu!

**Hotel Recommendation:** [Sol Y Luna](#) – This Relais & Chateaux property is a destination in itself. Cozy up in your own private casita with a view of the Andes Mountains. If we didn't have a hike to Machu Picchu planned, we could have stayed here forever!





*Aguas Calientes* is the town where Machu Picchu is located. It's a cute little mountain town where travelers congregate from all over the world. You'll want to spend the night here before going up to Machu Picchu.

**Hotel Recommendation:** [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo](#) — This hotel is located in Aguas Calientes town, just a short bus ride to the base of Machu Picchu. Even though you're right in the heart of things, stepping into the Inkaterra makes you feel as though you're stepping into the plush Peruvian rainforest. The cozy beds are the perfect place to rest your tired feet after a day of trekking.

Expedited Passport Services - [RushMyPassport.com](#)





### **Do I Have to Hike In?**

You don't have to be a hiker to see Machu Picchu, but you should have a general level of fitness. There is a great deal of walking at the actual archeological site and the altitude can make things a bit more difficult.

We did hike the one-day Inca Trail, which is 8 miles long, 2,000+ ft. of incline and took us about 5 hours. We then stayed the night in Aguas Calientes and took the bus up the next day





## The Many Roads to Machu Picchu

**Hiking:** There are various hiking trails that lead you to Machu Picchu. The most notable hiking trail is the Inca Trail, which is a 4 day/3 night 26-mile hike. Since we were pressed for time, we chose the 2 day/1 night 8-mile hike and stayed in a hotel.

**Bus:** For those that don't want to hike in, you can take a bus from Aguas Calientes town up to the top of Machu Picchu. The buses run all day with the first bus to Machu Picchu leaving at 5:30 am and the last bus down at 5:30 pm.

**Train:** There is a Peru Rail train that runs from Cusco directly to Aguas Calientes. We chose to get off at KM 104 and hike the rest of the way to Machu Picchu. After our trip, we took the bus down the mountain and then walked to the train station where we took our Peru Rail train all the way back to Cusco. We highly recommend taking the Vistadome train for the best views of the Andes Mountains! If you don't feel like hiking you can take the train directly from Cusco to Aguas Calientes.









**Luxury Option:** The Belmond Hotel group runs the show in Peru. They have a the [Hiram Bingham train](#), a private train with champagne and live music that runs directly to Machu Picchu. You can then stay at the [Belmond Sanctuary Lodge](#) which is the only hotel that is located directly at Machu Picchu.

### **Do I Need a Guide?**

To visit Machu Picchu, you do need a guide. We used [Peru For Less](#), who organized our entire trip from soup to nuts. They handled our permits and tickets and we highly recommend utilizing them for the Machu Picchu portion of your trip.

*Thank you to Peru for Less and the Inkaterra hotel for hosting us as their guests. All opinions expressed here are entirely our own.*