

WHERE TO STAY

# Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel: Luxury on the Inca Trail

Experience the famous “lost city” of Machu Picchu in style with a your own private casita at Inkaterra, a luxury hotel hidden in the jungle of Peru.

Chris and I have always dreamed of visiting Machu Picchu. Ever since I was a small child and learning about this fabled lost city, built on a mountain top and surrounded by clouds — it's occupied a place in my imagination. And every so often, someone would ask us; "What's one place you dream of visiting?", and Machu Picchu was almost always our immediate response. I mean, how could it not be?! So when we found ourselves planning a two-month journey through South America, we knew it was finally our chance to make our dream of visiting Machu Picchu a reality.

What we quickly discovered however, is that visiting Machu Picchu can take a lot of effort and planning. First, it's pretty remote; There are only two ways of getting there; You can either take a 4 hour train from Cusco, Peru or you can walk. Well, you don't actually walk — it's more like a hike. A five day hike. Over mountains. Through the woods. And there are mosquitos. Suffice to say, we decided to take the train. Where we had lunch. And drinks. And did not break a sweat.



But even once you get to Machu Picchu, there are still additional details that need sorting out; like getting into this historical site. First, you can't just walk in, you'll need to buy a ticket - sometimes months in advance. And that ticket will only get you into some areas, but not others. And only a certain number of people are allowed to buy tickets each day. And the tickets need to be purchased through a very poorly built and difficult to use government website, which occasionally (well actually often) simply chooses not to work. Frankly, it's a big hassle, and we were not really feeling the whole process.

However, during our research for the trip, we discovered that there was a hotel group – [Inkaterra](#) – which not only dealt with the practicalities of getting us into Machu Picchu, but also offered private tours and luxury accommodation in Aguas Calientes — which is the gateway town for Machu Picchu. After about 6 seconds of debate, we figured why not let them take care of planning the trip for us? We had them book us a hotel room, and purchase our tickets into Machu Picchu, meaning all we had to do was take the train to the hotel. So just like that, after several emails, our whole trip to Machu Picchu was planned. It was happening -- we were on our way.



## Arriving At Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel

The [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel](#) is located in the small town of Aguas Calientes -- which located just at the base of Machu Picchu, was built for the sole purpose of servicing the hundreds of thousands of tourists who come to see this historic site each year. Yes, it may be a bit scruffy, but the surroundings are incredible. The town sits on a small river with enormous mountains towering over it on every side. As Aguas Calientes is such a small town, the hotel has the advantage of being right in the center of town, while at the same time being spread out within the surrounding jungle. Although you can step out right into the hustle and bustle, once inside, you find yourself in what feels like a peaceful lodge surrounded by nature.

The rooms at the hotel are all individual 'casitas' (spanish for little houses) and some are free-standing houses each of which comes with its own facilities. These are dotted amongst the trees, and connected by a network of paths which weave through the greenery. It really felt like we were in the heart of the jungle... The buildings have a traditional look with Spanish-style whitewashed walls and terracotta roofs, however inside they are quite modern with beautiful and bright textiles decorating the space.

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Our casita had a large bedroom with seating area, a bathroom, and an open living area complete with a couch that could be folded out to make another bed. The decoration was nice and neutral, with earthy colors and lots of exposed wood. This was offset by the colorful native textiles, and the room was enhanced by the large number of windows looking out onto the jungle.

Thanks to the fly screens, even as it got dark we could leave these open and listen to the sounds of birds and insects while keeping the mosquitos out. This, along with the hot water bottles they left under the sheets made the nights cozy and extremely relaxing! There was even a fireplace although it was not quite cold enough to use it. A final bonus was quality of the bath products provided. Like at their [sister hotel](#) in Cusco, they are organic and made especially for Inkaterra – they even give you a bottle of citronella to help keep the bugs at bay.



Our room at Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel

## Dining at Inkaterra

Included in the price of your room are both breakfast and dinner at one of the hotel's two restaurants (although drinks must be paid for). Both restaurants look out over the river and have a great view of the mountains. The food is similar in both – a mix of Peruvian and international cuisines – although Cafe Inkaterra offers a slightly lighter menu.

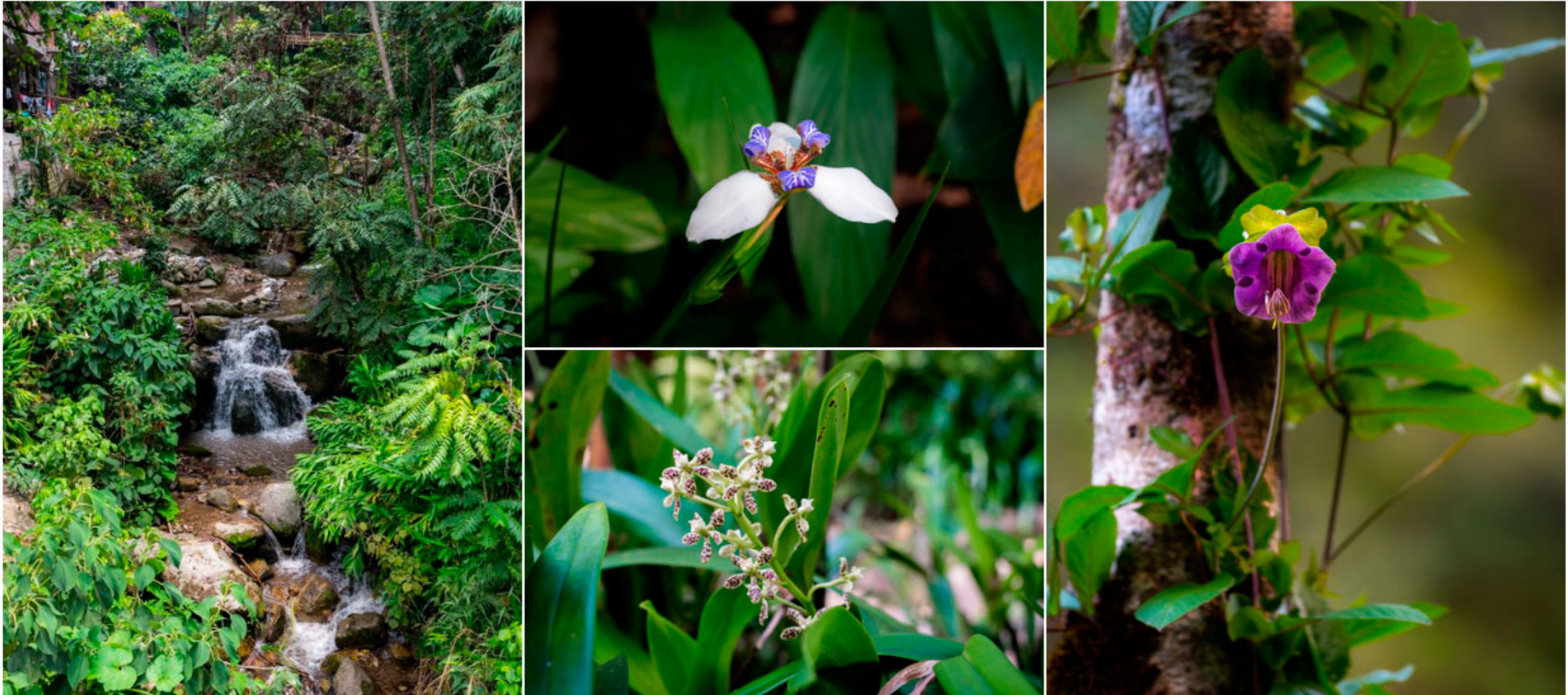
We discovered this on our last day and enjoyed the chicken fingers and salads we ordered there. You can of course, go out into Aguas Calientes to eat as there are plenty of restaurants offering a variety of foods. We chose to stick to the hotel however, as most meals were included and it was no cheaper eating lunch out. In addition to the restaurants, there is also a nice bar/lounge which gets quite busy in the evenings.



## Exploring the Area

The Inkaterra team also offer a variety of amenities and other things to do during your stay. For those looking to relax (perhaps after a long hike up the mountain), there is a spa. This has a sauna and steam room, and they offer treatments inspired by local traditions. There is also the option to do one of the complimentary excursions on offer at the hotel. These include various nature walks through the forest, a trip to a local farm, and a bird watching walk. These are all guided and will help you understand the beautiful cloud-forest ecosystem of the area.

Perhaps the coolest excursion though is to a tea plantation owned by Inkaterra. Here you can learn how it is grown, pick your own leaves, and seal them into tea bags. You can then enjoy one of the freshest cups of tea you will ever drink. The on-site tour company can also arrange a variety of treks, not just to Machu Picchu, but to other nearby sites as well.



To explore Machu Picchu we opted to book a private full day tour through the hotel. This included bus fares, entrance fees, a guide, and food. As well as avoiding the hassle of sorting all that out, we also got to skip all the lines and be amongst the first to the archaeological site. Our day started at 7.15am when we got on a bus up the mountain. We were at the top by 8 and had a while to explore before it got too crowded. Our guide Liter was fantastic. This is clearly more than just a job for him as he was exceedingly passionate and knowledgeable about the history of the place. We told him that we were photographers and as well as all the standard stops, he took us to some lesser known places where we could get some unique shots.

The site is as incredible as we had hoped. The views are unbelievable and it seems impossible that people could have built such a large settlement in this spot. The ruins themselves are very impressive and you can almost picture it as a living city with the ancient Inca going about their business. We had the option to hike Huayna Picchu as well (the mountain behind the city), but we decided to save ourselves another couple of hours scrabbling up steep slopes, and focus on Machu Picchu itself. We explored for a few hours and then at around 11:45 went for lunch. It was starting to get hot (thankfully there was no rain!) and the crowds were starting to appear. We timed it well, and as everyone was arriving we were eating a yummy buffet lunch at the Sanctuary Lodge. Afterwards we had another look around and came back down to the hotel around 4pm.



Once there, we enjoyed being able to have a hot shower and relax in comfortable surroundings. Although we had not done any major hiking, we were still exhausted from all the walking around the site. We were glad to have our little oasis to go back to, and to have been able to get to the top before the crowds. Many people do it as a day trip from either Cusco or Ollantaytambo, something I can't get my head around! That would mean a train journey of up to four hours before getting the bus up, seeing the site, coming back down, and finally getting the train again.

Our advice is to stay a night or two in Aguas Calientes. Although there is not much to do there, it's a nice enough town - the landscapes around it are impressive enough to justify a visit, and how often do you get to stay in a jungle? There are plenty of places to stay but if you want a bit of comfort and luxury, Inkaterra is the hotel to choose.

