

# From a tree lodge in the Amazon jungle to one of the busiest cities in the world: The 10 reasons you must visit Peru NOW – and they're not as obvious as you might think

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## 1. On the top of the list is Machu Picchu

Yes - it's top of everyone's list when visiting Peru - and it's not hard to see why.

There's no more exhilarating a feeling than looking out onto the picturesque scenery as you pass by the surrounding mountains and valleys.

And the relief as you walk back down, passing the masses of tourists and knowing you have climbed Machu Picchu, really is something else.

For those who are a little more adventurous and thrive off a challenge, climbing to one of the peaks of Machu Picchu for a bird's eye view is worth the extra effort.

The Machu Picchu Montana trail is supposed to be moderately difficult – they lied – it's challenging and by the end you'll be finding it difficult to breathe!

Adjusting to the high altitude was a real struggle for myself and most of the other hikers, and it only gets harder as it goes on.

At the start of trail it is a slow but steady ascent of about 30-35 degrees for about an hour (but it feels like two).

Gradually the paths become narrower and the steps become steeper and steeper and narrower again, making it even more challenging. A good level of fitness is definitely required for this trek.

After trekking for what seems like an eternity (OK, it was roughly 1 hour and 30 minutes) reaching the top of the



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peak is nothing short of breath-taking.

The summit of Machu Picchu is absolutely stunning. Reaching an altitude of 10,000ft gives you a great sense of achievement - some would even say a feeling of being on cloud nine - however in this case you are looking down on the clouds.

Hot Tip – there are only 400 tickets sold per day, tickets book out months in advance, so get in early and don't miss out on once in a lifetime trek.





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The height of the climb from the base of the entrance to the trail is 652 metres. That might not sound to be bad, but don't be fooled. Take snacks and plenty of water and hiking poles if you feel you may need that extra support.

For ease I would recommended booking with a tour group such as [Bamba Experience](#) where everything is organised in advance, including: ticket entrance to Machu Picchu, train tickets, bus transfers and accommodation in the town Aguas Calientes.

Entering Machu Picchu is a military operation which starts at 5am, with hundreds of tourists lining up in the cold as they wait for buses to take them to the entrance to the site.

You can either wait for over an hour to get the bus or take the road less travelled and walk into the darkness to the base of the mountain and start the journey into the 'lost city'.

The tour guide advised us that those who are fit can get to the peak in 45 mins, and those who are slower take a little over an hour.

Needless to say, it took me a little over an hour - and then some.

## 2. Cusco full of culture

Cusco is the gateway to the history of the Inca Empire. The streets are filled with Peruvians in Inca outfits and alpacas striding through the streets, which are full of culture.

Cusco is 3,399 metres above sea level, meaning you need a couple of days to acclimatise, so remember to take it easy as you discover the vibrant city of Cusco.









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Exploring Peru and its ancient Inca cities and jungle







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There is so much to see and do and the city is full of archaeological remains and Spanish colonial architecture.

Seeing the San Pedro Markets is a must, as are the Inca and the Machu Picchu museums.

The Plaza de Armas, in Cusco's city centre, boasts many shops, restaurants and bars making it a great place to spend the afternoon and night.

### 3. Palacio del Inka, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Cusco

My hotel pick for Cusco would be the [Palacio Del Inka](#). The hotel is rustic with Inca influence, and is designed to showcase a centuries-old, magical blend of pre-Colombian, Incan, Spaniard, colonial, and modern cultures.

A hidden oasis in the city of Cusco - Palacio Del Inka presents a captivating variety of rare opportunities and state-of-the-art amenities. Dating back nearly five centuries, Palacio Del Inka stands in the historic centre of Cusco.







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Directly across from the Koricancha temple, it is a five-minute walk from the main square and less than a mile from an array of museums, markets, and restaurants.

You feel like you have stepped back in time to the Inca Empire and it was an enriching and memorable stay.

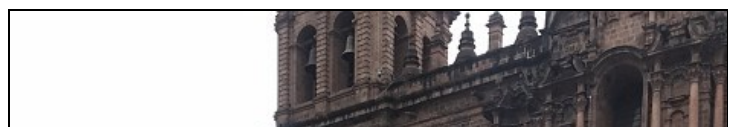
#### **4. Festival of the sun in Cusco**

Festival of the sun is a religious ceremony of the Inca Empire in honour of the god, which is held on June 24 and spans over a couple of days in the Cusco region.

This year the festival attracted record numbers of 50,000 people on the surrounding hills of Cusco in Peru. The festival takes place on 3 scenes staged in 3 different places in and around areas of Cusco.

The first ceremony was held at Qoricancha Temple, where the Inca —escorted by his entourage— sang to the Inti (Sun God). The second one took place at Cusco's main square, where the Inca re-enacted the famous Two Worlds Encounter scene.

Lastly, the main ceremony was performed at Sacsayhuaman Fortress, one of Cusco's emblematic attractions. The festival showcases Peruvian costumes and dances which is full of colour and excitement.







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## 5. Tambo del Inka, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa

The taste of luxury at its finest, [Tambo del Inka](#) is a lavish, unforgettable experience. From the moment you drive into the grounds of the hotel it is nothing short of spectacular.

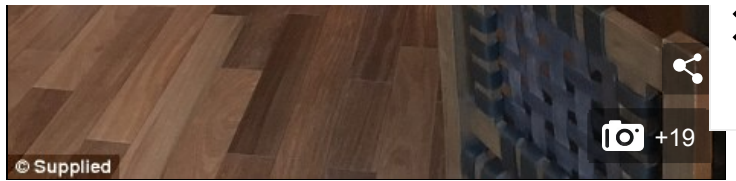
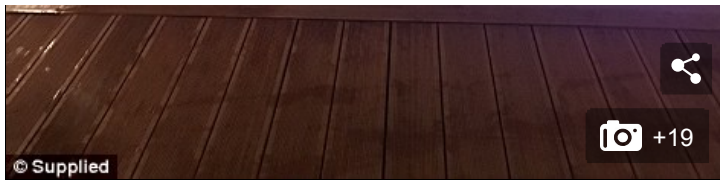
The triple-height ceilings, with the most epic stone wall chimney and glammed up weavings, can be found in the reception and dining area.

The grounds are so beautiful that there is no reason to leave the hotel, which also offers a pool, sauna and jacuzzi.

The Euro-Peruvian food at Hawa - the fine-dining restaurant on-site - was by far one of the best meals I had in Peru and the service was absolutely perfect.







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## 6. A true jungle experience at the **Treehouse Lodge**

There is no other way to experience the Peruvian Amazonian Jungle, than sleeping 20 feet above ground in a tree.

The location provides an amazing backdrop as you discover the serene protected Yarapa and Cumaceba rivers near the Pacaya Samiria Reserve.

Every bungalow has its own aerial space in the jungle with its own views and privacy. Each of the rooms are well constructed and comfortable, considering you are living in a tree.

There is running cold water to shower, brush and flush and plenty of space to enjoy the views. The fish nets provide cover from the bugs and the height from the jungle floor provides relief from the heat and humidity.

Nothing could be more romantic than waking up to the tweeting of the birds, which is truly a magical experience.

Exploring the grounds of the tree lodge is one of the great features of the resort. Walking from one bridge to another is fun way to see the jungle and is like no other hotel stay.

The chill out common area has hammocks and games and is also a great space to mingle with other lodges to hear their experiences on their excursions.

The lodge is all inclusive with breakfast, lunch and dinner provided. Each meal draws on how the locals Peruvians in the jungle eat.



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## 7. Adventures in the Peruvian Amazon Jungle

The Treehouse Lodge package includes all excursions and from the moment you are picked up at the airport you are assigned your own personal tour guide, making for a very personalised experience.

Our tour guide was a local from the depths of a village in the Peruvian jungle, helping you design your own itinerary to suit what you would like to explore.

The experience will take you through dense rainforest, above land and through the rivers, making every day a new adventure.

Every hour is different, with our guide taking us on night jungle walks, 6am bird watching trips, kayaking, swimming in the Amazon, sunset watching, village walkabouts, meeting sloths, caiman spotting, medicine walks through the jungle and - my favourite - feeding monkeys up close and personal.

One of the most touching experiences of all was visiting a local village and seeing how people live on the banks of the Amazon River.







**Huacachina is surrounded by golden sand dunes and at the centre of it all is a lagoon, ringed by palm trees, restaurants and epic sunsets. Although it is a small town, don't be fooled, as there are plenty of adventures to be had**

### **8. Huacachina a hidden oasis**

Huacachina is a desert oasis and tiny village just west of the city of Ica in southwestern Peru.

Huacachina is surrounded by golden sand dunes and at the centre of it all is a lagoon, ringed by palm trees, restaurants and epic sunsets. Although it is a small town, don't be fooled, as there are plenty of adventures to be had.

By far the most fun thing to do is take to the sand dunes for the intense sunrise and sunset.

The tour includes a four-wheel drive through the sand dunes, followed by watching the most serene peaceful sunset.

Not many tourists know about Huacachina but this little magical spot within Peru should not be missed.







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9. Lima – the busy capital city

With a population of 10 million people that spans over 43 districts, Lima is the city that never ends. Luckily taxis



are cheap, making it an easy, comfortable way to explore good handful of the districts in a small amount of time.

Key sights to explore would be the old town, main square, coastal beaches, Huaca Pucllana ruins, the impressive huge Jockey Shopping Mall, bohemian quarter and park reserve to watch the water fountains.

What I enjoyed most above all the sites was the ceviche and the Pisco sours. By far my favourite meal was at the La Viste Resturant, which is well worth a visit.

Depending what you prefer, I have two hotel recommendations for Lima.

Option one, **JW Marriot Lima** – located closer to the beach and offering ocean views, the hotel is opposite a shopping mall, has a casino and you can find La Viste Resturant on the foyer level.

Option two, **Westin Lima** - the hotel is more centrally located and offers views of the busy city skyline. The spa facilities are out of this world and probably the best and only way to end the long trip.

## 10. All about that eco life – experience Inkaterra

Established in 1975, **Inkaterra** has been at the forefront of ecotourism and sustainable development in Peru.

It offers boutique luxury hotels teamed up with eco-friendly excursions making for an all-round experience.

The Inkaterra properties are based in the heart of Machu Picchu, Sacred Valley, Cusco and the Amazon Jungle. Excursions include bird watching, nature walks, Orchid Trails, Organic Tea Plantations, twilight walks, and native farms tours. Inkaterra has spent the past four decades dedicated to authentic travel experiences, aiming to preserve biodiversity and local cultures.

Its sustainability efforts have gained them membership with diverse alliances, such as Relais & Châteaux, Virtuoso and National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World. If you are looking for an eco-friendly luxury experience than Inkaterra has everything to offer and with the most high standard of service.

## CONNIE'S TRAVEL TIPS

**Best time to go? June/ July – dry season**

**The winter in Peru (May – September) is the driest season and therefore the best time of year to travel to see Machu Picchu. The rainfall and the humidity is lower during this time in the rainforest.**

### Handy Hints:

- **Currency in Peru is Sol. It is rare to find currency exchanges places that do Sol, so either order in advance or change your currency into Chilean Peso or into US dollars and when you arrive in Peru you can exchange for Sol.**

- **You will need to ensure you are up to date with your vaccinations before entering the jungle**







Established in 1975 Inkaterra has been at the forefront of ecotourism and sustainable development in Peru. Pictured above is one of their hotels Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba

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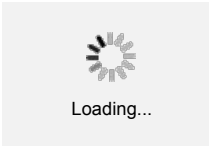

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