



13 reasons Peru should be your next vacation spot

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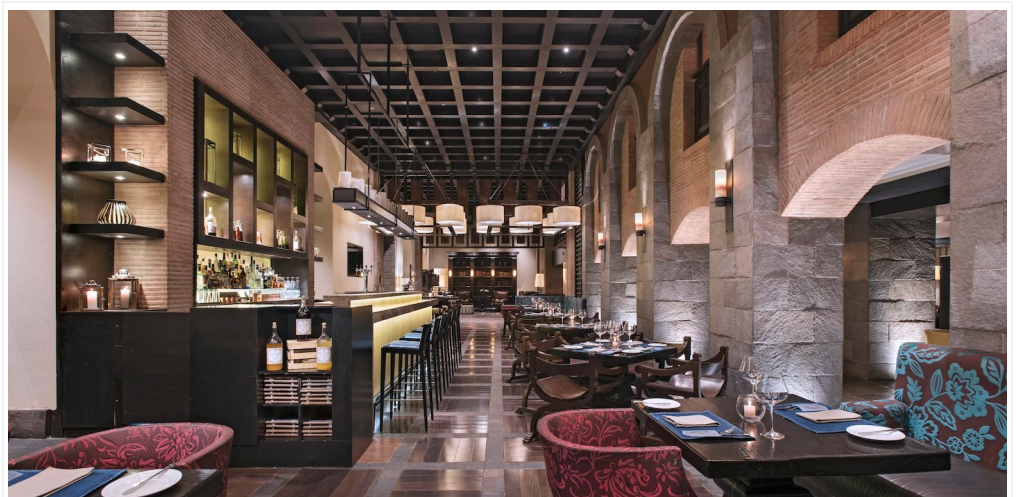


[Sharael Kolberg](#) | [FamilyTravelChannel.com](#)

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A country of colorful textiles, adorable llamas, snow-capped mountains and ancient ruins, Peru is a true bucket-list destination. Whether you're an environmentalist, foodie, photographer or thrill seeker, there are plenty of activities to keep you entertained while visiting this South American country. Here are a few of our favorite recommendations for making the most of a trip to magical, mystical Peru.

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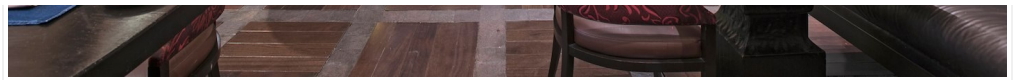


Image courtesy JW Marriott El Convento Cusco

Acclimate with an oxygenated room

Located at more than 11,000 feet, the charming city of Cusco is a popular vacation destination. It is believed to have once been the capital of the Incan Empire and is home to many archeological ruins. But don't step off the plane and plan a big day of exploring when you first arrive. Many people suffer from altitude sickness due to the elevation. Instead, book a room at the [JW Marriott El Convento Cusco](#) where you should take a dip in the indoor pool, get a spa treatment and sip coca tea (rumored to help with altitude adjustment) in the courtyard before settling in for the night in a room equipped with an intelligent oxygen system to help you acclimate.



Photo by animalspot.net

Swim with pink dolphins

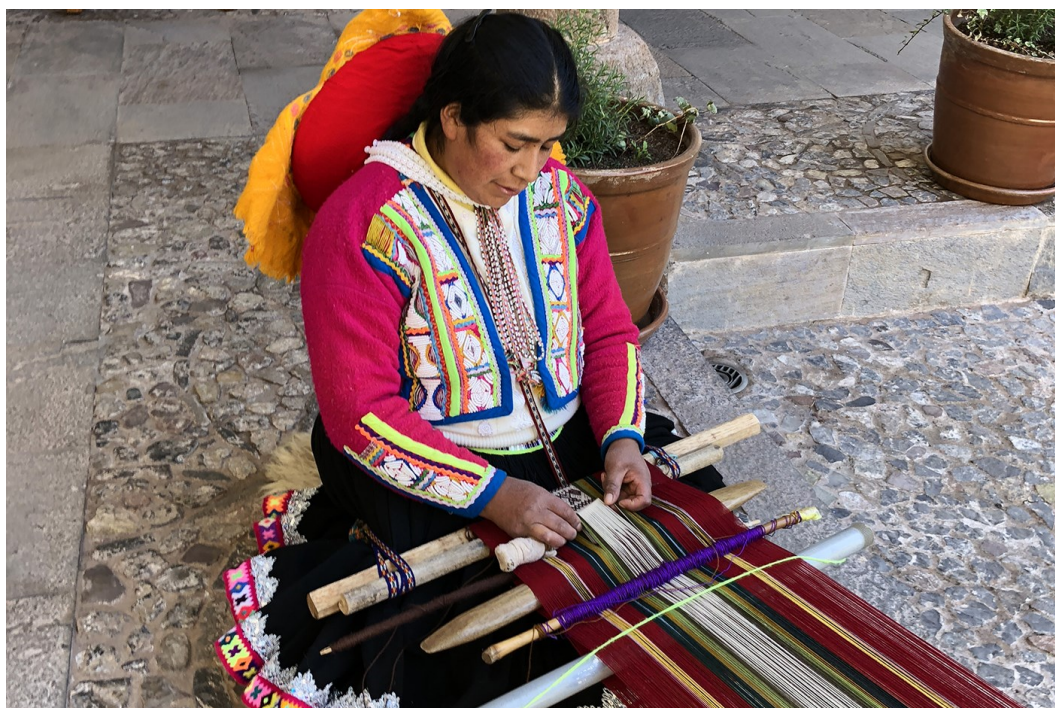
The much sought-after and endangered pink river dolphins can be found in the fresh water of the Amazon River. Whether aboard a cruise boat, motor boat, or kayak, getting up close and personal with these mysterious creatures will definitely prove Instagram worthy. Be sure to also keep your eyes open for a variety of tropical birds, colorful butterflies and mischievous monkeys.





Catch a scenic train to Machu Picchu

A must when visiting Peru is the ancient Incan citadel, Machu Picchu —one of the seven wonders of the modern world. Built in the 1400s and rediscovered in 1911, this magical historic site is nothing short of awe-inspiring. The quickest and most scenic way to get there is by train. Inca Rail leaves from Cusco and Ollantaytambo with train cars that feature large side and ceiling windows that allow for spectacular views of the Sacred Valley along the way. The train stops in Aguas Calientes where visitors then take a short 20-minute bus ride on a switch back road to the ruins. For those wanting to stay the night and see the site before the crowds pile in, the [Belmond Sanctuary Lodge](#) is located at the top, just steps away from the entrance of Machu Picchu.



Learn how to weave colorful textiles

Wander into the courtyard at the [Belmond Palacio Nazarenas](#) in Cusco and you'll find a local Peruvian woman demonstrating how their colorful wool threads are hand-woven into textiles that are used to make traditional scarves, blankets, backpacks and more. The intricate and grueling technique has been passed down for generations and can take days or even weeks to make one item, depending on the size.





Volunteer with children

Organizations such as International Volunteer HQ are always looking for individuals who are passionate about providing underprivileged children with the attention and support they need. Turn your vacation into a chance to give back at various orphanages, schools and community centers throughout Cusco and Lima.



Image by scapedoperu.com

Pass on oven-roasted cuy

For those looking for culinary delights, Cusco and Lima have no shortage of restaurants serving menu items that foodies are sure to love. Traditional Peruvian dishes include potatoes (more than 3,000 varieties), quinoa, rice, corn, beans, ceviche, empanadas and, for the tourists, llama and cuy (guinea pig!). For a unique dining experience, grab lunch in an outdoor courtyard of an ancient monastery at the **Belmond Hotel Monasterio** in Cusco. Dine on native creamy potato soup, fresh local trout, and corn cheesecake while listening to the soothing sounds of monk chants.

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Image courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu Hotel

Undergo a cleansing by a Peruvian shaman

For a different twist on the traditional guided tour of Machu Picchu, book a “Mystical Tour” through [Sumaq Machu Picchu Hotel](#) in Aguas Calientes. The Shaman will describe the connection of Machu Picchu to Pachamama (Mother Earth) and, using crystals, will perform a cleansing and blessing for each participant with tips on how each person can live their best life. Guests leave with a Peruvian “good luck” gift.



Image by cuzcoeats.com

Hike Rainbow Mountain

For those willing to brave a hike in high altitude to reach a mountain colored like a rainbow, the trek to **Vinicunca Mountain** is well worth the endeavor. [GotoPeru](#) offers all-day guided tours from Cusco. The photo opp from the top is priceless.



Take a selfie with a llama

Llamas and alpacas can be found throughout Peru. In the touristy areas, you'll see them dressed up with pompom necklaces or knitted hats alongside women dressed in traditional attire. For a small fee, you can have your photo taken with them. You'll also find wild llamas at Machu Picchu and farm-raised llamas in the highlands. Not only do they make great selfies, but they are also used for meat and wool. Some upscale hotels, like the [JW Marriott El Convento Cusco](#), bring in their own llamas for guests to take photos with.



Image courtesy Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel

Spot up to 214 types of birds

For birdwatchers, [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel](#) is paradise. The 12-acre lush property is home to up to 214 different types with guided tours available and feeding stations located throughout the property to attract the birds for viewing and photographing. The serene setting, with waterfalls and candlelight, is also home to 372 species of orchids during their rainy summer months of December through February.



Image courtesy Casa Andina Premium

Sleep like Incan royalty

Located just a few blocks from the historic Koricancha Temple, the [Casa Andina Premium Cusco](#) has a history dating back centuries and it is thought that it might

have served as residences for royal Incans and later, Spanish nobles. Now the upscale hotel resembles a palace fit for royalty with gourmet dining options, impeccable service and lavish amenities.



Cleanse with salt of the Earth

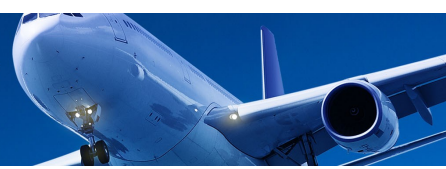
Just a short drive from Cusco, visitors can tour the **Maras Salt Ponds**. Thousands of hillside ponds are filled with salt water that evaporates leaving three types of salt for harvesting. Experience the benefits of the salt with a Maras Salt Scrub at the [Aranwa Cusco Boutique Hotel](#). The salt is used as a natural exfoliant that leaves skin clean and smooth.



Board down a sand dune

Huacachina, the largest sand dunes in South America, is the perfect place to strap on a board and go for a ride. Not up for the challenge? Slide down the fine sand on your stomach instead.

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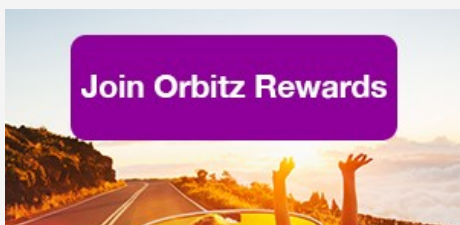
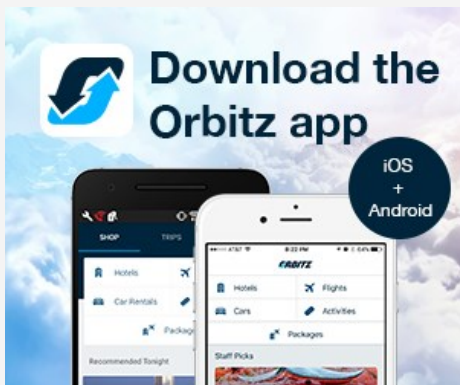
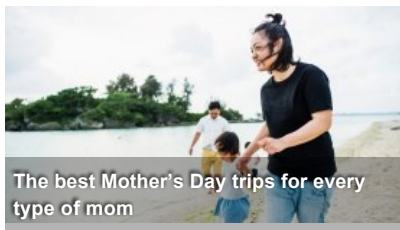
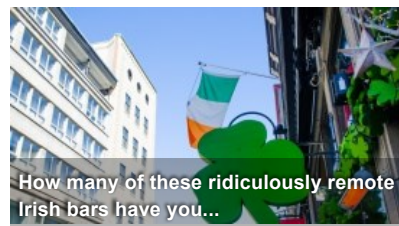


Sharael Kolberg | FamilyTravelChannel.com

Founder at Family Travel Channel

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