



ANDEAN HEALING AT THE INKATERRA SPA

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Wellness tourists are increasingly flocking to the Andes for healing. They immerse themselves into [ayahuasca](#), San Pedro, plant diets and shamanic rituals, which can sometimes be harrowing, though effective, ways of overcoming personal, physical and spiritual issues.

However, there are kinder, more subtle methods of doing this, as I discovered at the eco-friendly hotel Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba.



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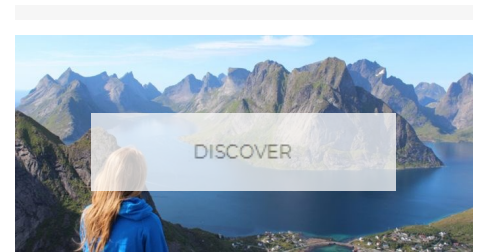
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[Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba](#) is a contemporary hacienda-style hotel in the [Land of the Traveller](#), also known as the Sacred Valley in Peru. Situated between Cusco and Machu Picchu, it boasts an array of castitas and rooms with sprawling views over the valley. The architecture and interiors were inspired by the cultural history of the region, with locally woven textiles, colonial-era furniture, and antique woodwork that add to the hacienda's immense charm.

Ecology has always been integral to the Inkaterra brand, so it's no surprise that the restaurant features an Earth to table concept. Ten acres of organic gardens provide the foundation for all meals here, and guest are even invited to come and select their own quinoa, giant corn, potatoes and other veggies, all of which are farmed with traditional hand tools and oxen, as has been done for centuries in this region.

Given the vast amount of expansive, untouched nature, there's plenty to do here, from horseback riding, rafting, biking and hang gliding to hiking and exploring the many ruins that are off the tourist trail. Well-trained guides are on staff, and can teach you about the local history, flora and fauna on a fascinating educational tour. A bonanza of hand-woven, naturally dyed textiles and clothing are available to shop from nearby markets. Most are made from baby alpaca, Pima cotton or locally sourced wool, though it's important to check the quality, as cheaper acrylic products can mimic natural fibres to the untrained eye.

Besides its breathtaking mountain views, the Sacred Valley is also the perfect place to heal the body and soul due to its year-round sunshine and warm climate, as well as its calm, friendly and perpetually pleasant people. I came here to relax and reconnect to nature in the hopes of overcoming my own chronic insomnia.





The Spa

Inkaterra has several properties in different parts of Peru, including the Amazon, Cusco and Machu Picchu, but in my opinion, the Hacienda hotel is one of the most authentic, as it's away from the teeming throngs of tourists. It's a spot that offers true relaxation and contemplation, and nowhere better exemplifies this than the recently launched [Mayu Spa](#).

Its rustic design – complete with lots of natural wood, stone and picture windows proudly displaying the surrounding foothills – was inspired by traditional Andean architecture. All treatments are based in 100% natural products derived from native medicinal herbs, which each client is requested to select themselves, from the adjacent herb garden, so the therapist can pummel them into a neutral, vegetable-based oil for their treatment.

The wellness center has a small plunge pool, four private therapy rooms and a dry adobe-constructed sauna that imitates the Temescal – a spiritual and soothing ‘sweatlodge’ ritual practiced amongst many locals in the area.



My Experience

Treatments on offer range from typical de-stressing and deep tissue massages to Andean hot stone therapy and reflexology. All massages incorporate ancestral techniques and the hot stone therapy used stones from the river, but I wanted something truly different. I chose a combination of the de-stress treatment, which involved passive stretching and applied pressure along the energy lines of the body, and the Pinda Kkora Jampi.

It's a mouthful, I know, but when I learned this is a great way to relieve insomnia, I was sold. This is an ancient technique not from the Andes, but from Indian Ayurvedic medicine, whose purpose is the perfect relaxation of body and mind through rhythmic movements. The Pindas are organic cloth bags filled with seeds or medicinal and aromatic herbs that have been previously heated to take advantage of the integral aromatherapy qualities of the herbs. These little bags are used on the body with pressures and rotations, helping to release muscle tension and restore energy chakras.

I spent an hour in the calming, naturally scented healing room, being stretched, pressed,

pulled, massaged and kneaded with the herbs I selected (Andean mint and thyme, if you're asking). At the end of it all, I was so relaxed, I was almost dazed, so my therapist guided me to a lounge chair outside, and provided my with a gorgeous infusion of local herbs and passionfruit.



I'm not sure if it was the power of the massage, the tranquility of the environment, or the magic of the Andes, but that night, I slept better than I had done in, well, possibly months. In fact, my experiences at Inkaterra and in the surrounding valley were so positive, I've decided to stay here much longer than expected. And I think you would, too.

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