



# Machu Picchu

by Zachary Kappel | May 20, 2019



The next stop, Machu Picchu! When we booked our ticket to Peru we knew that regardless of the rest of the itinerary, we had to see Machu Picchu. As one of the seven wonders of the world and perhaps one of the most well-known spots on the planet, it's an absolute must. In anticipation of our visit I did some research and found it difficult to ascertain exactly what to expect from Aguas Calientes and Machu Picchu. Trains, busses, tickets, restaurants, accommodations – there are a lot of moving parts to this pivotal part of your visit to Peru. This post is all about making it easy, letting you in on the secret, and taking you step by step through everything you need to know to plan the perfect visit to the incredible Incan ruins at Machu Picchu.





First step – book your tickets for entry to Machu Picchu, preferably as far in advance as possible. Booking directly is easy - <https://www.machupicchu.gob.pe/inicio> - however you will need to know what you want to book. There are three choices that the vast majority visitors choose from – normal admission, **Huayna Picchu or Montana Machu Picchu**. Let me start by saying that the “epic” pictures you see online are taken with regular admission tickets, just up the hill upon entrance to Machu Picchu. I booked our trip a few weeks in advance and Huayna Picchu was completely booked. Huayna Picchu is the most rigorous of the hikes and also considerably shorter than Montaña Machu Picchu. If you are booking in advance and Huayna Picchu is available I would go for it, especially if you have two days to spend in the area. It’s a steep hike and gives incredible views of the ruins while seeing the ruins on Huayna Picchu as well. If not available don’t panic, there are additional hikes you can take that are included in general admission that are wonderful experiences as well.



We hiked to Inka Bridge (25 mins approx. each way) as well as the “Sun Gate” (1 hour up, 45 mins back) and it was incredible. Spectacular views and still left enough time to explore the village (the main attraction, walking through the ruins themselves – approx. 2 hours). My take on the visit was that I would recommend Montaña Machu Picchu for those who have more than one day to visit, we had one full day, which we thought was perfect. Montaña Machu Picchu is a longer hike and not quite as steep or intense as Huayna Picchu.





For a day visit I would ideally recommend general admission with a visit to the Sun Gate and exploring the pueblo before and after. Lastly, grab your bus tickets the night before – this is not included in your tickets referenced above. From Aguas Calientes it's roughly 30 minutes by bus to the gates of Machu Picchu. To buy tickets, head to the main street along the river (Avenida Hermanos Ayar) and follow the arrows painted on the street indicating bus ticket purchase, you can't miss it (<https://goo.gl/maps/nmzFXMkLy1tNBgC67>) - you'll need your passport to purchase, so don't forget it. Buy a roundtrip ticket the night before. There are no assigned times, so the ticket will get you onto any bus (leaving roughly every 5 or 10 minutes, continuously all day).



Step two – book your accommodations, our first choice and best option – [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel](#). If you've researched you know that Aguas Calientes has a number of choices, so why is [Inkaterra](#) the hands down winner? Accommodations, service, dining, amenities, activities (it's all inclusive of on site activities AND dining, which is absolutely amazing!) and just the overwhelming feeling of comfort, delight and excitement you get from walking over a rope bridge to arrive at a rainforest resort wonderland! This place is AMAZING, honestly, this property is worth visiting whether you go to Machu Picchu or not, anything else you do in Aguas Calientes is a bonus. We have quite a bit of travel under our belt, and I have to admit that this is one of the nicest if not **the** nicest accommodations we have enjoyed.





The property consists of weaving stone paths through the thick and beautiful Peruvian jungle. Casitas fill the rainforest, the pool and jacuzzi peak out between leaves and branches, then the dining and cocktail lodges come into view as you continue the path, it's perfection. The Casitas are absolute PARADISE! Our casita (83) was fully equipped with a king bed, private fire place, private garden – stay with me – private jacuzzi, private outdoor lounging area, outdoor shower and indoor shower wrapped in glass yielding an incredible view of your very own rain forest paradise.



The dining is incredible, some of our favorite meals in Peru were at [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo hotel](#). The duck and lamb shank were spectacular, and of course the Lomo Saltado – some of the best I've had anywhere! This is also a great place to try Cuy for those in search of a great take on the traditional dish. What's more, the cocktails and wine list are just as outstanding. Let me tell you nothing beats coming back from a long day of exploring the ruins like a pisco sour tasting at the bar!



The included activities on the property are equally as fantastic. We enjoyed a from-scratch tea making experience. From picking the tea leaves in the hotel's private tea leaf garden to grinding the leaves and tasting the tea, the tea making is a great way to immerse yourself in the history of the land. The on-site activities office also helped us arrange a private guide for Machu Picchu with hardly a day's notice. The guide accompanied us for the first half of the day as we toured the pueblo, giving us history and background for about 3 hours on-site. We actually had admission to re-enter once (this comes with tickets from Huayna Picchu or Machu Picchu mountain) so we exited with our guide to say goodbye and grab a snack and beer outside the gate, before re-entering to hike the Sun-gate and explore on our own.



The Inkaterra property is situated on 12 acres of rainforest, it is no wonder it is a member of National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World. Walking the property is enchanting and an activity in itself with over 200 bird species and the world's largest native orchid collection! I invite you to count the 373 different species of orchids that have been registered. When not in the Machu Picchu pueblo we spent virtually all of our time relaxing in the Inkaterra jungle paradise.



Step three – trains to and from Aguas Calientes. There are two main train companies: Peru Rail and Inca Rail. For Peru Rail and Inca Rail, trains depart from Poroy station, the station near Cusco, or from Ollantaytambo station, the station near Urubamba. We took the Inca Rail train from Ollantaytambo after our incredible stay at Sol y Luna (read our previous blog post, here), and bought tickets a week or two in advance. All the trains and carriers are similar, we based our choice off of the departure times and picked what was most optimal for our schedule. Upon arrival at the station in Aguas Calientes there will be an Inkaterra rep from the hotel to walk you through the market and to the hotel, it couldn't be easier. Upon departure we went directly from Aguas Calientes to Cusco (technically Puro station and a 20-minute Uber ride). If you're looking to treat yourself try Peru Rail's exclusive Belmond Hiram Bingham train, operating on the same route, Cusco – Ollantaytambo – Aguas Calientes, offering upscale dining, bar and entertainment. The train ride is beautiful no matter how you choose. Enjoy the ride! Our next stop: Puno region and Lake Titicaca! Stay with us for the next post, coming soon!



P.S. For more photos, information, and details on our Machu Picchu adventure, Aguas Calientes, and more, visit [our Instagram, @lexandzachtravel!](#) Oh, and be sure to check out our Story Highlights! And if you like the look of our photos then check out our new [presets: Inkaterra Presets](#) and [Machu Picchu Presets!](#) And don't forget to bring a rain jacket!



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