

LUXE

A GUIDE TO PERU'S CAN'T-MISS RESORTS AND PLACES TO VISIT FOR YOUR HONEYMOON

Its ancient sites, beautiful topography, and diverse ecosystem make Peru one of the most beautiful destinations in South America, and perfect for adventure-seeking honeymooners.

22 OCT 2019 BY DEVANSHI MODY



Visitors flock to the glorious Inca citadel of Machu Picchu in Peru as they would to The Louvre for Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa: to radiate in its presence, take a gazillion images and then head home. But there is so much more to experience at this South American destination. Bestowed with splendid diversity by Mother Nature and rich in culture, Peru is the perfect honeymoon spot for those with a taste for adventure and luxurious stays.



FIRST STOP: LIMA

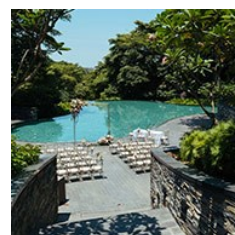
Whether it's world-class food, the exciting nightlife, colonial-style architecture or surfing, this Peruvian gem has something for everyone. Giving you a good taste of the cuisine is the colonial mansion-turned-restaurant Astrid Y Gaston, where Astrid, the flamboyantly-dressed owner flits between tables and waxes lyrical about its bestselling wine-paired seven-course meal. Afterwards, head to Pizza Street in Miraflores or La Plaza in Barranco, where music and dancing go on all night. Peruvians don't head out until about 11pm, so plan on staying out late. Or park yourselves at Ayahuasca, a three-storey, carnival fun-house of a bar.



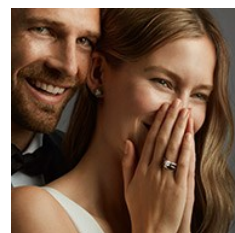
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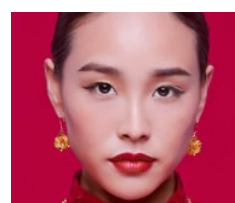
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Lima's colonial mansion-turned-restaurant Astrid Y Gaston.

ON TO CUSCO

Next stop: the ancient Inca capital of Cusco, where you should treat yourself to a stay at the best resort and spa in Peru’s Sacred Valley of the Incas. Known for its personalised services and next-level pampering, Tambo Del Inka, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, is set in hectares of sumptuous gardens surrounded by shimmering snow-capped mountains. It boasts an alfresco dining terrace serving marvellous mocktails concocted with exotic indigenous ingredients, and Peru’s most famous Farm to Table Experience using the freshest bounty from its own organic farm.

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You’ll be able to see, smell, harvest, prepare and cook under the close guidance of the resort’s chef, and then enjoy the most delicious meal right next to the river fronting the farm, with a fantastic view of snowy peaks. The resort also features one of the world’s most sensational pools – a glass-encased indoor-outdoor pool that extends over a lawn attracting all species of birds.



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Not sure what to see first? Venturia, a travel desk at the resort, offers customised tours. Must-visits include the Ollantaytambo ruins, once a huge Inca fortress with large stone terraces, cobble-stoned streets and adobe buildings. Major sites within the complex include the famous Temple of The Sun and the Princess Baths fountain.

The Salineras de Maras’ salt pans are still used exactly as they were in the time of the Incas by people doing the back-breaking work of harvesting salt on small family plots. The salt gathered here is some of the best in the world. Stop at a store or one of the many small-scale vendors selling the “fruit” of their labour in its pure form or mixed with herbs for cooking, bathing, or chocolate bars.



MORAY’S CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

Another marvel of nature are the mysterious Incan concentric terraces (above) in the city of Moray, about 50km north-west of Cusco. Resembling ancient Greek amphitheatres, they’re shaped like giant bowls and the terraces within them are split by staircases that extend upwards, so visitors can walk from the top to the bottom of the bowls.



Also awesome, and with relatively fewer tourists, is the breathtaking Pisac Inca citadel guides often call Little Machu Picchu. It lies high above Pisac village on a triangular plateau with a plunging gorge on either side. Some sections of the path upwards can get difficult for vertigo sufferers, but the destination is really worth the effort.

For culture and history buffs, there is the majestic Baroque Saint Peter the Apostle of Andahuaylillas church with its ceilings covered in beautiful religious paintings. Then there is Tipon, which resembles an ancient Roman village caught in time with its lavish lawns and

gently cascading terraces with water channels and fountains, and the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin or Cusco Cathedral.

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A great place to stay the night at is Palacio del Inka. Set in a five-centuries-old mansion in downtown Cusco, its design embraces historical aspects of the Peruvian culture such as stone archways and ornate gilded antiques, while maintaining world-class luxury and modern conveniences.

THE ALLURE OF MACHU PICCHU

For a unique experience, journey to Machu Picchu on the iconic Belmond Hiram Bingham luxury train with its cars full of 1920s Old-World beauty and charm. Before you embark, you're served sparkling wine at the station and entertained by vivacious folk dancers. After settling in, enjoy the brunch in carriages with beautiful vintage furnishings, and then head to the train's open-air end to enjoy the breathtaking Andes mountains.

On disembarking, take a guided scenic bus ride included in the train fare and soak in the views of seemingly endless mountains stretching towards the clouds before succumbing to the magical charm of the multi-tiered Machu Picchu set high in the Andes above the Urubamba River valley.

Shrouded by mist and surrounded by lush vegetation and steep escarpments, the sprawling Inca citadel is the most famous archaeological site on the continent. Built in the 15th century, it's famous for its sophisticated dry-stone walls that fuse huge blocks without the use of mortar, intriguing buildings that play on astronomical alignments, and panoramic views.

Of course, the best time of day to visit Machu Picchu is in the early morning or mid-afternoon; the crowds tend to be at their heaviest from about 11am to 3pm. So while they get all hot and sweaty, allow yourself to enjoy afternoon tea at Belmond Sanctuary Lodge, which stands sentinel, as it were, right outside the Inca fortress.

Now, if you thought your trip had reached its peak with Machu Picchu, then you haven't yet checked into the all-inclusive explora Valle Sagrado. Located between Cusco and Machu Picchu at an altitude of 600m below the ancient Inca capital city, it emerges from a hazy speckle of purple and golden corn, like something out of an Impressionist painting, and offers visitors an in-depth exploration experience from a base immersed in the history of the Inca.





Inkaterra Hacienda Urubumba




Inkaterra Hacienda Urubumba

Alternatively, spend the night at the Inkaterra Hacienda Urubumba hotel and spa, which literally glitters on the hillside, and is among the most beautiful lodgings in Peru. The main building recreates a traditional Spanish hacienda and is built around a large central courtyard. Individual casitas rise behind on the lilt of the hill.

CALL OF THE RAINFOREST

A short flight from Cusco lands you in the Peruvian Amazon, and a downstream journey along the river takes you to Tambopata Research Center, the only lodge in the Amazonian Tambopata Reserve Forest. The Rainforest Expeditions began 30 years ago when founder Eduardo Nycander visited the Amazon, decided to rescue macaws and, engineered artificial nests. Later, the eco-lodge was added.





From the main building, a seven-minute walk along a wooden bridge leads you to three-walled deluxe suites opening onto a heady tumble of ferociously green jungle enclosing Maldivian-style terraces with outdoor baths, showers and lounges. Your bed, seemingly seamless with the jungle, has a mosquito net to keep out flying insects.

The famed Tambopata Macaw Project involves the most profound research on wild macaws in the Amazon, and mornings are spent observing them, parrots and parakeets, whose colours are as cacophonous as their voices. There are also monkey trails and bamboo-forest hikes.

Next, explore the northern Amazon on a Delfin cruise. You can hop into a skiff for excursions along astonishingly pretty streams or breakfast on the boat with pink and grey dolphins swimming alongside.

HONEYMOON HAVENS

For the ultimate honeymoon experience, book into Titilaka, a luxury lodge on Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable water body that stretches like an ocean. Your airport transfer comes with blankets and oxygen (it's at 3,810m!), Wi-Fi, juices and amazing snacks. At the lodge, smart leather sofas, slick lights and contemporary art flirt with a fanciful extravaganza of vibrant decorative shawls and ornate pink cows. Rooms come with opulent beds and the richest toiletries in all Peru. Everything from the mini bar, plus meals and excursions are complimentary. Book the handsome boat for a delightful picnic at Taquile Island.



Another place to escape to is Belmond Las Casitas with luxurious cottage-style villas set in the beautiful surroundings of Colca Canyon, which is among the world's deepest canyons, and where giant condors fly.



From here, Arequipa city, framed by three volcanoes, is great for a day excursion. If you're game, Aldo del Camp, its dapper general manager can organise a whale of a picturesque drive all the way to Nazca. Otherwise, lounge with a book on an outdoor bench, book a rigorous massage at the spa, walk around the charming gardens as the light changes over the hills or take a soak in the outdoor tub at your lodging.



One last stop to check out is Hotel Paracas, where the sea and desert kiss, and manicured lawns roll down to the brilliant blue sea bobbing with boats. Lounge on your villa's terrace and drink in the view or sign up for the in-house spa's top-notch massages.

Alternatively, flaunt your best beachwear and get an envy-inciting tan by the pool that glistens like a multifaceted sapphire before tucking into stupendously good food! Still in holiday mode? The Venturia travel desk at Hotel Paracas offers desert odysseys with dune-bashing rollicks culminating in dune-top sunsets best enjoyed with a bottle of wine. In the morning, take the speedboat to Ballestas Islands to see birds, sea lions and other exotic marine creatures. Chau!

GETTING THERE

South America travel expert [Katrina Trotter](#) crafts customised honeymoon tours to Peru that include highlights and gourmet secrets of Peru with private guides, tours, luxury accommodation, and private transfers.

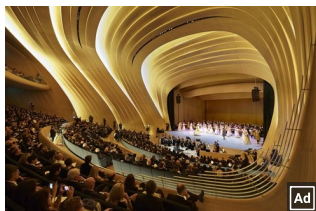
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