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Machu Picchu Reopens After Month-Long Closure

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Peru's top destination reopened February 15, 2023 after an almost month-long closure due to political unrest in the South American country.

Machu Picchu (Photo by Carlos Garcia Granthon/Fotoholica Press/LightRocket via Getty Images)

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Reopening of Machu Pichu

Late 2022 and early 2023 saw political protests in many parts of Peru, linked to the actions of former president, Pedro Castillo, who was ousted and jailed in December 2022. Peru temporarily closed some airports and railways, including the train between Cusco and the base town of Machu Picchu, and then closed the popular tourist site itself for almost a month.

Reuters reports that the reopening came about following an agreement between community leaders, tourist businesses and government authorities. In a statement, a representative from Peru's cultural ministry said "This decision reflects the joint commitment of the institutions that make up the Machu Picchu Management Unit, the municipal authorities of Machu Picchu and Ollantaytambo, directors of the Chamber of Commerce and leaders of social organizations, to ensure the safety of the monument and transport services so that visitors can enjoy their visit."

A llama at Machu Picchu.

Logistics for visiting Machu Picchu

To get to Machu Picchu, travelers need to take the train to the town of Aguas Calientes (also called Machu Picchu Pueblo) and then take a bus (or hike) up to the ancient Incan site itself. The train can be caught anywhere between the city of Cusco (where travelers arrive after flights from Peru's capital, Lima) and Ollantaytambo, the last town reachable by road. Site tickets are available online and in Aguas Calientes; train tickets can be purchased online and in towns along the route.

Aguas Calientes provides the easiest logistics for getting to Machu Picchu, particularly for those with tickets for a morning visit, since there is no need to take the train and then the bus. There are several excellent nearby hotels, though other towns in the Sacred Valley have more to offer travelers than does Aguas Calientes.

Machu Picchu, Peru

Minimizing the effects of the altitude

Many travelers make the mistake of trying to acclimatize to the Andes' considerable altitude in Cusco before going to see Machu Picchu. The altitude sickness zone begins at 8,000 feet above sea level while Machu Picchu is just below that at 7,972 feet. Cusco is 11,150 feet above sea level.

Travelers arriving straight from Lima will feel the altitude's effects, but find it much more tolerable by staying in lower altitude towns and then returning to explore Cusco after a few days of acclimatizing. The Sacred Valley town of Urubamba is 9,420 feet above sea level and Ollantaytambo is 9,160 feet. Aguas Callientes is at 6,700 feet.

Best hotels for visiting Machu Picchu

Ideal stays in Aguas Calientes include Sumaq Machu Picchu Hotel and Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel. Luxurious [Sumaq Machu Picchu Hotel](#) is in Aguas Calientes/Machu Picchu Pueblo in a quiet location along the river and has an excellent restaurant serving Peruvian and international dishes. It's a short walk from both the train station and the stop where the bus picks up passengers for Machu Picchu. Five-star [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel](#) is on the other edge of town on a 12-acre property featuring 214 species of birds and 372 species of orchids. Inkaterra's Unu Spa will ease any aches and pains from days of hiking with its Andean sauna and treatments like The Walker, which reduces inflammation and relaxes muscles using a gel of Andean cat's claw plant.

Tambo del Inka's indoor-outdoor pool.

For stays in the Sacred Valley, Urubamba is a pretty town for wandering and is ideally located to see sites beyond Machu Picchu like the Maras Salt Mines and the concentric terraces at Moray. Tambo del Inka, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa is a short walk to town and has its own private train station taking you between Cusco and Aguas Calientes. Tambo del Inka's Kallpa Spa is one of the best in Peru and has a thermal circuit and extensive treatment offerings. Hotel guests can access its spectacular indoor-outdoor pool without needing to book a spa treatment.

For stays in Cusco itself, the elegant JW Marriott El Convento Cusco is in a 16th-century restored former convent near Cusco's main square. Some of the

hotel's rooms are oxygen-enriched for those who have rushed their altitude acclimatizing. The hotel is known for its immense arched courtyard, art by contemporary Peruvian artists, and five-star service.

Iberostar Selection Miraflores' rooftop, Lima, Peru.

When visiting Machu Pichu, almost all travelers arrive in Peru in Lima and most need to at least overnight in the capital before flying to Cusco. Wise travelers book a few days in Lima before and/or after their long flights to Peru and so that they can explore the Pacific coastal city's sites.

[Iberostar Selection Miraflores](#) is a centrally-located five-star hotel—it's just two blocks from the malecón promenade above the Pacific (many rooms have views of the ocean) and a short walk to the main square in Lima's popular

Miraflores neighborhood. The hotel has multiple sustainability policies, including no single-use plastics, thorough recycling programs, and filtered water stations on each floor. The 214-room hotel is popular for its rooftop tapas bar next to its infinity pool for watching the sun set over the Pacific and for its ground-floor Ortega & Huaman restaurant which serves international and Peruvian dishes, including ceviche made with sustainable fish.

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