



Amazing Machu Picchu

Description

Peru's top travel destination

By Eva Stelzer

Machu Picchu is one of the top ten must-see destinations in the world, and rightfully so. Passionate travellers from all over the world flock to Machu Picchu, the 15th century Inca site that provides an insight into a culture long gone.

Located high in the Andes Mountains in what is known as the Cusco Region of Peru, Machu Picchu was brought to the attention of the modern world when Peruvian guide and Yale professor Hiram Bingham rediscovered it in 1911. The site had ironically never been lost to the local mountain people, who still grew crops on the terraced hills.



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interesting aspect of the site is its precise location. Inca astronomers spent two years charting the path of the sun so that the summer solstice would shine through the entrance – known as the sungate – of the summer palace. Today, when hikers walk the trails to enter Machu Picchu, they enter via the sungate after a four-day trek of amazing vistas and experiences. Of course there are also trains that can get you to Machu Picchu without all that leg power and physical exertion. There are three different options on Peruvian rail to get to Machu Picchu. They all stop in Aguas Calientes. You can take the most local train or Expedition, the Vistadome which, as the name suggests, has amazing picture windows for breath-taking vistas, or you can return from Machu Picchu on the luxurious Hiram Bingham train. The Hiram Bingham is by far the most expensive option. The main difference is in the experience. More than just transportation, the train provides dinner and drinks and Peruvian entertainment.

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The Machu Picchu Citadel structures include palaces, temples, homes and more, all situated on a mountain ridge. Considering the fact that it was likely built in the 15th century, the architecture and manpower involved in the creation of this amazing estate is nothing short of spectacular. Machu Picchu is complete with farming terraces and grain storages to create a self-sustaining community.

While the exact usage of the location is unknown, there are many theories ranging from religious worship to



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high quality architecture, built largely without the use of mortar, the buildings have been extremely well preserved and provide an amazing destination for all who travel to it. For those interested in learning about the collapse of the Inca Empire, visiting Machu Picchu is a surreal, deeply moving experience.

Many intrepid travellers choose the one or four-day hike into the sungate. A four-day trek will amaze, including



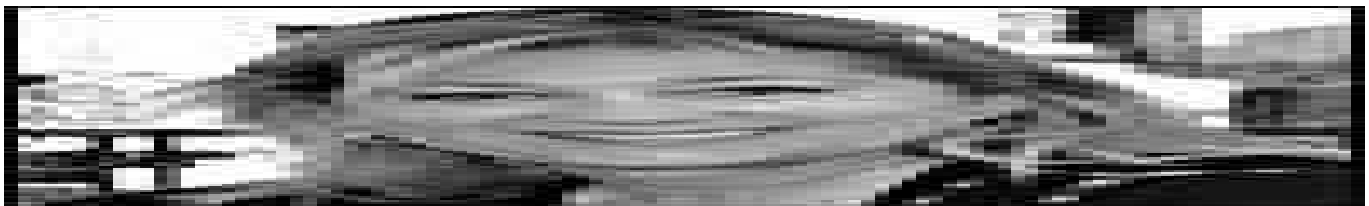
three nights in a tent without a luxury store in sight. The full trek includes a grand total of 91,000 steps, 766 flights of stairs and 60 kilometres.

Not the trekking type? Don't worry. You can also take the train all the way to Aguas Caliente and then a 30-minute bus ride directly to the entrance of the Machu Picchu Citadel. Whichever way you decide to travel, a visit to Machu Picchu is the experience of a lifetime.

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Images: courtesy of Eva Stelzer.



Eva Stelzer, former academic writer-turned-freelancer, specializes in travel, fitness, and anything active. She calls Montreal home, has studied in Paris, France and Cuenca, Spain and has lived in Italy. She speaks English, French, Spanish, and Italian.

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