Machu Picchu

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[Jump to navigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#mw-head)[Jump to search](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#p-search)

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| --- | --- |
| **Machu Picchu** | |
| [80 - Machu Picchu - Juin 2009 - edit.2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg)  Machu Picchu in June 2009 | |
| [Map showing location of Machu Picchu in Peru](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Peru_physical_map.svg)  Map showing location of Machu Picchu in Peru  Shown within Peru | |
| **Location** | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/cf/Flag_of_Peru.svg/23px-Flag_of_Peru.svg.png [Peru](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru) [Cusco Region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cusco_Region) |
| **Coordinates** | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[13°09′48″S 72°32′44″W](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Machu_Picchu&params=13_09_48_S_72_32_44_W_type:landmark)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[13°09′48″S 72°32′44″W](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Machu_Picchu&params=13_09_48_S_72_32_44_W_type:landmark) |
| **Height** | 2,430 metres (7,970 ft) |
| **History** | |
| **Founded** | c. 1450 |
| **Abandoned** | 1572 |
| **Cultures** | [Inca civilization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_civilization) |
| **Site notes** | |
| **Archaeologists** | [Hiram Bingham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiram_Bingham_III) |
|  | |
| [**UNESCO World Heritage Site**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) | |
| **Official name** | Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu |
| **Type** | Mixed |
| **Criteria** | i, iii, vii, ix |
| **Designated** | 1983 (7th [session](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Committee)) |
| **Reference no.** | [274](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/274) |
| **State Party** | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/cf/Flag_of_Peru.svg/23px-Flag_of_Peru.svg.png [Peru](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru) |
| **Region** | [Latin America and the Caribbean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_the_Americas) |

**Machu Picchu** (English: [/ˈmɑːtʃuː ˈpiːktʃuː/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-ahd-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-6) or [/ˈpiːtʃuː/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English),[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-ahd-3)[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-8) Spanish: [[ˈmatʃu ˈpi(k)tʃu]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/Spanish);[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-9) [Quechua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quechua_language): *Machu Pikchu*[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-10)[[ˈmatʃʊ ˈpɪktʃʊ]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/Quechua)) is a 15th-century [Inca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Empire) [citadel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citadel), located in the Eastern Cordillera of southern Peru, on a mountain ridge 2,430 metres (7,970 ft) above sea level.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-unesco-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-UNESCO_WHC-12) It is located in the [Cusco Region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cusco_Region), [Urubamba Province](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urubamba_Province), [Machupicchu District](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machupicchu_District) in [Peru](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru),[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-13)above the [Sacred Valley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_Valley), which is 80 kilometres (50 mi) northwest of [Cuzco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuzco) and through which the [Urubamba River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urubamba_River) flows, cutting through the Cordillera and creating a canyon with a tropical mountain climate.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-14)

Most [archaeologists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeologists) believe that Machu Picchu was constructed as an estate for the Inca emperor [Pachacuti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pachacuti) (1438–1472). Often mistakenly referred to as the "Lost City of the Incas" (a title more accurately applied to [Vilcabamba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilcabamba,_Peru)), it is the most familiar icon of [Inca civilization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Empire). The Incas built the estate around 1450 but abandoned it a century later at the time of the [Spanish Conquest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_conquest_of_the_Inca_Empire). Although known locally, it was not known to the Spanish during the colonial period and remained unknown to the outside world until American historian [Hiram Bingham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiram_Bingham_III) brought it to international attention in 1911.

Machu Picchu was built in the classical Inca style, with polished [dry-stone walls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dry-stone_wall). Its three primary structures are the [*Intihuatana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intihuatana,_Urubamba), the *Temple of the Sun*, and the *Room of the Three Windows*. Most of the outlying buildings have been reconstructed in order to give tourists a better idea of how they originally appeared.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTENava19769%E2%80%9310-15) By 1976, thirty percent of Machu Picchu had been restored[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-FOOTNOTENava19769%E2%80%9310-15) and restoration continues.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDavey2001-16)

Machu Picchu was declared a Peruvian Historic Sanctuary in 1981 and a [UNESCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) [World Heritage Site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) in 1983.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-UNESCO_WHC-12) In 2007, Machu Picchu was voted one of the [New Seven Wonders of the World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New7Wonders_of_the_World#Winners) in a worldwide Internet poll.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-17)

## **Etymology[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: Etymology)]**

In the [Quechua language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quechua_language), *machu* means "old" or "old person", while *pikchu* means either "portion of coca being chewed" or "pyramid, pointed multi-sided solid; cone".[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-18) The name of the site is often interpreted as "old mountain".[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-19)

## **History[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: History)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Machupicchu_hb10.jpg)

View of the city of Machu Picchu in 1912 showing the original ruins after major clearing and before modern reconstruction work began.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTENava20009%E2%80%9310-20)[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDavey2001-16)

Machu Picchu was built around 1450–1460.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:0-21) Its construction appears to date to the period of the two great Inca rulers, [Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pachacuti) (1438–1471) and [Túpac Inca Yupanqui](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topa_Inca_Yupanqui) (1472–1493).[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-22)[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hiram-23):xxxvi There is a consensus among archaeologists that Pachacutec ordered the construction of the royal estate for himself, most likely after his successful military campaign. Though Machu Picchu is considered to be a "royal" estate, surprisingly, the estate would not have been passed down in the line of [succession](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_succession). It was used for only approximately 80 years before being abandoned, seemingly due to destruction of the [Spanish Conquests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_conquest_of_the_Inca_Empire) in other parts of the [Inca Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Empire).[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:0-21) It is possible that most of its inhabitants died from [smallpox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smallpox) introduced by travelers before the Spanish [conquistadors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conquistador) arrived in the area.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-24)

### Daily life of Machu Picchu as a royal estate**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Daily life of Machu Picchu as a royal estate)]**

During its use as a royal estate, it is estimated that no more than 750 people lived there at a time, most people being support staff ([*yanaconas*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanakuna)*, yana)*[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-:0-21)[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:1-25) who lived there permanently. Though the estate belonged to Pachacutec, religious specialists and temporary specialized workers (*mayocs*) lived there as well, most likely for the ruler's well-being and enjoyment. During the harsher season, staff dropped down to around a hundred servants and a few religious specialists focused on maintenance alone.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:0-21)

Studies show that according to their skeletal remains, most people who lived there were immigrants from diverse backgrounds. They lacked the chemical markers and osteological markers they would have if they had been living there their whole lives. Instead, there was bone damage from various species of water [parasites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parasites_of_humans) indigenous to different areas of Peru. There were also varying osteological stressors and varying chemical densities suggesting varying long-term diets characteristic of specific regions that were spaced apart.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:3-26)These diets are composed of varying levels of [maize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maize), [potatoes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potato), [grains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grain), [legumes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legume), and [fish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fish), but the overall most recent short-term diet for these people was composed of less fish and more corn. This suggests that several of the immigrants were from more coastal areas and moved to Machu Picchu where corn was a larger portion of food intake.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:1-25) The skeletal remains found at Machu Picchu are also unique in their level of natural bone damage from laborious activities. Most people found at the site had lower levels of [arthritis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthritis) and [bone fractures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bone_fracture) than those found in most sites of the Inca Empire. Inca individuals who had arthritis and bone fractures were typically those who performed heavy physical labor (such as the [Mit'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mit%27a)) and/or served in the [Inca military](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_army).[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:0-21)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Llama_on_Machu_Picchu.jpg)

[Llama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llama) with Machu Picchu [ruins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruin) in the background.

Animals are also suspected to have immigrated to Machu Picchu as there were several bones found that were not native to the area. Most animal bones found were from [llamas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llama) and [alpacas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpaca). These animals naturally live at altitudes of 4,000 metres (13,000 ft) rather than the 2,400 metres (7,900 ft) elevation of Machu Picchu. Most likely, these animals were brought in from the [Puna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puna_grassland) region[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-27) for meat consumption and for their pelts. [Guinea pigs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guinea_pig) were also found at the site in special burial caves, suggesting that they were at least used for funerary rituals,[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-:0-21)as it was common throughout the Inca Empire to use them for sacrifices and meat.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-28) Six dogs were also recovered from the site. Due to their placements among the human remains, it is believed that they served as companions of the dead.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:0-21)

### Agriculture**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Agriculture)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Machu_Picchu_(3833992683).jpg)

[Terraces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrace_(agriculture)) used for [farming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farming) at Machu Picchu

Much of the [farming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incan_agriculture) done at Machu Picchu was done on its hundreds of man-made terraces. These terraces were a work of considerable engineering, built to ensure good drainage and soil fertility while also protecting the mountain itself from erosion and landslides. However, the terraces were not perfect, as studies of the land show that there were landslides that happened during the construction of Machu Picchu. Still visible are places where the terraces were shifted by landslides and then stabilized by the Inca as they continued to build around the area.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:2-29)

It is estimated that the area around the site has received more than 1,800 mm (71 in) of rain per year since A.D. 1450, which was more than needed to support crop growth there. Because of the large amount of rainfall at Machu Picchu, it was found that [irrigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irrigation_in_Peru) was not needed for the terraces. The terraces received so much rain that they were built specifically to allow for ample drainage of the extra water. Excavation and soil analyses done by [Kenneth Wright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incan_engineers) in the 90s showed that the terraces were built in layers, with a bottom layer of larger stones covered by loose gravel.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:2-29) On top of the gravel was a layer of mixed sand and gravel packed together, with rich topsoil covering all of that. It was proven that the topsoil was probably moved from the valley floor to the terraces because it was much better than the soil higher up the mountain.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:0-21)

However, it has been found that the terrace farming area makes up about just 4.9 ha (12 acres) of land, and a study of the soil around the terraces showed that what was grown there was mostly corn and potatoes, which was not enough to support the 750+ people living at Machu Picchu. Therefore, when studies were done on the food that the Inca ate at Machu Picchu, it was found that most of what they ate was imported from the surrounding valleys and farther afield.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-:3-26)

### Encounters**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: Encounters)]**

Even though Machu Picchu was located only about 80 kilometers (50 mi) from the Inca capital in [Cusco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cusco), the Spanish never found it and so did not plunder or destroy it, as they did many other sites.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarra1-30)[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hiram-23):xxx The conquistadors had notes of a place called *Piccho*, although no record of a Spanish visit exists. Unlike other locations, sacred rocks often defaced by the conquistadors remain untouched at Machu Picchu.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarra20011-31)

Over the centuries, the surrounding jungle overgrew the site, and few outside the immediate area knew of its existence. The site may have been discovered and plundered in 1867 by a German businessman, Augusto Berns.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-32) Some evidence indicates that German engineer J. M. von Hassel arrived earlier. Maps show references to Machu Picchu as early as 1874.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-33)

In 1911 American historian and explorer [Hiram Bingham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiram_Bingham_III) traveled the region looking for the old Inca capital and was led to Machu Picchu by a villager, Melchor Arteaga. Bingham found the name Agustín Lizárraga and the date 1902 written in charcoal on one of the walls. Though Bingham was not the first to visit the ruins, he was considered the scientific discoverer who brought Machu Picchu to international attention. Bingham organized another expedition in 1912 to undertake major clearing and excavation.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hiram-23):xxx-xxxi

In the variety of its charms and the power of its spell, I know of no place in the world which can compare with it. Not only has it great snow peaks looming above the clouds more than two miles overhead, gigantic precipices of many-colored granite rising sheer for thousands of feet above the foaming, glistening, roaring rapids; it has also, in striking contrast, orchids and tree ferns, the delectable beauty of luxurious vegetation, and the mysterious witchery of the jungle.

— **Hiram Bingham III** [[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-34)

In 1981, Peru declared an area of 325.92 square kilometres (125.84 sq mi) surrounding Machu Picchu a "historic sanctuary". In addition to the ruins, the sanctuary includes a large portion of the adjoining region, rich with the [flora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flora) and [fauna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fauna) of the [Peruvian Yungas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peruvian_Yungas) and [Central Andean wet puna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Andean_wet_puna) [ecoregions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecoregions).[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-ecoregions-35)

In 1983, UNESCO designated Machu Picchu a [World Heritage site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_site), describing it as "an absolute masterpiece of architecture and a unique testimony to the Inca civilization".[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-unesco-11)

### First American expedition**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: First American expedition)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Melchor_Arteaga_crossing_the_Urubamba_River_on_24_July_1911.jpg)

Melchor Arteaga crossing the Urubamba River on 24 July 1911

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sergeant_Carrasco_at_Machu_Picchu_on_24_July_1911.jpg)

Sergeant Carrasco at Machu Picchu on 24 July 1911

Bingham was a lecturer at [Yale University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale_University), although not a trained archaeologist. In 1909, returning from the Pan-American Scientific Congress in Santiago, he travelled through Peru and was invited to explore the Inca ruins at [Choqquequirau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choquequirao) in the Apurímac Valley. He organized the 1911 Yale Peruvian Expedition in part to search for the Inca capital, which was thought to be the city of [Vitcos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitcos). He consulted Carlos Romero, one of the chief historians in Lima who showed him helpful references and Father [Antonio de la Calancha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_de_la_Calancha)’s Chronicle of the Augustinians. In particular, Ramos thought Vitcos was "near a great white rock over a spring of fresh water." Back in Cusco again, Bingham asked planters about the places mentioned by Calancha, particularly along the Urubamba River. According to Bingham, "one old prospector said there were interesting ruins at Machu Picchu," though his statements "were given no importance by the leading citizens." Only later did Bingham learn that [Charles Wiener](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Wiener) also heard of the ruins at [Huayna Picchu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huayna_Picchu) and Machu Picchu, but was unable to reach them.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hiram-23)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hiram_Bingham_III_at_his_tent_door_near_Machu_Picchu_in_1912.jpg)

[Hiram Bingham III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiram_Bingham_III) at his tent door near Machu Picchu in 1912

Armed with this information the expedition went down the [Urubamba River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urubamba_River). En route, Bingham asked local people to show them Inca ruins, especially any place described as having a white rock over a spring.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hiram-23):137

At Mandor Pampa, Bingham asked farmer and innkeeper Melchor Arteaga if he knew of any nearby ruins. Arteaga said he knew of excellent ruins on the top of Huayna Picchu.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBingham2010-36) The next day, 24 July, Arteaga led Bingham and Sergeant Carrasco across the river on a log bridge and up the Huayna Picchu mountain. At the top of the mountain, they came across a small hut occupied by a couple of [Quechua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quechua_people), Richard and Alvarez, who were farming some of the original Machu Picchu agricultural terraces that they had cleared four years earlier. Alvarez's 11-year-old son, Pablito, led Bingham along the ridge to the main ruins.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarra20011-31)

The ruins were mostly covered with vegetation except for the cleared agricultural terraces and clearings used by the farmers as vegetable gardens. Because of the vegetation, Bingham was not able to observe the full extent of the site. He took preliminary notes, measurements, and photographs, noting the fine quality of Inca stonework of several principal buildings. Bingham was unclear about the original purpose of the ruins, but decided that there was no indication that it matched the description of Vitcos.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hiram-23):141, 186–187

The expedition continued down the Urubamba and up the Vilcabamba Rivers examining all the ruins they could find. Guided by locals, Bingham rediscovered and correctly identified the site of the old Inca capital, [Vitcos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitcos) (then called Rosaspata), and the nearby temple of [Chuquipalta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuquipalta). He then crossed a pass and into the Pampaconas Valley where he found more ruins heavily buried in the jungle undergrowth at [Espíritu Pampa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esp%C3%ADritu_Pampa), which he named "Trombone Pampa".[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-37) As was the case with Machu Picchu, the site was so heavily overgrown that Bingham could only note a few of the buildings. In 1964, [Gene Savoy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Savoy) further explored the ruins at Espiritu Pampa and revealed the full extent of the site, identifying it as [Vilcabamba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilcabamba,_Peru) Viejo, where the Incas fled after the Spanish drove them from Vitcos.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-38)[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hiram-23):xxxv

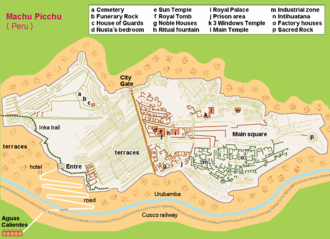
Bingham returned to Machu Picchu in 1912 under the sponsorship of Yale University and National Geographic again and with the full support of Peruvian [President Leguia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augusto_B._Legu%C3%ADa). The expedition undertook a four-month clearing of the site with local labour, which was expedited with the support of the Prefect of Cuzco. Excavation started in 1912 with further excavation undertaken in 1914 and 1915. Bingham focused on Machu Picchu because of its fine Inca stonework and well-preserved nature, which had lain undisturbed since the site was abandoned. None of Bingham's several hypotheses explaining the site held up. During his studies, he carried various artifacts back to Yale. One prominent artifact was a set of 15th-century, ceremonial Incan knives made from [bismuth bronze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bismuth_bronze); they are the earliest known artifact containing this alloy.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-39)[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-40)

Although local institutions initially welcomed the exploration, they soon accused Bingham of legal and cultural malpractice.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-autogenerated1-41) Rumors arose that the team was stealing artifacts and smuggling them out of Peru through Bolivia. (In fact, Bingham removed many artifacts, but openly and legally; they were deposited in the Yale University Museum. Bingham was abiding by the 1852 Civil Code of Peru; the code stated that "archaeological finds generally belonged to the discoverer, except when they had been discovered on private land." (Batievsky 100)[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-42) ) Local press perpetuated the accusations, claiming that the excavation harmed the site and deprived local archaeologists of knowledge about their own history.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-autogenerated1-41) Landowners began to demand rent from the excavators.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-autogenerated1-41) By the time Bingham and his team left Machu Picchu, locals had formed coalitions to defend their ownership of Machu Picchu and its cultural remains, while Bingham claimed the artifacts ought to be studied by experts in American institutions.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-autogenerated1-41)

### Human sacrifice and mysticism**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=7" \o "Edit section: Human sacrifice and mysticism)]**

Little information describes human sacrifices at Machu Picchu, though many sacrifices were never given a proper burial, and their skeletal remains succumbed to the elements.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Gaither-43):115 However, there is evidence that retainers were sacrificed to accompany a deceased noble in the afterlife.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Gaither-43):107,119 Animal, liquid and dirt sacrifices to the gods were much more common, made at the Altar of the Condor. The tradition is upheld by members of the [New Age Andean religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pachamama#New_Age_Worship).[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Hill-44):263

## **Geography[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=8" \o "Edit section: Geography)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Karta_MachuPicchu.PNG)

Map of Machu Picchu

Machu Picchu lies in the [southern hemisphere](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_hemisphere), 13.164 degrees south of the [equator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equator).[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarraix-45) It is 80 kilometres (50 miles) northwest of Cusco, on the crest of the mountain Machu Picchu, located about 2,430 metres (7,970 feet) [above mean sea level](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Above_mean_sea_level), over 1,000 metres (3,300 ft) lower than [Cusco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cusco), which has an elevation of 3,400 metres (11,200 ft).[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarraix-45) As such, it had a milder climate than the Inca capital. It is one of the most important archaeological sites in South America, one of the most visited tourist attractions in Latin America[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-FOOTNOTEDavies1997163-46) and the most visited in Peru.

Machu Picchu features wet humid summers and dry frosty winters, with the majority of the [annual rain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precipitation_(meteorology)) falling from October through to March.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarraix-45)

Machu Picchu is situated above a bow of the Urubamba River, which surrounds the site on three sides, where cliffs drop vertically for 450 metres (1,480 ft) to the river at their base. The area is subject to morning mists rising from the river.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarra1-30)The location of the city was a military secret, and its deep precipices and steep mountains provided natural defenses. The [Inca Bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Bridge), an [Inca grass rope bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_rope_bridge), across the Urubamba River in the [Pongo de Mainique](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pongo_de_Mainique), provided a secret entrance for the [Inca army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_army). Another Inca bridge was built to the west of Machu Picchu, the tree-trunk bridge, at a location where a gap occurs in the cliff that measures 6 metres (20 ft).

The city sits in a saddle between the two mountains Machu Picchu and Huayna Picchu,[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarra1-30) with a commanding view down two valleys and a nearly impassable mountain at its back. It has a water supply from springs that cannot be blocked easily. The hillsides leading to it were terraced, to provide more farmland to grow crops and to steepen the slopes that invaders would have to ascend. The terraces reduced soil [erosion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erosion) and protected against [landslides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landslide).[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_ZegarraCrowley2000b2-47) Two high-altitude routes from Machu Picchu cross the mountains back to Cusco, one through the [Sun Gate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Gate), and the other across the Inca bridge. Both could be blocked easily, should invaders approach along them.

## **Site[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=9" \o "Edit section: Site)]**

### Layout**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=10" \o "Edit section: Layout)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MachuPicchu_TerracedFields_(pixinn.net).jpg)

Terraced fields in the upper agricultural sector

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Machupicchu_intihuatana.JPG)

Temple of the Sun or Torreon

The site is roughly divided into an urban sector and an agricultural sector, and into an upper town and a lower town. The temples are in the upper town, the warehouses in the lower.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-48)

The architecture is adapted to the mountains. Approximately 200 buildings are arranged on wide parallel terraces around an east-west central square. The various compounds, called *kanchas*, are long and narrow in order to exploit the terrain. Sophisticated channeling systems provided irrigation for the fields. Stone stairways set in the walls allowed access to the different levels across the site. The eastern section of the city was probably residential. The western, separated by the square, was for religious and ceremonial purposes. This section contains the *Torreón*, the massive tower which may have been used as an observatory.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTELonghena2010252-49)

Located in the first zone are the primary archaeological treasures: the [*Intihuatana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intihuatana,_Urubamba), the *Temple of the Sun* and the *Room of the Three Windows*. These were dedicated to [*Inti*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inti), their sun god and greatest deity.

The Popular District, or Residential District, is the place where the lower-class people lived. It includes storage buildings and simple houses.

The royalty area, a sector for the [nobility](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobility), is a group of houses located in rows over a slope; the residence of the [*amautas*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amautas) (wise persons) was characterized by its reddish walls, and the zone of the *ñustas* (princesses) had trapezoid-shaped rooms. The Monumental Mausoleum is a carved statue with a vaulted interior and carved drawings. It was used for rites or sacrifices.

The Guardhouse is a three-sided building, with one of its long sides opening onto the Terrace of the Ceremonial Rock. The three-sided style of Inca architecture is known as the *wayrona* style.[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarra8-50)

In 2005 and 2009, the [University of Arkansas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Arkansas) made detailed [laser scans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3d_laser_scanning) of the entire site and of the ruins at the top of the adjacent Huayna Picchu mountain. The scan data is available online for research purposes.[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-51)

### Temple of the Sun or Torreon**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=11" \o "Edit section: Temple of the Sun or Torreon)]**

This semicircular temple is built on the same rock overlying Bingham's "Royal Mausoleum", and is similar to the [Temple of the Sun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coricancha#Inca_Astronomy) found in Cusco and the Temple of the Sun found in [Pisac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pisac), in having what Bingham described as a "parabolic enclosure wall". The stonework is of [ashlar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashlar) quality. Within the temple is a 1.2 m by 2.7 m rock platform, smooth on top except for a small platform on its southwest quadrant. A "Serpent's Door" faces 340°, or just west of north, opening onto a series of 16 pools, and affording a view of Huana Picchu. The temple also has two [trapezoidal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trapezoidal) windows, one facing 65°, called the "Solstice Window", and the other facing 132°, called the "[Qullqa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qullqa) Window". The northwest edge of the rock platform points out the Solstice Window to within 2’ of the 15th century [June solstice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_solstice) rising Sun. For comparison, the [angular diameter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angular_diameter) of the Sun is 32'. The [Inca constellation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constelation#Dark_cloud_constellations) Qullca, storehouse, can be viewed out the Qullqa Window at sunset during the 15th-century June Solstice, hence the window's name. At the same time, the [Pleaides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleaides) are at the opposite end of the sky. Also seen through this window on this night are the constellations Llamacnawin, Llama, Unallamacha, Machacuay, and the star Pachapacariq Chaska ([Canopus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canopus)).[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-52)[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-53)

### Intihuatana stone**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=12" \o "Edit section: Intihuatana stone)]**

*Main article:*[*Intihuatana, Urubamba*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intihuatana,_Urubamba)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Intihuatana_Solar_Clock.jpg)

*Intihuatana* is believed to have been designed as an astronomic clock or calendar by the Incas

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pachamama.jpg)

The sculpture carved from the rock bottom of the sun temple is interpreted as "Water mirrors for observing the sky".[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDoig2005-54)

The *Intihuatana* stone is one of many [ritual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual) stones in South America. These stones are arranged to point directly at the sun during the winter [solstice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solstice).[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-Amao2012b-55) The name of the stone (perhaps coined by Bingham) derives from [Quechua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quechua_languages) language: *inti* means "sun", and *wata-*, "to tie, hitch (up)". The suffix *-na* derives nouns for tools or places. Hence *Intihuatana* is literally an instrument or place to "tie up the sun", often expressed in English as "The Hitching Post of the Sun". The Inca believed the stone held the sun in its place along its annual path in the sky.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*] The stone is situated at 13°9'48" S. At midday on 11 November and 30 January, the sun stands almost exactly above the pillar, casting no shadow. On 21 June, the stone casts the longest shadow on its southern side, and on 21 December a much shorter shadow on its northern side.

### Inti Mach'ay and the Royal Feast of the Sun**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=13" \o "Edit section: Inti Mach'ay and the Royal Feast of the Sun)]**

Inti Mach'ay is a special cave used to observe the Royal Feast of the Sun. This festival was celebrated during the Incan month of *Qhapaq Raymi*. It began earlier in the month and concluded on the December solstice. On this day, noble boys were initiated into manhood by an ear-piercing ritual as they stood inside the cave and watched the sunrise.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDearbornSchreiberWhite1987346-56)

Architecturally, Inti Mach'ay is the most significant structure at Machu Picchu. Its entrances, walls, steps, and windows are some of the finest masonry in the Incan Empire. The cave also includes a tunnel-like window unique among Incan structures, which was constructed to allow sunlight into the cave only during several days around the December solstice. For this reason, the cave was inaccessible for much of the year.[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDearbornSchreiberWhite1987349%E2%80%93351-57) Inti Mach'ay is located on the eastern side of Machu Picchu, just north of the "Condor Stone." Many of the caves surrounding this area were prehistorically used as tombs, yet there is no evidence that Mach'ay was a burial ground.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDearbornSchreiberWhite1987349.-58)

### Construction**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=14" \o "Edit section: Construction)]**

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| [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/9/99/Question_book-new.svg/50px-Question_book-new.svg.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Question_book-new.svg) | This section **needs additional citations for**[**verification**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability). Please help [improve this article](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit) by [adding citations to reliable sources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Introduction_to_referencing_with_Wiki_Markup/1). Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. *Find sources:* ["Machu Picchu"](https://www.google.com/search?as_eq=wikipedia&q=%22Machu+Picchu%22) – [news](https://www.google.com/search?tbm=nws&q=%22Machu+Picchu%22+-wikipedia) **·** [newspapers](https://www.google.com/search?&q=%22Machu+Picchu%22+site:news.google.com/newspapers&source=newspapers) **·** [books](https://www.google.com/search?tbs=bks:1&q=%22Machu+Picchu%22+-wikipedia) **·** [scholar](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22Machu+Picchu%22) **·** [JSTOR](https://www.jstor.org/action/doBasicSearch?Query=%22Machu+Picchu%22&acc=on&wc=on) *(July 2018) (*[*Learn how and when to remove this template message*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Maintenance_template_removal)*)* |

*Main article:*[*Incan architecture*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incan_architecture)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MachuPicchu_Residential_(pixinn.net).jpg)

View of the residential section of Machu Picchu

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:124_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009.jpg)

Interior of an Inca building, featuring trapezoidal windows

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Funerary_Stone_in_Machu_Picchu.jpg)

Funerary Stone in upper cemetery

The central buildings use the classical Inca architectural style of polished dry-stone walls of regular shape. The Incas were masters of this technique, called [ashlar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashlar), in which blocks of stone are cut to fit together tightly without [mortar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortar_(masonry)).

The section of the mountain where Machu Picchu was built provided various challenges that the Incas solved with local materials. One issue was the seismic activity due to two fault lines. It made mortar and similar building methods nearly useless. Instead, the Inca mined stones from the quarry at the site[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-59), lined them up and shaped them to fit together perfectly, stabilizing the structures. [Inca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca) walls have many stabilizing features: doors and windows are trapezoidal, narrowing from bottom to top; corners usually are rounded; inside corners often incline slightly into the rooms, and outside corners were often tied together by "L"-shaped blocks; walls are offset slightly from row to row rather than rising straight from bottom to top.

Heavy rainfall required terraces and stone chips to drain rain water and prevent mudslides, landslides, erosion, and flooding. Terraces were layered with stone chips, sand, dirt, and topsoil, to absorb water and prevent it from running down the mountain. Similar layering protected the large city center from flooding.[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWrightValencia_Zegarra2000-60) Multiple canals and reserves throughout the city provided water that could be supplied to the terraces for irrigation and to prevent erosion and flooding.

The Incas never used wheels in a practical way, although their use in toys shows that they knew the principle. The use of wheels in engineering may have been limited due to the lack of strong [draft animals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_animal#Animals_used_for_their_strength), steep terrain and dense vegetation. The approach to moving and placing the enormous stones remains uncertain, probably involving hundreds of men to push the stones up inclines. A few stones have knobs that could have been used to lever them into position; the knobs were generally sanded away, with a few overlooked.

### Roads and transportation**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=15" \o "Edit section: Roads and transportation)]**

The [Inca road system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_road_system) included a route to the Machu Picchu region. The people of Machu Picchu were connected to long-distance trade, as shown by non-local artifacts found at the site. For example, Bingham found unmodified [obsidian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obsidian) nodules at the entrance gateway. In the 1970s, [Burger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_L._Burger) and Asaro determined that these obsidian samples were from the *Titicaca* or [Chivay obsidian source](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chivay_obsidian_source), and that the samples from Machu Picchu showed long-distance transport of this obsidian type in pre-Hispanic Peru.[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBurgerSalazar2004-61)[[*page needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citing_sources)]

Thousands of tourists walk the [Inca Trail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Trail_to_Machu_Picchu) to visit Machu Picchu each year.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-62) They congregate at Cusco before starting on the one-, two-, four- or five-day journey on foot from kilometer 82 (or 77 or 85, four/five-day trip) or kilometer 104 (one/two-day trip) near the town of [Ollantaytambo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ollantaytambo) in the Urubamba valley, walking up through the Andes to the isolated city.

### Tourism**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=16" \o "Edit section: Tourism)]**

Machu Picchu is both a cultural and natural [UNESCO World Heritage Site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO_World_Heritage_Site). Since its discovery in 1911, growing numbers of tourists have visited the site each year, including 1,411,279 in 2017.[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-63) As Peru's most visited tourist attraction and major revenue generator, it is continually exposed to economic and commercial forces. In the late 1990s, the Peruvian government granted concessions to allow the construction of a cable car and a luxury hotel, including a tourist complex with boutiques and restaurants and a bridge to the site.[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-BBC1-64) Many people protested the plans, including Peruvians and foreign scientists, saying that more visitors would pose a physical burden on the ruins.[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-test-65) In 2018, plans were restarted to again construct a cable car to encourage Peruvians to visit Machu Picchu and boost domestic tourism.[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-66) A [no-fly zone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No-fly_zone) exists above the area.[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-67) [UNESCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) is considering putting Machu Picchu on its [List of World Heritage in Danger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_in_Danger).[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-BBC1-64)

During the 1980s a large rock from Machu Picchu's central plaza was moved to a different location to create a helicopter landing zone. In the 1990s, the government prohibited helicopter landings. In 2006, a Cusco-based company, Helicusco, sought approval for tourist flights over Machu Picchu. The resulting license was soon rescinded.[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-68)

Tourist deaths have been linked to [altitude sickness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altitude_sickness), floods and hiking accidents.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-69)[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-70)[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-71)[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-72) UNESCO received criticism for allowing tourists at the location given high risks of landslides, earthquakes and injury due to decaying structures.[[73]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-73)

Nude tourism is a recent trend, to the dismay of Peruvian officials. In several incidents, tourists were detained for posing for nude pictures or [streaking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Streaking) across the site. Peru's Ministry of Culture denounced these acts for threatening Peru's cultural heritage. Cusco's Regional Director of Culture increased surveillance to end the practice.[[74]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-74)

### January 2010 evacuation**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=17" \o "Edit section: January 2010 evacuation)]**

*See also:*[*El Niño-Southern Oscillation*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Ni%C3%B1o-Southern_Oscillation)

In January 2010, heavy rain caused flooding that buried or washed away roads and railways to Machu Picchu, trapping more than 2,000 locals and more than 2,000 tourists, later airlifted out to safety. Machu Picchu was temporarily closed,[[75]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu" \l "cite_note-75) reopening on 1 April 2010.[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-76)

### Entrance restrictions**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Machu_Picchu&action=edit&section=18" \o "Edit section: Entrance restrictions)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Artifact_collected_on_Bingham%27s_1912_expedition_to_Macchu_Picchu.jpg)

Artifact collected on Bingham's 1912 expedition, on display at the Museo Machu Picchu

In July 2011, the Dirección Regional de Cultura Cusco (DRC) introduced new entrance rules to the citadel of Machu Picchu.[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-77) The tougher entrance rules attempted to reduce the effect of tourism. The entrance was limited to 2,500 visitors per day, and the entrance to Huayna Picchu (within the citadel) was further restricted to 400 visitors per day. In 2018, additional restrictions were placed on the entrance. Three entrance phases will be implemented, increased from two phases previously, to further help the flow of traffic and reduce degradation of the site due to tourism.[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-78)

In May 2012, a team of [UNESCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) conservation experts called upon Peruvian authorities to take "emergency measures" to further stabilize the site's buffer zone and protect it from damage, particularly in the nearby town of [Aguas Calientes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aguas_Calientes,_Peru), which had grown rapidly.[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#cite_note-79)

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