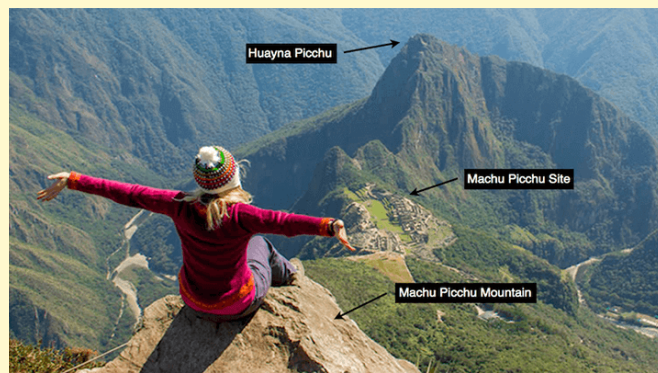


Walks to the Inca Bridge and the Sun Gate, or climb Huayna Picchu and Machu Picchu Mountain

Aside from Inca Trail, there are numerous paths within the grounds of the site, from a 20-minute diversion to the precarious-looking Inca Bridge to ascents of Machu Picchu Mountain or the more familiar, pointed peak overlooking the ruins, Huayna Picchu. Permits will need to be arranged for both of the peak climbs, while an hour's round trip can bring you to the Sun Gate — thought to be the original entryway to the citadel.



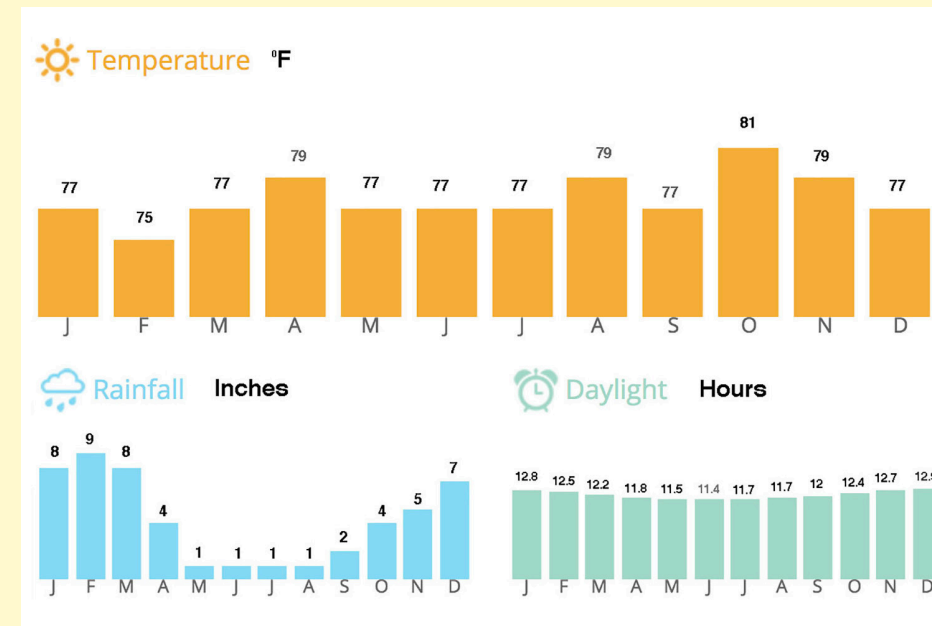
Aguas Calientes

The frontier-like town situated in a gorge below the ruins can feel like little more than a stopping place, and some of its shops, eateries and places to stay ring true to that — service can feel perfunctory and bland. But it has its charms too, such as a series of hot springs, some murals, and (depending on which day you visit) local markets serving regional dishes.



Best time to visit Machu Picchu

We recommend visiting between April to October. Our specialists preferred time to visit is May, as the grass is springy and the mountainsides green. In May, you are also more likely to avoid the rainfall that can beset the early months of the year, as well as the crowds that surge to the site in July and August.



Call a specialist

You can call us on 1-855-838-8300 (Call toll free tomorrow from 9am EDT)

Office Hours (EDT)

- Monday - Thursday : 9am to 6pm
- Friday : 9am to 5:30pm
- Saturday - Sunday : 10am to 5pm

Come and visit us

If you'd like to discuss your travel plans in person with a specialist, please make an appointment to come and see us.

Website

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What our specialists say

Designed to be an unforgettable adventure for friends, families, couples, and really anyone keen on exploring the different environments and rich history of Peru. After a night in Lima fly to Cuzco, where you will visit intriguing nearby Inca ruins and see how the Spanish conquistadors built over Inca foundations. The next couple of days are spent exploring the Sacred Valley, including visits to Pisac and Ollantaytambo, you'll spend two days at the 'lost city' of Machu Picchu. We've also included a private guide for you so that it's got that exclusive touch.

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Things to see and do at Machu Picchu

The Inca Trail

This three-day hike that traverses mountain peaks and Inca-laid paving is seen as the traditional, or most authentic, way to approach Machu Picchu: you'll be treading the same route as the messengers who journeyed to and from the citadel.



Inca stonework

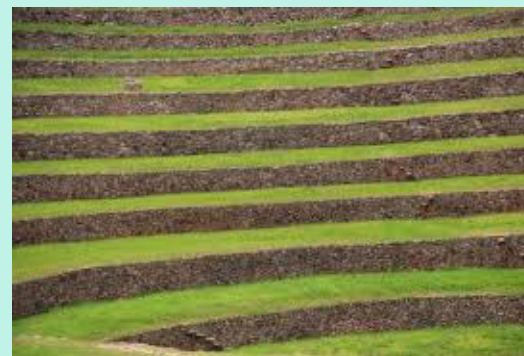
From their storehouses to their temples, the Incas seldom embellished their stone buildings with any carved decoration, and Machu Picchu is no exception. This didn't diminish Hiram Bingham's impressions of the stonework, when he first reached the overgrown ruins of Machu Picchu on a winter's day in 1911. He described the stones as, 'beautifully fitted together in the most refined style of Inca architecture'.

The citadel's buildings are completely unostentatious, but you're looking at the precision the Inca craftsmen achieved. You'd be hard pressed to slot a credit card between any of the stones. Always building one step ahead of the next earthquake, Inca masons didn't simply lay standard-sized stones, one regular row on top of another. They used mortise and tenon joints to key many-angled blocks together across multiple faces. The Temple of the Three Windows serves as a particular good example of their mastery.



Terracing

The scale of ambition at Machu Picchu is best illustrated in its agricultural terraces, which concertina down the mountainside like a giant's staircase. The cascading levels of walls drop acutely and are obscured from many vantage points around the complex, but their full length can be viewed at a side angle from the lower level of the complex, where the workaday buildings stand. The terraces are also laid bare in their full glory from the top of Huayna Picchu, where you can fathom just how big a part in the overall complex they play.



The Intihuatana and other astroarchaeology

Despite the Inca's pragmatic approach to building, there are a few sculptural details to look for at Machu Picchu. The ritualistic Intihuatana ('hitching post of the sun') stands on a highpoint of the complex, a tapered cuboid of stone protruding from a plinth that aligned with the sun. In the lower levels, two rings of stone, carved proud from the floor, are a more humble sign of the Inca's interest in the heavens. They're thought to have acted as instruments for gazing at the moon and stars when filled with water.



Temple of the Condor

Close by, the carving of a great bird in the Temple of the Condor is so rudimentary that it takes a bit of time to piece it together from what, ostensibly, looks like a triangle and a couple of crescents of stone. Once you have the whole, you'll note that the Inca used the natural contours of two pieces of unworked stone for the great wings.

