



# Cuzco & the Sacred Valley

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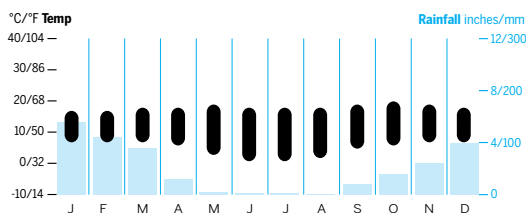
## Why Go?

Incas deemed this spot the belly button of the world. Sure enough, a visit to Cuzco tumbles you back into the cosmic realm of ancient Andean culture – one that was knocked down and fused with the finest colonial and religious splendors of Spanish conquest, only to be repackaged as a thriving tourist trap. Welcome to a mystical and whimsical world of paradox. But Cuzco is only the gateway. Beyond lies the Sacred Valley, Andean countryside dotted with villages, high altitude hamlets and ruins linked by trail and solitary railway tracks to the country's biggest draw – Machu Picchu.

Old ways are not forgotten. Colorful textiles link to the past, as do the wild fiestas and carnivals with the fiber of pagan tradition in solemn Catholic rituals. Just as dynamic is a landscape that careens from Andean peaks to orchid-rich cloud forests and Amazon lowlands. Explore it on foot or by fat tire, rafting wild rivers or simply braving the local buses to the remote and dust-worn corners of this far-reaching department.

## When to Go

### Cuzco



**Jun–Aug** High season for tourism, events and festivals, days are sunny and nights cold.

**Late Jun** Celebrate the solstice at Inti Raymi, the largest festival of the year.

**Sep–Oct** Shoulder season for tourism, with fewer crowds in Machu Picchu.

## Regional Cuisine

Sunday lunch with a country stroll is a Cuzco ritual. Locals head to the villages south of town: **Tipón** is the place to eat *cuy* (guinea pig), **Saylla** is the home of *chicharrón* (deep-fried pork) and **Lucre** is renowned for duck.

Look for the following foods in local restaurants, on the street and at festivals:

**Anticucho** Beef heart on a stick, punctuated by a potato, is the perfect evening street snack.

**Caldo de gallina** Healthy, hearty chicken soup is the local favorite to kick a hangover.

**Chicharrones** Definitely more than the sum of its parts: deep-fried pork served with corn, mint leaves, fried potato and onion.

**Choclo con queso** Huge, pale cobs of corn are served with a teeth-squeaking chunk of cheese in the Sacred Valley.

**Cuy** Raised on grains at home, what could be more organic? The faint of heart can ask for it served as a filet (without the head and paws).

**Lechón** Suckling pig with plenty of crackling, served with tamales (corn cakes).

### DON'T MISS

The Corpus Christi parade on Cuzco's Plaza de Armas dusts off the saints for a spin through the ecstatic crowds in early June.

## Boleto Turístico & Boleto Religioso

To visit most sites in the region, you will need Cuzco's official **boleto turístico** (tourist ticket; adult/student under 26 with ISIC card \$130/70), valid for 10 days. Among the 17 sites included are: Sacsaywamán, Q'enqo, Pukapukara, Tambomachay, Pisac, Ollantaytambo, Chinchero and Moray, as well as an evening performance of Andean dances and live music at the Centro Qosqo de Arte Nativo. While some inclusions are admitted duds, you can't visit any of them without it.

Three partial *boletos* (adult/student \$70/35) cover the ruins immediately outside Cuzco, the museums in Cuzco, and the Sacred Valley ruins. They are valid for one day, except for the Sacred Valley option, which is valid for two.

Purchase *boletos turísticos* from **Dircetur/Cosituc** (☎261-465; [www.boletoturistico cusco.com](http://www.boletoturistico cusco.com); La Municipalidad, office 102, Av El Sol 103; ☉8am-6pm Mon-Fri) or at the sites themselves, except for the Centro Qosqo de Arte Nativo. Students must show valid ID.

The **boleto religioso** (religious tourist ticket; adult/student \$50/25), valid for 10 days, secures entry to Cuzco's churches, the Museo de Arte Religioso and Cuzco's most significant display of contemporary art at Museo Quijote. It's available at any of the sites.

## MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

National flights arrive at Cuzco's Aeropuerto Internacional Alejandro Velasco Astete but plans are pending to build an airport in the Sacred Valley near Chinchero. Buses (including international routes) go to the Terminal Terrestre in Cuzco.

## Need to Know

» Those arriving from lower altitudes may experience altitude sickness. Take it easy the first few days of your visit or start in the slightly lower Sacred Valley.

## Top Tip

» Since Machu Picchu tickets can no longer be purchased online, get this business done early with an authorized agent listed at [www.machupicchu.gob.pe](http://www.machupicchu.gob.pe) or in person at Cuzco's Dirección Regional de Cultura. To add entry to the coveted Wayna Picchu hike, purchase even earlier.

## Resources

- » [www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/peru/cuzco)
- » [www.machupicchu.gob.pe](http://www.machupicchu.gob.pe)
- » [www.peru.travel](http://www.peru.travel)
- » [www.saexplorers.org](http://www.saexplorers.org)