



Cuzco & the Sacred Valley

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Cicciolina (p225)
- ➔ La Bodega 138 (p225)
- ➔ Huacatay (p243)
- ➔ Indio Feliz (p252)
- ➔ Marcelo Batata (p225)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel (p251)
- ➔ Apu Lodge (p247)
- ➔ Ecopackers (p217)
- ➔ Niños Hotel (p218)
- ➔ Inkaterra La Casona (p220)

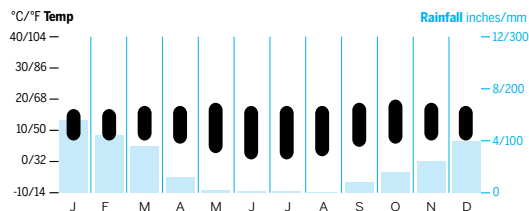
Why Go?

Incas deemed this spot the belly button of the world. A visit to Cuzco tumbles you back into the cosmic realm of ancient Andean culture – knocked down and fused with the colonial splendors of Spanish conquest, only to be repackaged as a thriving tourist mecca. Yet Cuzco is only the gateway. Beyond lies the Sacred Valley, Andean countryside dotted with villages, high altitude hamlets and ruins linked by trail and railway tracks to the continent's biggest draw – Machu Picchu.

Old ways are not forgotten here. Colorful textiles keep vivid the past, as do the wild fiestas and carnivals where pagan tradition meets solemn Catholic ritual. A stunning landscape 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, culturally rich 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.

CUZCO

084 / POP 427,000 / ELEV 3326M

Cosmopolitan Inca capital, Cuzco (also Cusco, or Qos'qo in Quechua) today thrives with a measure of contradiction. Ornate cathedrals squat over Inca temples, massage hawkers ply the narrow cobblestone streets, a woman in traditional skirt and bowler offers bottled water to a pet llama

while the finest boutiques sell alpaca knits for small fortunes. The foremost city of the Inca empire is now the undisputed archaeological capital of the Americas, as well as the continent's oldest continuously inhabited city. Few travelers to Peru will skip visiting this premier South American destination, also the gateway to Machu Picchu.



Cuzco & The Sacred Valley Highlights

- 1 Drinking in the sublime grandeur of **Machu Picchu** (p253).
- 2 Getting swept into the colorful frenzy of a traditional **festival** (p216).
- 3 Hiking through traditional villages and terraced agri-culture on the spectacular **Lares trek** (p45).
- 4 Exploring the narrow streets and shops of bohemian **San Blas** (p207).
- 5 Wandering ancient ruins in the stunning settings of the **Sacred Valley** (p236).
- 6 Taking on the wild Apurímac or Tampobata Rivers on a **river-running trip** (p212).
- 7 Dining on haute cuisine or **cuy** (guinea pig): **Cuzco restaurants** (p224) can cater to any whim.
- 8 Barreling from the Andes down into the Amazon on a **mountain bike** (p213).
- 9 Trekking up from the tropics on the **Salkantay route** (p45) to Machu Picchu.