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Latin America

Centre of
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VIRTUAL MACHU PICCHU PUEBLO LEARNING TOOL SUPPORT FILES *PERU & MACHU PICCHU INFORMATION*

Prepared by Joanna Schott to support the Virtual Machu Picchu Pueblo Learning Tool developed by Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) with funding from the Latin America Centre of Asia-Pacific Excellence (LatAm CAPE)

Welcome to the Peru and Machu Picchu information pack.

This pack provides educators with information to assist them in supporting students on their virtual journey through Machu Picchu Pueblo (also known as Aguas Calientes) and accompanies the Virtual Machu Picchu Pueblo Learning Tool.

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QUICK FACTS

Peru

- Population: *31 million (2017)*
- Official language: *Spanish*
- Other languages: *Quechua, Aymara*
- Major industries: *fishing, mining, tourism*
- Government: *Presidential representative democratic republic*
- Current President: *Martin Vizcarra*
- Current Prime Minister: *Vicente Zeballos*
- Capital: *Lima*

Machu Picchu

- Altitude: *2430m*
- Settled: *1901*
- Population: *4,525*
- Climate: *subtropical*



Map Source: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/south-america/peru/>

The Virtual Machu Picchu Pueblo Learning Tool was developed by a cross-disciplinary team from Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand: Dr Christian Schott, Project Leader (Tourism Management Program, School of Management), Dr Andrea Milligan (Faculty of Education), and Dr Stephen Marshall and Johnny Flutey (Centre for Academic Development)

PERU TODAY

Architecturally steeped in a mixture of European and indigenous styles, Peruvian culture has its origins in both Amerindian and Hispanic cultures. Its lifestyle, cuisine, religious beliefs and traditions are a melting pot of this background.

Lifestyle

Today, Peruvian's lifestyles vary according to their social class and whether they live in a rural or urban environment. Those living rurally are dependent on the agricultural cycle and the harvesting and planting periods. Most work is done during daylight hours so people rise early and go to bed early. Religious festivals, weddings and baptisms are often the only disruptions to this routine.

In urban Peru the majority of the population consists of poor people living in squatter settlements that surround the main urban areas. Most of these people work two or three jobs and have less leisure time than other Peruvians.

Conversely, urban affluent Peruvians have a much different lifestyle. The most important meal of the day is lunch when most families come together to eat. This is followed by a nap (siesta) before people return to work or relax, visit friends and family, play sport or participate in other activities. The evening meal is eaten very late and often out of the house while visiting friends or in a restaurant (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Peru/Daily-life-and-social-customs>).

Cuisine

With rice as the dietary staple, common cuisine in Peru is relatively varied. Dishes include meats such as alpaca, guinea pig, chicken and beef while 'aji' (capsicum) is a widely eaten vegetable along with corn and potatoes. Known dishes include Ceviche, Causa, Lomo Saltado, Anticuchos and Aji de Gallina (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/top-10/best-food-peru/>)

Religion

Peru is a highly religious country. Religion has played a crucial role in the social and cultural development of Peruvian societies from their origins in the Andes, through the political and cultural formation of pre-Hispanic Andean societies, and finally, the religious transformation following the fall of the Inca Empire and the conquest of power by the Spanish, who imposed Catholicism which remains to be the main religion.

Traditions and Festivals

Famous for its textiles (particularly woollen garments made from alpaca, llama and sheep wool), [dance](#), [music](#) and [dress](#), Peru is a conservative and very traditional country.

Peru operates a very full calendar of festivals and events that focus primarily on religious occasions such as Easter and Christmas as well as important historical festivals like [Inti Raymi](#) 'Festival of the Sun' (<https://www.amautaspanish.com/destinations/learn-spanish-in-peru/peru-overview/festivals-137.html>)

Poverty

Peru is the third largest country in South America, and has one of the most prosperous economies with an average growth rate of 5.9% and one of the world's fastest industrial growth rates (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru>).

Despite this, it is still a developing country with the majority of people living in urban areas (79.3%) with the remainder living rurally (20.7%) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru#Population>). Although the rate of poverty is declining 20.5% of the population live at or below the poverty line and school enrolments are only just beginning to rise again (<https://data.worldbank.org/country/peru>).

Crime

Possibly because of the high amount of poverty, street crime, theft at gunpoint and theft on tourist and public busses are common and are often linked to drugs and organised crime (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/peru/safety-and-security>).

HISTORY OF MACHU PICCHU

The Peruvian town of Machu Picchu Pueblo (more commonly known as Aguas Calientes after the river running through it) sits on the Eastern Cordillera mountain range in the Urubamba Valley north of Cusco in southern Peru approximately 80 kilometres from Machu Picchu [citadel](#).

In 1981 the Peruvian Government declared Machu Picchu a Historical Sanctuary, and this was quickly followed by UNESCO who declared the area a World Heritage Site in 1983. More recently (2007), Machu Picchu was voted as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

Although different hypotheses exist around the purpose of Machu Picchu, many archaeologists believe that it was constructed as an estate for the Inca emperor [Pachacuti](#) who ruled from 1438 – 1472. Later abandoned during the Spanish conquest in the 16th century it was ‘rediscovered’ by American [Hiram Bingham](#) in 1911 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu).

The citadel itself comprises approximately 200 structures (ranging from baths and houses to temples and sanctuaries) and is set on a steep ridge crisscrossed by stone terraces. As a World Heritage site, the property covers 32,592 hectares of mountain slopes, peaks and valleys with the central point being the archaeological monument of ‘La Ciudadela’ (the Citadel). Machu Picchu’s most distinct and famous structures include the [Temple of the Sun](#) and the [Intihuatana stone](#).

Considered a mysterious site due to its location, buildings and stories, scientists are still unsure about exact role Machu Picchu may have played in the Incas’ sophisticated understanding of astronomy and domestication of wild plant species.

Who were 15th century Incas?

The term ‘Inca’ means ‘ruler’ or ‘lord’ in Quechua and was used to refer to the ruling class of people in the Andean empire. The Incas made up a very small percentage of the total Andean empire population (approximately 15,000-40,000) but they were very powerful; ruling a population of around 12 million people from 12 A.D until approximately 1572.

Known as Tawantinsuyu, the Inca state spanned from northern Ecuador to central Chile. The Incas were forward-thinking people and operated a sophisticated society particularly for the time. Inventing aqueducts and terraced farming, they identified that different elevation levels could yield better crops for different foods which could then be stored or freeze-dried. Most people during this time were self-sufficient farmers who farmed and ate corn, potatoes, llamas, alpacas and dogs.

The Incas worked gold and silver, weaving colourful cloths. They were also remarkable artists and musicians, as well as astute mathematicians, inventing an ancient tool called '[quipu](#)' for account keeping which used coloured strings and knots.

Although there was no written language during the early stages of the empire a dialect of Quechua was the main language. The Incas built a complex system of roads which totalled more than 24,000km. Teams of relay runners were used to transport goods and messages to and from every corner of the empire, at an astonishing rate of over 240km a day (<https://www.chimuadventures.com/blog/2016/11/incas-short-history/>).

The Incas worshipped many different gods which were associated with natural forces, however their main god was Inti, the sun god. The Incas believed the gods had to be kept happy through worship and as a result many religious festivals were held throughout the year and were associated with the astronomical calendar as well as planting seasons (<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/incas/inca-rituals-and-beliefs/>).

As part of their religion sacred sites were established to honour the gods and were often built in places of natural prominence such as mountain tops (Machu Picchu), caves and springs (https://www.ancient.eu/Inca_Civilization/). The Inca empire fell around 1532 when it was overtaken by the Spanish conquistadors (<https://www.history.com/topics/south-america/inca>).

TOURISM IN MACHU PICCHU

Tourists first began visiting Machu Picchu in 1911 shortly after Hiram Bingham published his book 'The Lost city of the Incas' detailing his discovery of the citadel (<https://www.history.com/topics/south-america/machu-picchu>). Today Machu Picchu contributes approximately a third of the overall tourism income of Peru and "...plays a very important role in poverty reduction for the people of Peru. It represents a great deal of economic opportunity for poor people living in the Cusco region, where few other forms of income exist", (Huaman Aucapuma, Mayor of Urubamba (2016) (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/11/01/peru-easing-business-regulations-in-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-tourist-destinations>)).

About one third of all international tourists to Peru visit Machu Picchu each year (9.6 million people). The jobs associated with this area employ 43,000 people, mostly from Cusco where poverty is high, and is critical to the country's economy as a whole (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/11/01/peru-easing-business-regulations-in-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-tourist-destinations>).

Table 1: International arrivals to Peru by region

	2016	2017	2018
Total (000)	3,744	4,032	4,419
• Africa	5	4	5
• Americas	2,935	3,186	3,538
• East Asia and the Pacific	170	184	195
• Europe	628	649	672
• Middle East
• South Asia	6	7	9
• Other not classified	1	1	2

Source: World Tourism Organization (2019), Compendium of Tourism Statistics dataset [Electronic], UNWTO, Madrid, data updated on 20/11/2019

International inbound tourists to Peru are gradually increasing with the largest number of visitors coming from the Americas. The following table provides an overview of the breakdown of international visitors by region for the last three years.

In terms of Cusco as the feeder city to Machu Picchu, international inbound tourists are predominantly from the United States (22%) however the section 'other' comprises numerous small European countries which combine to provide the largest overall market visiting this destination.

Table 2: 2017 International arrivals to Cusco by region

Total	%
United States	22
Chile	9.9
Argentina	6.5
France	5.8
Brazil	5.5
Spain	5.2
Canada	4.5
Germany	4.4
Other	36.2

https://www.mincetur.gob.pe/wp-content/uploads/documentos/turismo/estadisticas/ReporteTurismoRegional/RTR_Cusco.pdf

High season in Machu Picchu is from April to October, when there is less rain, and the northern hemisphere is on holiday. Low season operates from November to March when there is less tourism because of the increase in rainfall.

Machu Picchu Pueblo has developed rapidly over the last decade because of the significant increase in tourist numbers. In high season numbers can reach 7,000 visitors each day and while many tourism operators in the area would like numbers of between 5,000-6,000 a recent deal agreed between the Peruvian government and UNESCO means tourist numbers to the citadel won't exceed 2,500 per day (<https://www.peruviantimes.com/30/inc-says-machu-picchu-entrance-tickets-will-be-rationed-to-avoid-tourist-hoards-when-rail-service-resumes/5440/>).

With only train access to Machu Picchu Pueblo and a fleet of tourist busses ferrying people to and from the site itself (about 30 minutes bus ride or 1.5-hour walk), accessibility is a challenge.

In addition, Machu Picchu archaeological site only has one circuit for visitors to move through. While there are approximately 45 ceremonial sites around the mountain, these cannot be visited yet as they are either unsafe, don't have adequate infrastructure to support visits or they are deemed too vulnerable from a world heritage protection perspective. There is however a desire among operators to increase the number of circuits available to tourists and to extend the experience from one day to two or three days.

While Machu Picchu archaeological site is the main tourist attraction, tourists also visit the Aguas Calientes river which has pool that natural thermo-medicinal baths.

CHALLENGES FOR MACHU PICCHU

Government regulations

Despite the Peruvian government's desire to nurture and protect the tourism industry in and around Cusco, the inefficient and highly regulated environment means the private sector is struggling to improve infrastructure and services to meet the increasing demand. Frustratingly this results in lost income from bookings as well as additional pressure on already suffering resources such as walking tracks.

In 2012 the World Bank Group was commissioned by the Peruvian government to develop an advisory project to streamline the processes (IT systems, staff training, marketing) that new businesses in the tourism sector must follow to become licensed and operate in Cusco. However, this doesn't appear to help existing businesses

(<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/11/01/peru-easing-business-regulations-in-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-tourist-destinations>).

Carrying capacity

Carrying capacity refers to the number of visitors able to safely visit it at any one time without damaging the site or constricting visitor experience

(<https://www.esri.com/about/newsroom/arcnews/preserving-machu-picchu/>).

There is an obvious trade-off between the desire for higher visitor numbers to Machu Picchu (more money) and protecting the site from degradation. While [visitor rules](#) are promoted to manage crowds and the attraction itself, there is currently only one main circuit for visitors to move through the site which can lead to crowding. New circuits are currently being developed. UNESCO and the Peruvian government have recently negotiated a daily limit of 2,500 visitors to the site

(<https://www.peruviantimes.com/30/inc-says-machu-picchu-entrance-tickets-will-be-rationed-to-avoid-tourist-hoards-when-rail-service-resumes/5440/>). This deal was agreed on following the Peruvian government proposing a \$132.5m emergency plan to preserve the historic site. This number is a significant decrease on the previously seen maximum of 5000 - 6000 visitors.

Environmental factors

Heavy rain and landslides are common in Machu Picchu particularly from November to March with climate change only increasing the amount of rainfall. An early alert system has been installed in higher parts of the Aguas Calientes river and watchmen regularly check for rock fall that could block the river and cause flooding. Additional river defences are also being developed such as water dispersers which work to control water levels and metal poles to stop rock falls blocking the river.

At the archaeological site itself, erosion from the rain, wind and use means visitor paths are degrading. To aid in protecting the paths, geo blocks (small crates that visitors walk on to protect the vegetation from trampling) have been installed.

COSTS AND BENEFITS OF TOURISM AT MACHU PICCHU

With such large numbers of tourists visiting Machu Picchu, the costs and benefits of tourism to the site as well as the local community must be managed. The Barcelona Field Studies Centre provides an overview of these impacts categorising them into three main areas; social, environmental and economic benefits and costs.

Table 3: Potential Benefits and Costs to the Community from Tourism

Potential Benefits of Tourism	Potential Costs of Tourism
<p><i>Social Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities and services may be provided that otherwise might not be developed. • Encourages civic involvement and pride. • Provides cultural exchange between hosts and guests. • Encourages the preservation and celebration of local festivals and cultural events. • Facilities and infrastructure supported by tourism (e.g. the railway) can also benefit residents. • Encourages the learning of new languages and skills. 	<p><i>Social Costs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May attract visitors whose lifestyles and ideas conflict with the community's. • May change individual behaviour and family relationships. • Overloading of porters leads to health problems • May lead to the loss of traditional values and culture through imitation of visitor behaviour or cultural diffusion resulting from normal, everyday interaction. • Crowding and congestion on the roads, footpaths and in the narrow streets. • Can lead to an increase in crime in the area. • Desecration of burial sites and the removal and display of human remains from Machu Picchu to further stimulate tourism. This has contributed to the destruction of spiritual heritage.
<p><i>Environmental Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters conservation and preservation of natural, cultural and historical resources. • Could be considered a clean industry. 	<p><i>Environmental Costs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is being slowly eroded by tourists' feet. • Machu Picchu is located among steep slopes that are constantly being eroded by heavy rains and landslides are common. • Timber has been cut along the Inca trail for fuel for cooking and forest fires in the vicinity have threatened Machu Picchu on several occasions. • Until now, the influx of visitors has been kept under control to the extent that the only way of reaching the site was by railway. But plans to build a road from Cuzco and a cable car running from the valley to the top of Machu Picchu could lead to irreparable harm being done. • Unorganized urban growth in the area with human waste pumped direct into the Urubamba river. Aguas Calientes has mushroomed in size as more hotels and restaurants have been built to accommodate the needs of tourists, and the burden is evident in the heaps of garbage piled along the banks of the Urubamba river.
<p><i>Economic Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracts high-spending tourists from higher socio-economic groups. • Provides governments with extra tax revenues each year through accommodation and restaurant taxes, airport taxes, sales taxes, Inca trail and Machu Picchu entrance fees, employee income tax etc. • Creates local jobs and business opportunities. These include those jobs directly related to tourism (hotel and tour services) and those that indirectly support tourism (such as food production and housing construction). 	<p><i>Economic Costs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflates property values and prices of goods and services. • Employment tends to be seasonal. Workers are laid off in the low season. • Tourist numbers can be adversely affected by events beyond the control of the destination e.g. terrorism, economic recession. This is a problem in Peru for the country is over-dependent upon tourism. • The jobs provided are usually poorly paid.

Adapted from: (<https://geographyfieldwork.com/MachuTourismImpact.htm>)

FUTURE OF TOURISM AT MACHU PICCHU

Due to the recent events around Covid-19 it is difficult to assess the future of tourism at Machu Picchu, however looking at the strategy outlined by the Ministry of Tourism in Peru prior to the pandemic and assuming a return to pre-Covid conditions in the long term, some projections can be made.

The Ministry of Tourism in Peru (MINCETUR) which is the governing body of the Tourism and Foreign Trade Sector has identified as one of its strategic objectives to “make tourism a competitive, socially inclusive and environmentally responsible economic activity that will serve as a tool for the nation’s sustainable development” (<https://www.mincetur.gob.pe/ministry-of-foreign-trade-and-tourism/about-mincetur/?lang=en>).

In terms of Machu Picchu this focus on sustainable development in tourism is an integral part of the balance between the desire to grow economically while minimising or eliminating impacts on the attraction, culture, and local community.

The introduction of government regulations limiting tourist numbers will impact positively on the environment and crowding, however, it will also reduce income. To counter this, the municipality of Machu Picchu is trying to generate new tourist attractions outside Machu Picchu creating jobs and income. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/11/01/peru-easing-business-regulations-in-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-tourist-destinations>

These attractions may also employ the increasing number of Venezuelan immigrants moving to Machu Picchu for work because of the unstable political situation in Venezuela.

Laws around waste processing and banning the use of plastics at Machu Picchu and Machu Picchu Pueblo have seen the introduction of organic products and local processing of organic wastes. Other plastics and metals are compacted and sent away for treating.

Machu Picchu is currently working to expand the tourism offering to include opportunities for visitors to experience the indigenous crafts of the area in a ‘hands on’ sense. This will also provide employment for locals.

Additional to the environmentally and culturally sustainable development of the destination is the need to ensure the image of Machu Picchu isn’t damaged by increasing crime. As a result, the town is working to install security cameras to discourage pickpockets and other criminal activity.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/11/01/peru-easing-business-regulations-in-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-tourist-destinations>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Peru/Daily-life-and-social-customs>

<https://www.amautaspanish.com/destinations/learn-spanish-in-peru/peru-overview/festivals-137.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru>

<https://data.worldbank.org/country/peru>

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/peru/safety-and-security>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu

<https://www.chimuadventures.com/blog/2016/11/incas-short-history/>

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/incas/inca-rituals-and-beliefs/>

https://www.ancient.eu/Inca_Civilization/

<https://www.history.com/topics/south-america/inca>

<https://www.history.com/topics/south-america/machu-picchu>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/11/01/peru-easing-business-regulations-in-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-tourist-destinations>

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<https://www.peruviantimes.com/30/inc-says-machu-picchu-entrance-tickets-will-be-rationed-to-avoid-tourist-hoards-when-rail-service-resumes/5440/>

<https://www.esri.com/about/newsroom/arcnews/preserving-machu-picchu/>

<https://geographyfieldwork.com/MachuTourismImpact.htm>

<https://www.equaltimes.org/latin-america-s-environmental?lang=en#.XzouA-gzY2y>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Government_ministries_of_Peru

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/pe>

<https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples/policy>