

OBSERVER

Inside Sumaq Machu Picchu's Mystical Shaman Tours, Pisco Sours and Sacred Rock Ceremonies

By [Morgan Halberg](#) • 12/09/19 7:00am



Sumaq is the five-star hotel you should book for your trip to Machu Picchu. Scroll through to see inside the property.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



Sumaq was extensively renovated in 2016.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The Imperial Suite is the most lavish room.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



It has a separate bar and living area.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



All of the rooms are outfitted in burgundy, gold and deep wood tones.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



A junior deluxe suite.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



There are also rooms with three beds, for family vacations.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



Many of the rooms have small private terraces.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The marble bathrooms.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The hotel will organize a private dinner on the terrace for guests.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu

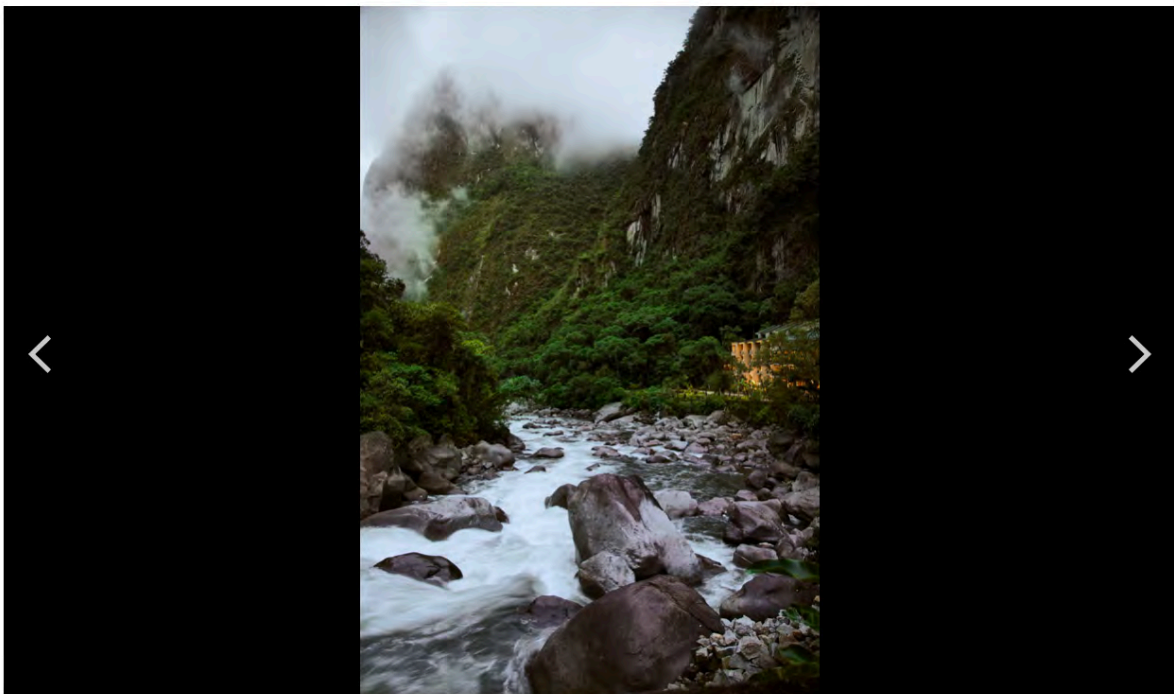


Guests can book a number of culinary experiences.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



You can take a ceviche class at the bar.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The hotel is right by the Vilcanota River.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



Qunuq is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The dishes use local ingredients.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The Aqlla Spa.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The hotel is in the perfect location.
Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



The pachamanca demonstration showcases the "earth oven" practice.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu



A shaman will come to the hotel for certain ceremonies and rituals.

Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu

Every year, millions of eager travelers make the trip to Machu Picchu, checking off the 15th century Incan citadel from their jet set bucket list. There's a reason so many people are determined to make it to Machu Picchu—it's one of those rare, once-in-a-lifetime magical experiences that actually lives up to the hype.

But it's not exactly a convenient site to reach, and while many people turn the excursion into a day trip, it's far more relaxing and enjoyable to transform the hike into a whole travel experience. That means finding a luxe hotel for your stay in Aguas Calientes, the settlement below the famous Incan site. Sumaq Machu Picchu is one of the few five-star hotels in the town and is located in its own little enclave, away from the hoards of backpacking tourists that are inevitable when visiting certain destinations.

The plush, understated Peruvian hotel feels like it's in a private oasis, overlooking the Vilcanota River. Sumaq also removes all the stress from planning your visit to Machu Picchu—they take care of the whole itinerary, starting out with sending someone to come pick you up at the train station, transfer your luggage and give you a little peek at the famous market, where we highly recommend picking up an alpaca sweater or two. That's just the beginning, though—other experiences include private shaman rituals, ceviche classes, pisco sour demonstrations and more. And, of course, the guides for your hike. Here's everything you need to know about our top hotel pick for Machu Picchu.



The deluxe rooms have balconies and views of the river and lush greenery. Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu

The Rooms Are Inspired by the Local Andean Culture

The hotel is comprised of 62 rooms and suites, all of which are decorated in a deep red, gold and dark wood color scheme. The decor is modern while showcasing the local Andean influence, like the woven textiles hung on the walls and on the beds. Most of the rooms feature views of the Vilcanota River and lush greenery from the mahogany-accented windows. If you want an upgrade, consider one of the two deluxe junior suites, which have private living rooms, balconies and Jacuzzis. Rates start at \$350 for a deluxe garden view, while the deluxe river view starts at \$608.



The über plush Imperial Suite is the most luxurious room at the hotel. Courtesy Sumaq Machu Picchu

Or Splurge on the Regal Imperial Suite for \$2,660 a Night

If you're really looking to splurge, book the hotel's Imperial Suite, which costs about \$2,660 a night. There's a king-size bed, a separate living room and a massive marble Jacuzzi in the entertaining area, so you can relax in a bubble bath post-hike while taking in the views of the mountains and Vilcanota River. Guests who book this suite also get butler service and a wine bar filled with bottles selected from the hotel owner's personal cellar. Those staying in the Imperial Suite can also have a full formal dinner within the room, and it includes ceviche and pisco sour demonstrations right in the living area.



We can't promise your ceviche will turn out exactly like this. Courtest Sumaq Machu Picchu

Learn How to Make Ceviche and Pisco Sours, and Watch an Ancient Peruvian Earth Pot Cooking Ritual

You don't *have* to be staying in the Imperial Suite to experience the aforementioned food demos, though. The hotel will plan out a special cooking class at the bar, where you can learn how to cook up trout ceviche (it's fresh from the neighboring river). There's also the option for a pisco sour class, because you absolutely must try the local Peruvian drink while there—plus, it means you can add a new cocktail recipe to your repertoire.

If you don't mind waiting a few hours before you dine, we definitely recommend the pachamanca demonstration. It's an ancient Peruvian dish in which stones are heated in a fire and then buried in the ground and act as an oven (an "earth pot"), and food including pork, chicken and potatoes are then buried in the earth with it, underneath a few layers of plantain leaves. If you're looking for a simpler meal, the hotel's one restaurant, Qunuq, is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, with Peruvian dishes and local ingredients like quinoa chicken, trout ceviche and alpaca. You can also go for the Flavor of the Andes tasting menu, to try a little bit of everything.



It's worth it. Courtesy Morgan Halberg

Take a Mystical Tour of Machu Picchu, Complete With a Shaman and Sacred Rock Ceremony

Now, here's what you (and pretty much everyone else) planned your trip around—the actual Machu Picchu experience. Sumaq will take care of all the logistical planning, and they have a few different options for how you can see the magical site. On my recent trip to Machu Picchu, I embarked on the “Mystical Tour,” where you'll meet your private guide and shaman (yes, shaman, and no, this isn't gimmicky) before getting onto the bus that takes you up the mountain. The experience, which is a bit over five hours when you factor in travel to and from the site, is both historical and spiritual, and includes a ceremony at a sacred rock, cleansing ritual and, of course, plenty of background on the Incan citadel.



A shaman comes to the hotel for rituals and ceremonies. Courtest Sumaq Machu Picchu

A Shaman Will Also Perform an Earth Offering Ritual and Aura Cleansing

If you're looking to add another level to the more spiritual experience, book the "Offer to the Earth" ritual, where the shaman who took you around Machu Picchu will come to Sumaq and perform a ceremony with an offering to the earth, including coca leaves, palo santo, crystals, shells and other items. Sumaq also offers aura cleansing sessions and coca leaf readings, both of which are completed by a private shaman.



A very soothing spa moment. Courtest Sumaq Machu Picchu

Indulge in a Massage With Natural Honey and Coca Oil

After you've traveled the three-and-half-hour train journey from Cusco to Aguas Calientes, and then spent over five hours hiking around Machu Picchu, it'll be hard to resist a stop at the spa. Sumaq's Aqlla Spa is located on the lower level of the hotel, with a treatment room, steam sauna and Jacuzzi. The treatments, including facials, massages and scrubs, are all about embracing the local culture and ancient Inca practices, and include floral essences, natural coca oil and Cusco honey.