

SELLING POWER

Make tracks for Machu

Does the thought of deciphering rail timetables in Spanish leave you feeling cold? Fe Destination Marketing Group's *Philip Cooke* and Talking Stick Marketing's *Byron Shirto* der

Following the launch of British Airways' direct service from London to Lima, interest in Peru is soaring, but this is making it harder for travel agents and tour operators to enable clients to visit Machu Picchu, the 15th-century Inca citadel.

Nine out of 10 visitors to Peru will want to visit Machu Picchu, putting huge pressure on one of the world's most protected archaeological sites, so the Peruvian government has put strict controls on the number of visitors to the monument or walking the Inca Trail that connects it to Cusco via Peru's Sacred Valley.

There are no roads to Machu Picchu, so unless your clients can walk for up to five days at high altitude along the Inca Trail (which has to be booked in advance, has a limited carrying capacity and requires non-Peruvians to be accompanied by local guides), the only way to reach it is by train from Cusco or Urubamba, via Ollantaytambo, followed by a bus or taxi journey up to the summit.

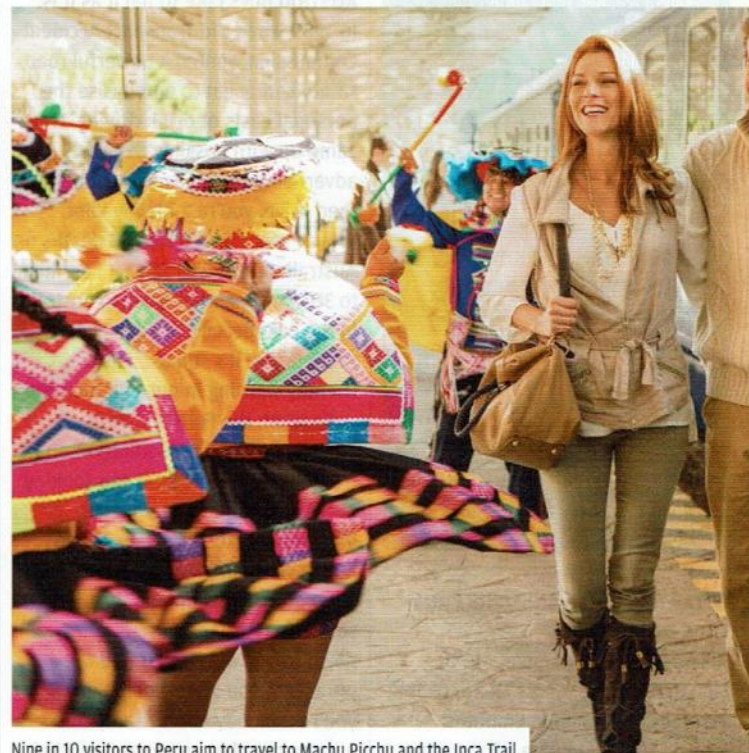
So it's essential that all tickets and admissions for all elements of this journey are purchased in advance of travel, either online or via your local agent in Peru. But be warned – timetables change with the season, numbers are restricted and the price structure is complicated.

Rail services

Railway services to Machu Picchu/Aguas Calientes are provided by two separate and competing train companies, Inca Rail and PeruRail, both of which use the main Cusco - Ollantaytambo - Machu Picchu rail network, with PeruRail's Hiram Bingham service starting from the Rio Sagrado Hotel in Urubamba before joining the main line at Ollantaytambo.

Cusco stations

Cusco was once the capital of the Inca empire. It is a Unesco World Heritage Site and the usual starting point for travellers to Machu Picchu. Altitude sickness can be a problem on arrival as Cusco is situated 3,400m above



Nine in 10 visitors to Peru aim to travel to Machu Picchu and the Inca Trail

sea level, so arrival a day or two earlier to acclimatise is advisable.

Poroy station is the closest station to Cusco and is used by both Inca Rail and PeruRail. It is 10km outside the city centre and passengers are usually required to make their own arrangements (by taxi, bus or with a tour operator) to get to and from the station. This takes about 25 minutes* and the train journey from Poroy to Machu Picchu then takes three hours and 30 minutes.

Wanchaq station is in Cusco's city centre. There are no Machu Picchu services from this station, but PeruRail operates a service from here to Puno and Lake Titicaca on the Peru-Bolivian Border, travelling on the Andean Explorer. As of May 2017,

this will become a luxury Belmond Andean Explorer service only, offering one, two and three-day sleeper journeys along the route, which also takes in Arequipa.

Sacred Valley stations

Despite its name, the Sacred Valley is located high in the Andean mountains. It contains the Inca Trail, which links Cusco with Machu Picchu, passing through numerous archaeological sites and remote villages.

Ollanta station in the Incan fortress town of Ollantaytambo is the main station for most services to and from Machu Picchu. Ollantaytambo is two hours' drive from Cusco and 30 minutes from Urubamba. Inca Rail and PeruRail offer services from this



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Machu Picchu

Help is at hand, The Peruvian rail system



Belmont Hiram Bingham's Peru Bar

station and the journey time to Machu Picchu is one hour and 50 minutes.

Urubamba Station is one hour and 20 minutes' drive from Cusco and a 30-minute drive from Ollantaytambo. This station is also only served by PeruRail's Vistadome luxury service and the train journey time to Machu Picchu is two hours and 20 minutes.

About PeruRail

PeruRail's tourist services to Machu Picchu are an Anglo-Peruvian joint enterprise between Peruvian Railways and the UK-based international hotel, train and leisure specialist Belmond Ltd.

PeruRail operates three levels of service between Cusco and Machu Picchu (approximately 50 miles) and between Urubamba and Machu Picchu (approximately 30 miles). All PeruRail services from Cusco stop and pick up at Ollantaytambo and the full journey from Cusco to Machu Picchu takes three and a half hours.

The Vistadome and Expedition services operate daily between Poroy, Ollantaytambo and Urubamba (Vistadome) and Machu Picchu year round, but Peru's rainy season affects the high-altitude sections of this route, so between May and December each year these services start their journey to Machu Picchu from Pachar, a temporary station located about halfway to Machu Picchu (not from Poroy). During this period, the all-inclusive Belmond Hiram Bingham's service to Machu Picchu begins at the Rio Sagrado Hotel in Urubamba, Monday-Saturday (note: additional Sunday services will be announced soon).

This service starts and ends at Poroy Station in Cusco but passengers take a private bus to the Belmond Hotel Rio Sagrado in Urubamba for lunch before meeting the train at Urubamba and then travelling on to Machu Picchu.

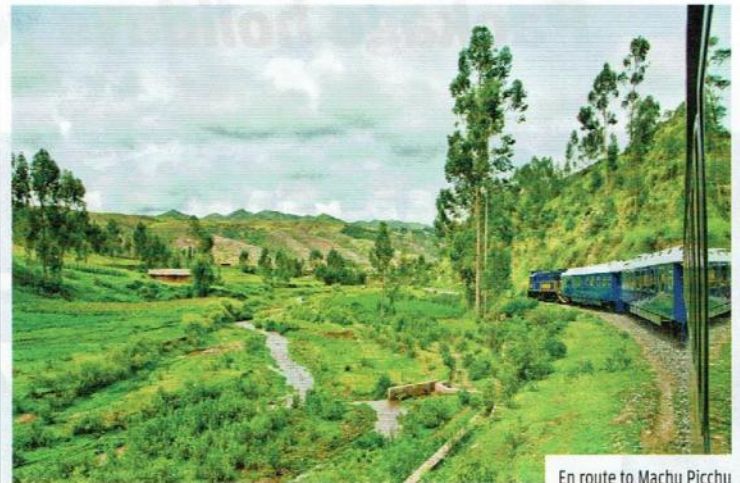
PeruRail also operates the earliest daily service from Cusco to Machu Picchu, providing passengers with the maximum time on site.

PeruRail prices vary but current guide prices are £110 return for the Expedition, £140 return for the Vistadome and £540 return for the Hiram Bingham.

Travellers may also switch between services - for example, taking the Expedition out and then travelling back to Cusco on the Hiram Bingham.

About Inca Rail

Inca Rail is a privately owned Peruvian firm operating between



En route to Machu Picchu

Cusco and Machu Picchu and between Ollantaytambo and Machu Picchu, offering two trains with four levels of service, including a Premium Economy service daily between Cusco (Poroy) and Machu Picchu.

Inca Rail also operates several departures between Ollantaytambo and Machu Picchu, including the Inca Train, which offers three distinct carriages, with Executive and First Class options. The Presidential Class is an exclusive private carriage. Inca Rail's prices also vary but they currently range between £55 return for Premium Economy from Cusco, £42 return for Executive Class from Ollantaytambo and £100 return for First Class from Ollantaytambo. Presidential Class is a separate carriage available as a charter product for up to 10 passengers. Price is available on application.

An unrivalled experience

Services included onboard range from basic refreshments to gourmet meals, soft drinks to welcome cocktails, local snacks to Peruvian gastronomy, and from window gazing to Peruvian musicians and fashion shows. This is an unforgettable way to experience some of the world's most amazing scenery.

Upon arrival in Machu Picchu/ Aguas Calientes, there are two options available for the ascent to the citadel of Machu Picchu, located high above the town and about four miles from the station. You can either walk (about one hour) or take a bus along a spectacular winding road, departing every 15 minutes. The first bus

departs 5.30am and the last one leaves the citadel at 5.30pm. Bus tickets cost about £18 (round trip).

Be aware that entrance to the citadel is by ticket only, currently costing about £27 and available in advance online or from ticket offices in the town - but not at the entrance.

Tickets sell out days in advance during the high season but you can use the website to find out how many tickets are available for sale each day. Also, visitors must bring passports, as they are requested upon entry to Machu Picchu.

**Journey times are approximate and while every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, TTG cannot be held responsible for errors*

HELP IS AT HAND

Both train companies have UK representative offices (not sales). For Inca Rail, contact Talking Stick Marketing (talkingstickmktg.com) For PeruRail contact The Destination Marketing Group (thedmg.co.uk)

Useful websites:

- Inca Rail: incarail.com
- PeruRail: perurail.com
- Belmond: belmond.com/hiram-bingham-train
- Machu Picchu: peru-machu-picchu.com or machupicchu.org
- Machu Picchu tickets: machupicchu.gob.pe