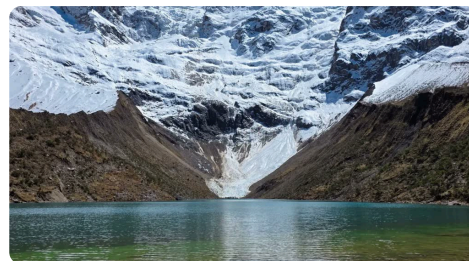


Altitude of Cusco, the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu

The official altitude of each place, a suggested order to acclimatize, and what Peru's Ministry of Health (MINSA) and the U.S. CDC recommend to prevent altitude sickness (soroche).

Data as of 24 October 2026. This sheet does not replace a medical consultation.


2,430 m

Machu Picchu citadel (7,972 ft)

3,399 m

city of Cusco (11,152 ft)

2,500 m

MINSA advises precautions above this (8,202 ft)

Altitude of each place (above sea level)

● Reference ● Machu Picchu ● Sacred Valley ● Cusco ● Mountains

Rainbow Mountain (Vinicunca)		
● upper viewpoint: above 5,200 m (17,060 ft)	5,036 m (16,522 ft)	MINCETUR
● Humantay Lake	4,200 m (13,780 ft)	MINCETUR
● Chinchero	3,750 m (12,303 ft)	Cusco Directorate of Culture
● Moray	3,480 m (11,417 ft)	Cusco Directorate of Culture
● Pisac (archaeological park)	3,400 m (11,155 ft)	Cusco Directorate of Culture
● Cusco (city)	3,399 m (11,152 ft)	Municipality of Cusco / PromPerú
● Cusco airport	3,310 m (10,860 ft)	CORPAC
● Pisac (town)	2,986 m (9,797 ft)	INEI
● Urubamba (town)	about 2,870 m (9,416 ft)	INEI
● Ollantaytambo (archaeological park)	2,860 m (9,383 ft)	Cusco Directorate of Culture
● Huayna Picchu (summit)	2,720 m (8,924 ft)	PromPerú
● Machu Picchu (citadel)	2,430 m (7,972 ft)	Ministry of Culture
● Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes)	2,040 – 2,092 m (6,693 – 6,864 ft)	Municipality of Machupicchu / INEI
● Lima (for reference)	162 m (531 ft)	INEI

▲ MINSA: precautions above 2,500 m

The figures for the archaeological parks are averages; those for the towns refer to their center. The town of Pisac and its archaeological park differ by about 400 m. For Cusco, INEI records between 3,399 and 3,439 m (11,152 and 11,283 ft), depending on the measuring point.

Does Machu Picchu cause altitude sickness?

Machu Picchu (2,430 m / 7,972 ft) and Aguas Calientes are lower than Cusco. According to the CDC, the risk appears in people who are not acclimatized and sleep at 2,450 m (8,038 ft) or higher, and it is greater during sleep: where you sleep matters as much as what you visit by day. Huayna Picchu (about 2,720 m / 8,924 ft) and Machu Picchu Mountain climb above the citadel, with demanding stone stairs.

Suggested order to acclimatize

From Lima (162 m / 531 ft), a single flight takes you to 3,310 m (10,860 ft). The CDC notes that in cases such as Cusco, travelers can go down to sleep lower than the airport for one or two nights and then go up. The Sacred Valley towns meet that condition.



This order is our own suggestion based on the CDC recommendations, not medical advice.

How to prevent it

- Rest for the first few hours after arriving and avoid intense physical exertion (MINSA).
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat light, in small portions (MINSA).
- Avoid alcohol and do only light exercise during the first 48 hours (CDC).
- Above 3,000 m (9,843 ft), do not raise the altitude at which you sleep by more than 500 m (1,640 ft) a day (CDC).
- Do not self-medicate: see your doctor before the trip. With high blood pressure or arrhythmias, travel with your full medication and a recent checkup (MINSA).

Coca tea and oxygen

Coca tea (mate de coca) is an Andean tradition, but neither MINSA nor the CDC includes it among their recommendations. Many hotels and health centers in Cusco offer oxygen (PromPerú); according to the CDC it relieves the headache, but small canisters give only very brief relief.

Symptoms of altitude sickness (CDC)

Headache with at least one of these: loss of appetite, dizziness, tiredness, nausea and, sometimes, vomiting. It usually starts 2 to 12 hours after arrival and, if you do not go higher, passes within 12 to 48 hours. In children, it sometimes shows only as persistent crying (MINSA).

Warning signs (MINSA)

Go to the nearest health facility if, after resting, you still have:

- difficulty breathing at rest
- a severe headache that does not go away
- vomiting
- confusion, excessive drowsiness or loss of consciousness

In children: marked listlessness, refusing fluids or difficulty breathing.

For serious symptoms, the most effective measure is to go down immediately to a lower area (MINSA). Never go higher to sleep while you have symptoms (CDC).

A tour that follows this order

Our Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu in 2 days tour starts lower than Cusco and sleeps in Aguas Calientes. Scan the code to see the itinerary and book.

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machupicchucataleya.com/tours/sacred-valley-classic-machu-picchu/

Full guide: machupicchucataleya.com/machu-picchu-altitude-cusco-sacred-valley/



Sources (checked in October 2026): MINSA, recommendations to prevent altitude sickness (April 2026) and warning signs (Radio Nacional, July 2026); CDC, Yellow Book 2026. Altitudes: Ministry of Culture, Cusco Directorate of Culture, INEI (Cusco Statistical Compendium 2025), Municipality of Machupicchu, Municipality of Cusco, PromPerú, MINCETUR (tourism inventory) and CORPAC.