

## 3-7 Phuyupatamarca to Machu Picchu

**Time (average)** 5–6 hours

**Altitude lost** 1100 metres

**Terrain** Inca road with steep staircases

**Summary** a day of steep descent, culminating in your first glimpse of Machu Picchu from Intipunku

After camping, most people visit Phuyupatamarca's ruins the next morning. The design demonstrates the Inca passion for closely fitting the built environment to the natural contours of the site. Sinuous curves and serpentine terraces may suggest Gaudi's 20th-century architecture in Barcelona more than late 15th-century Peru. Although Bingham discovered this site, most of it was still covered by jungle. In the 1940s the Fejos team uncovered the rest and gave the site its name: 'cloudy place'.

The five fountains were used for religious rituals as well as domestic purposes. There is an altar for llama sacrifice. The Incas worshipped water as the symbol of life, and Phuyupatamarca probably had key religious and ceremonial functions, especially for travellers on their way to Machu Picchu.

*Looking north from Phuyupatamarca ruins, with Machu Picchu mountain at centre and Intipata below*



After the ruins, the trail heads downhill as an irregular staircase that drops 500 metres of altitude in 1300-1500 steps (opinions differ about the number). As you descend, the forest becomes denser, the vegetation more lush and the butterflies and birds more plentiful.

After 2-3 hours, you will reach a large pylon which marks a choice point. Ahead you will be able to see Intipata ('sunny place') – an extensive set of agricultural terraces that follow the convex contours of their spur. The site grew food (potatoes, maize, fruit and sweet potato) for Machu Picchu. Keep straight on to visit Intipata, and return afterwards to this pylon.

To continue the trail, turn right at the pylon and follow the steep downhill path towards the buildings of Wiñaywayna. The campsite here is always busy because it is the last one before Machu Picchu. There is a restaurant, hostel, proper toilets and a museum of a sort (stuffed animals). Once refreshed, take a ten-minute walk towards the beautiful ruins of Wiñaywayna (2650 m), overlooking the Urubamba gorge. The terraces cling to the precipitous hillside with waterfalls beyond. 'Wiñaywayna' means 'forever young', and is the name of a pink orchid found around the site (see page 37).

*Wiñaywayna ruins*

