

MACHU PICCHU TO ALLOW MORE TOURISTS - NOT EVERYONE IS HAPPY



The Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, Peru's jewel of tourism, will increase the number of visitors by a third to revive the Andean region's economy of Cusco, which has collapsed due to the pandemic. But the measure triggered criticism.

A resolution, to be published in the coming days in the official gazette, **will increase the capacity from 3,044 to 4,044 people at the stone citadel per day**, recognized as one of the seven wonders of the modern world, according to the Peruvian Culture Ministry.

"It is a temporary measure until December 31. If the conditions are not met, we will return to the previous capacity," a ministry official said. "The important thing is to take care of the citadel and we will not neglect that part. The mission of the Ministry of Culture is to preserve heritage," he added.

The allowance of more tourists at the site immediately caused criticism, including from a former head of the citadel, anthropologist Fernando Astete.

"Too much competition always generates problems at the citadel," said Astete, who oversaw Machu Picchu for 20 years. "I hope it was [decided] with a technical study and not by officials. The decision to change that should be reported to UNESCO," the anthropologist added.

David Ugarte, former director of Cusco Culture, the region where the citadel and former capital of the Inca empire is located, also expressed his disagreement.

"The intention to increase the maximum capacity has always existed. It is wild mercantilism, from those who fail to understand Machu Picchu's historical heritage and what we must preserve forever," said Ugarte.

In statements to El Comercio, researcher Bertha Bermúdez regretted that "they always want to bring more and more tourists" to Machu Picchu.

The citadel was built in the 15th century during the reign of the Inca emperor Pachacuti. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it received 4,100 visitors a day.

In 2021, about 447,800 people visited the citadel, vastly different from the 1.5 million in 2019, according to official figures. In 2020, when it was closed for eight months due to the pandemic, it had only 274,500 visitors.

In the first half of this year, about 400,000 people visited the historic site.

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