

teaching note

Are We Putting Our Favorite Destinations in Peril? A no longer lost city - Machu Picchu case study

Summary of the Case

Machu Picchu is one of the most renowned tourist locations in the world. Not only is it a historic archaeological site, it was also named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and One of the New Seven Wonders of the World by National Geographic. While Machu Picchu brings in the largest share of Peru's hospitality and tourism revenue, the government has failed to oversee the location adequately. Due to the fact that it is such a hot spot for tourists, the ancient ruins of Machu Picchu are getting pushed over, broken, vandalized, and defecated on. The tourists are not only destroying the ruins but also the environment, specifically the vegetation and soil that surrounds and leads up to this archaeological site. These actions caused by the tourists and the inattention of the Peruvian government have created a rift between the locals, tourists, government, and UNESCO.

After a close analysis of the terrible occurrences on Machu Picchu, UNESCO threatened the Peruvian government. UNESCO said that if the government does not take actions to help protect Machu Picchu, it will then be placed on their endangered list and be officially closed to the public, thereby eliminating this important source of revenue. Ever since the interaction between UNESCO and the Peruvian government, there have been some steps to preserve and hopefully restore this site. The Peruvian government placed restrictions on visitation to the site in order to not destroy the environment and ruins, control the tourist crowds, and still derive income from the site.

From observing the initiatives that the government has taken to protect Machu Picchu, more recommendations surfaced including measures to restore the vegetation and soil, protect the ruins, have better crowd control, reduce carbon emissions, and maintain a decent revenue stream. To help restore the vegetation and soil and to protect the ruins, we recommended placing more guards around the site, restricting tourists from certain areas for growth purposes, and only opening a couple of paths at a time up to Machu Picchu. Managing the number of paths also helps with crowd control as well as allowing certain paths to have time for rest and restoration. We also focused on the transportation access to this site. We recommended that only one form of transportation, trains, should be allowed to reach Machu Picchu. This will coincide with the seasonal times that tourists will be able to visit this site. All of the recommendations are to help benefit the locals, tourists, and government while still maintaining the specific requirements enforced by UNESCO. As the initiatives continue to protect Machu Picchu, it is expected to remain a popular tourist destination as well as being more respectful and mindful of the history and culture behind these ruins and environment.

Teaching Objectives

- Identify the environmental impacts of overtourism at Machu Picchu
- Analyze the current actions being taken at Machu Picchu
- Develop strategies to balance people, planet, and profit at Machu Picchu
- Evaluate and implement strategies to encourage sustainability and social responsibility in your own life

Target Audience

The case study discusses the role that locals, tourists, government, and UNESCO have played in the ongoing damage of Machu Picchu's environment and ancient ruins. Since there are so many groups of people that are major contributors to the destruction of Machu Picchu, the target audience would include any and all tourists visiting Machu Picchu, locals living or working in the area of Machu Picchu, the Peruvian government, guards and guides who are employed at this site, and anyone who wants to protect ancient and renowned archaeological sites (such as UNESCO). This includes any demographic of travelers or individuals that have a deep passion for the protection and restoration of Machu Picchu.

Teaching Approach and Strategy

This case study could require multiple sessions and be taught in many different ways. With this said, three-hour teaching sessions should suffice for students learning the case study. In the first hour session, the instructor may want to talk about overtourism and how it affects the hospitality and tourism industry. More specifically, the instructor can help students understand this topic by providing industry examples such as world-famous sites other than Machu Picchu. A great teaching method to use for this would be a visual presentation. Instead of just talking about overtourism examples, it will be necessary to show before and after visuals representing the effects of overtourism. This can conclude the first hour session, hopefully instilling confidence into the students on the topic of overtourism.

Then, the second hour session should include major facts and visuals of the Machu Picchu site. In order for them to dig deeply into the case study, they must know and have a mental image of what goes on in Machu Picchu, the background behind it, and be introduced to its current situation today. It would be wise to show a timeline of how Machu Picchu was discovered and protected over all these years. It is also important to talk about the time when Machu Picchu was declared one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. The second hour session should be filled with knowledge about the destination: Machu Picchu.

The final session should then combine the two previous sessions into a final discussion about issues connecting the two topics. The session should start out with ways that overtourism is impacting Machu Picchu today. The students can then brainstorm their own ways they see an improvement to this issue. Once students have been given enough time to brainstorm recommendations of their own, the class should come together as a whole and sit in a circle-style layout. This way the instructor can incorporate an interactive component (i.e., a ball or talking stick) as a way that students can share their ideas when they receive the object. If the instructor does not wish to include this fun element, it is always okay to sit in the traditional circle layout and go around the circle allowing each student to share one idea and try not to have any ideas repeated. The instructor should either make the decision to strictly control the discussion, or to let the students have the freedom to control the discussion. We would advise the instructor to remain in control, often switching the discussion topics and questions as they start becoming repetitious.

Some examples of discussion question the group or instructor can ask would be:

- Do you think Peru has a good handle on this issue of sustainability and overtourism? Why, or why not?
- Should Peru be communicating with other nations in regard to the overtourism crisis?
- How can the preservation of Machu Picchu be fully respected by tourists?
- What is it going to take to decrease overtourism in Peru?
- Do you think it is a good idea for Peru's economy to limit or allow tourism to occur in Machu Picchu?
- Any last thoughts on the issue?

Analysis

Update:

The current dilemma is that Machu Picchu is dealing with overtourism and acts of vandalism to the site.

Marginal examples and answers:

- Peru has a good handle on the situation at the moment; however, as the summer months approach there will need to be fixed policies in place to handle the constant influx of tourists during peak months.
- Yes, Peru should be contacting other national parks that are dealing with similar dilemmas. For example, Venice, Italy is also going through the same situation with overtourism.
- The preservation of Machu Picchu can be fully respected by tourists who understand the history of the ancient site. One way to help with the preservation is having tour guides ex-

plaining the importance of preserving it and how we all play a huge part in that effort.

- It will take a group effort to decrease the amount of times travelers visit. It will take collaboration between the government and the tourists in understanding the importance of seasonal blackout dates and limited visitors per day.
- Yes, there are plus sides in limiting tourism and there are obvious negatives. However, there will be an influx of tourism in peak months that will boost the economy in the long run.