

In January I visited Machu Picchu, Peru's sacred Inca citadel and top tourist attraction. This is the rainy season in Peru. We did have rain especially at night. The visit to Machu Picchu went well, but the next day, because of heavy rains during the night, the Urubamba River was fiercely out of control. Eventually the dam broke and the town we were in, Aguas Calientes, started to flood. We (tourists and townspeople) were sent to higher ground, but eventually had to be evacuated by helicopter to a safer place. We were flown to a small village about 30 minutes away, and from there were transported by bus to the city of Cusco – another two hours! After three days, our entire group was united in Cusco to continue our tour. We then traveled to the village that was most affected by the floods, pooled our money to buy needed supplies (rice, flour, canned meat, grains, etc.) to help the people of that region. Many lost their livelihood – which depended on the tourism trade. Unfortunately, we are probably the last to see Machu Picchu for a while, as it has been closed down to tourists.

Machu Picchu is an ancient civilization located near Cusco (the ancient Incan capital). It was hidden for centuries and not known about except by local indigenous people. In 1911 Hiram Bingham, a professor from Yale exploring in Peru, heard about it from a local farmer. He went to the site and found this ancient marvel.

Sandy O'Neill