



**Machu Picchu Hike Trip Notes**  
**November 13-27, 2012**

Part 2

**Daily Notes to Tom from iPhone**

**From in-transit** - Less first class than I can remember. Tight seats. Not much recline. 2/2/2 seating and this is supposed to be first class. To counter that: Older and very pleasant attendants.

Boarding was getting me ready for Peru. Crazy. Stand by crowd. Nobody forming lines. After starting boarding process they said we had to get our passport verified. I gave up in the crowd and let them "verify me" at the boarding gate. Too much line.

Silly old couples needing to sit together. Really. Well unless they are newly married. Big effort to move other passengers around and meanwhile boarding process is held up.

Little old ladies about four feet tall and 100 years old with warts all over their face trying to sit in first class whereas they were assigned to row 32. No wonder they are confused. It looks like coach up here. Two of them did this trick then pretended to not understand or hear. One of them was out of Newark and did same trick there.

Wow. An agent just hollered down the aisle asking if everyone got a drink. Honest! Call this greyhound bus company? Only amusing. I have my codeine if I need it but I wouldn't miss this show.

No TV screen. No plug in. Maybe they decided Peruvians or anybody going to Peru didn't need any luxury. Or needed to get ready for what was to come. The reward? They are serving braised short ribs.

**Cusco first day**

Or call it the second day since it took a full 24 hours to get here and then 12 hours more and the body still can't negotiate in the 11,500 feet of elevation.

Airplane was an archaic United version due to be retired next month. I liked the attendants and maybe since they are likely ready to retire too. Plane was extreme opposite to the Dreamliner I will have from Houston to Newark on November 27<sup>th</sup>.

Coming in and landing between the high peaks was dramatic and like the Alps but more of them and taller. I was met by a Country Walkers rep, given a big bottle of water and a cup of coca tea, and an overview. Also a ten-day pass to the museums. I was stunned at the hordes of people and the old Saigon look from the early 70s in much of the town. Though this town grows up the mountains surrounding it.

The hotel is plenty nice and I'm pleased. It's in what looks like an old Monastery with lovely courtyard and frescoes but I think it was a rich hacienda. Down the street is a JW Marriott that is a real knock out: classy and stunning. A bit farther is The Monastery hotel which is overly stuffy for my tastes. I'd feel like a Beverly hillbilly in it. There were women dressed to the nines being shown H. Stern jewelry.



I had to wait couple hours for my room and was miserable. Maybe that's why I didn't like reception staff. Once into room I fell into bed without unpacking or even looking around. I was dead to world for nearly four hours despite all the coca tea and finally rallied enough for a walk and big restaurant meal. The tour company had given me recommended restaurants as well as a spiral book of suggestions and tips: Like never drink the water. No paper of *any kind* is to go into the toilets. Drink lots of coca tea.

At the restaurant I thought about ordering alpaca steaks but after seeing the adjoining tables' guinea pig (whole) I chickened out. One glass of wine made me totally unable to get back to hotel and I had to sit awhile. Did you know one glass of wine is worth at least three at this altitude?



I'm told its safe but the hordes of people and stray dogs make me leery.

### **Cusco second day - Thursday**

After 12 hours in bed I've risen from the dead with only a slight headache but still able to get out of breath even going down – yes, down - stairs. The hotel courtyard which is now covered in glass and serves as their lobby is filled with tourist waiting their rooms. Like yesterday though I hardly noticed I felt so miserable.

This entire schedule is terribly dis-functional and only a sight like Machu Picchu could be a calling card to a place with so many disadvantages. I'd guess that the Peruvians are not masters of organization.

-The flight from Houston is too short to be considered international so no decent aircraft or seats. No ditty bag.

-Arrival in Lima at midnight one must go thru customs and a new bag check and there is no transit. Thus no airline lounge.

-One finds hoards of people sleeping on the airport floor waiting the opening of ticket counters. Few places to eat and those that are open are junk. Security closes up until 2:30 and then there's only one very tiny lounge.

-My boarding pass shows 4:40 boarding and finally at 5:00 someone shows up which causes more pushing and shoving.

-We enter an old discarded United aircraft. I remember when my father tested TWA aircraft. He said failed aircraft were purchased by smaller foreign carriers. If a warning light for landing gear wouldn't go off they just disconnect it. Sometimes too much knowledge isn't healthy. My comfort with TACA, a Star Alliance member, fit in this category for this flight. But amazingly they manage to feed and drink us for the 1:05 flight.

-Arrival at Cusco airport is like another Woodstock and downright silly the mess to get out. My suitcase handle malfunctions so I manhandle my luggage through various twists and turns of pushing and shoving Peruvians who do not honor lines. It is worse than any third world airport I've seen.

-At the hotel there are mounds of tourists with their mounds of luggage waiting to get a room. They are trying to sleep but it must be like trying to sleep off a hangover. Coca tea is tried by all and we don't think it works but are afraid of the alternative.

Back to Cusco itself. The big square is more than a square. Plaza de Armas is a lovely multi sectional green park that hardly seems to fit. Well-kept flower beds and old trees held up like bonsai and with fountains interspersed. Surrounding the park one finds rows of arcades with much the same as sold on the streets. Also to be found are Irish pubs, Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds though they are somewhat hidden with little to no signs. Kids, grandmas and comediennes sell everything from charms to woolens to art work to little dolls. I send them all away and some deserve a big laugh for their creativity. Only one little boy of about ten got my full attention. "Where are you from?" he asks after allegedly giving up on a sale. "Where are you from?" I ask relating to his perfect English. He says he just got it in school and he knows New Jersey and rattles off a litany of geological facts about surrounding states. Knowing I'm impressed he goes on and I just want to hug him for being so studious and industrious. I tell him so and want to give a small reward of a few bucks which seems to surprise him though he might do well with this game every day. I feel good about rewarding his smarts and politeness. My \$\$\$ were small to me, but big to him.

Out my window in an alleyway each morning has been a little momma in full colorful costume with her llama. The costumes were common around town though the llamas were not. Many of them have baby llamas in their arms and full size one's at their side. We saw llama fetus in the market as they are a gift given to the gods.

Did I write about hotels? I'm plenty happy with mine but saw some that were hugely over the top. One being nearly next door and newly opened JW Marriott or just down from there the stuffy The Monastery. Next door to that is a still newer and ritzy one that just opened. Cusco is growing. Fortunately they have identified an area for a new airport about 30 miles outside of town.





From 10am to 10:15am and fortunately after breakfast and three cups of coca tea we had a really stupid earthquake drill. I'm fairly sure just standing out in the street is NOT what we should do and in the interim I surely acquired more hearing loss.

While out on the street we were sitting dogs for more sales pitches. Little girls in costume with baby llamas are the best but some of the artists were so good it was hard not to look thru their portfolios. At this stage of life I don't have a spare piece of wall available to fill. Also awkward is that I virtually tower over all Peruvians and I'm a mere 5' 5".

Off to use my museum pass now if I can just un-cloud my head enough to find them and/or assimilate what I'm looking at. I've never had a fondness for any type of South American art so some education might behoove me.

### **Cusco Day Two – part 2 it's still Thursday!**

I'm recovering after drinking lots more coca tea, more Diamox, and another afternoon nap. Before a nap I did my usual of walking miles in areas where I saw NO tourists. Also went into a palace turned into museum with walls of the famous Inca stone building and art said to be some of the best in the country, or so my tour book said. With the audio guide I toured each room, each piece of furniture and each piece of art. I learned a lot but still have trouble appreciating Incan art. Their outside wall contains the huge stones with one having 12 sides and made famous by Fodor's or Frommers.

Interesting was about a half mile away on the edge of historical Cusco there's a major crafts market with more 'stuff' than most towns offer but very few tourists to even purchase. It's piled full of stuff and there are many more workers than buyers. I can surmise that the government offered the housing and publicity to get the sellers off the streets (they are like flies and follow you everywhere and stick to you like glue) but it isn't working. It was a colorful walk through. (We all need Inca colored sneakers, right?) It's next to a giant water fountain of unique design with a sun god on top. One can walk underneath and beneath it and mostly not get wet. I'm easily entertained . . . and feel proud of myself for getting somewhere that doesn't have tourists – again.



Our tour guide Juan Carlos will be fine as will the six guests. Some are spoiled by Backroads and don't mind saying so, and some have a few boo-boos as well as a few extra pounds all of which mean I won't be the black-sheep? Juan Carlos took the opportunity to meet us for an hour worth of orientation this evening instead of wasting tomorrow morning on it. That was helpful because we really don't need hiking clothing tomorrow and I find they'll be taking us into the \$20 entry cathedral which I avoided today. I was tempted but always felt odd about churches charging to enter coupled with feeling anti-religious to be gawking in someone's place of worship.

I'm off to bed early because I'm still oddly tired and my heart beats hard and fast so decided it was best to see Cusco tomorrow instead of this evening. I had plenty of food stashed in the hotel room to survive just fine and could hole up here a couple days probably.

**From Ellen after my Cusco First Day report** – (It was Ellen more than anyone who convinced me to see Peru.) *Flying in from sea level is the toughest way to enter high altitude. Hope you're past the headache stage. I remember my first day. I hurt all over. I was in Cusco in 1980. I'm not sure what you mean by "Saigon: look", since you were in Saigon in to 70's and I was there in 2004. The Saigon look to me means tall towering high rises with names like Chase, Xerox, Citicorp on top. I remember Cusco as being populated by short, poor people. There's a huge Catholic church on the square that was built on a sacred Inca site. If you're on the street below the church site, there's a very high Cusco-type wall of large stones which was covered from top to bottom with gold in Inca days. And the site of the church was the site of the Inca's huge temple to the Sun.*

*From your description, it's possible you're staying at the same hotel where we stayed. I envy you the chance to visit museums in Cusco. We didn't have the time to do that. There's been some incredible archaeological activity in Peru since we were there.*

*The trip I was on was focused on archeology. We drove north from Lima to see the restoration of the pre-Inca town of Moche, the "pyramid of the sun" and the "pyramid of the moon" - up to Trujillo (the Peruvian town named for Trujillo, Spain birthplace of the conquistadores (most all 36 of them were illegitimate sons of one old bastard named Pizarro,)*

*Years after we visited the "pyramid of the sun", grave robbers uncovered a burial in this mound and Christopher Donan, a UCLA archeologist working on the restoration of Moche, moved up the coast to do the excavation of this site. It turned out to be one of the most important archeological discoveries of the late 20th Century.*

*There' a whole museum in Lima filled with artifacts form this dig. It's called "the Gold Museum." I'm guessing that some of the artifacts from this dig may have ended up in museums in Cusco, as well. The last time I was in Lima, there was a display in the Lima airport of a replica of one person uncovered in that dig, and arrayed with gold jewelry and gold accoutrements.*

*I see Christopher Donan around UCLA and at events at the Cotner Institute of archeology. Last time I talked to him, we were talking about that dig, and he said, 'Before we uncovered that burial, I thought the people buried there were simply myths.'*

*I'm guessing you've been up the hill to see Sacsayhuaman, the ancient Inca fort above Cusco and you're on your way to Machu Picchu. When I was there, the Inca bridge was not visible from the site. It was obscured by a very thick grove of bamboo. I'm guessing that has been cleared so the Inca bridge is now visible. I connected with the man who was in charge of the restoration. He took me through the bamboo to see the bridge. To see it coming out of a bamboo grove was a stunning surprise. We were also blessed by an unexpected visit of an Andean condor that came swooping down out of the clouds and flew so close, with binoculars I could almost count his eye-lashes. To me, Machu Picchu is a sacred place.*

### **Cusco on Friday**

*I'm feeling hugely better after the sleep of the dead. Off at 8:30am to Sacsayhuaman. Then a textile company high on a hill where we had a bit of lesson on alpaca versus baby alpaca versus polyester. Then there is viscaya of much more dollars. I liked the live alpaca at the ruins much better.*



Temple of the sun came after the huge market where everyone ooh and aahed over the butchered innards. How about llama fetuses? Having lived in the Far East in the 70s, no market can surprise me. An artist quarter turned out to be a place I was yesterday but today the fountains were working.

We walked by the famous hotels where I'd look in before and then coincidentally we went to a restaurant where I ate already. We had a full menu and a pisco sour. Baked potato chips of various colors and types was the hit for me.

### **Last missive from Cusco until end of trip.**

I like Juan Carlos our guide. His father was a famous guide. His great uncle was the archbishop of Cusco which we learned during our tour of the cathedral this afternoon. His wife is French from Provence area and he has the class of a Frenchman to prove it.

The town lit up at night is delightful. I took a picture the night I ate at the Inca Grill. We ate at the same place for lunch today. Three courses and pisco sour. I'd sent a picture of a whole guinea pig during my first dinner here. For dinner we were on the other side of town and were offered two courses off the menu plus wine and the usual waters and hot beverages.

Every tour company does this differently. I'd just as soon they have a set menu but wow, some folks are really difficult in ordering so I guess that's why not.

From the giant stones weighing hundreds of tons, to the textile factory and showroom with demonstration to the artist quarter where I'd been on my own before, Juan Carlos gave us so much history and inside information that the extra price of Country Walkers is surely worth it. It is still hugely less than some other tour companies.

I just wish we'd get enough time in the room to sleep 7-8 hours plus pack out! I need to simplify my routine, but guess I've said that before. Being old takes more time to get settled, then takes more time get fixed up.

### **Yucay arrival on Saturday**

Early pack out for a 1 - 1/2 hour drive to trailhead but on the way Juan Carlos gave us a number of stops and bits of education. You can tell he comes from a tour guide family. One stop was unintended when we went to cross a bridge into a small town and found a parade with bands and floats blocking our way. Interesting and didn't hurt our day at all.

This day would be on the Inca trail for a 2000' descent over rough and uneven steps. Juan Carlos didn't tell us that there were some good ascents too.

A big surprise awaited us. Far above the hills we were covering, far above the Indian burial grounds and far above the Villages on a peak we spotted a figure: a person in colorful costume. Then the Andean flute sounds started



echoing through the Sacred Valley. Juan Carlos had arranged for his friend Simone to serenade us. His sound permeated us at the same time he enchanted us. He would appear at surprising points through the day and always where the echo of his flute was ideal. Best of all I had looked through the markets for a flute but was fearful to buy knowing nothing about them. And here was Simone who hand crafts and sells flutes plus CDs. I bought both.

Simone was in full Inca dress. This isn't unusual and we see various sects often at the markets and on the street. Did I say how we went to a big market where Juan Carlos' mother shops and grandmother has shopped? It was a few blocks long in size and must have been a shock to some to see the butcher area and the entrails. Juan Carlos could explain what it was and how it was used: like you see sliced beef heart grilled at street vendors and learn it's a delicacy. The fresh herbs section was huge and these people really believe and partake. Then there's a large section with one little restaurant stall after another with a whole nutritious meal for much less cost than McDonalds.

Back to the day - after the Inca trail, we saw more markets. Festivals that happened after the parade and the town of 17,000 seemingly all in the square and many in costume. Never did we see another tourist in the town. We would have our lunch on a rooftop garden of a local restaurant back in a few alleyways.

My body had acclimated but we were also down to 9500'. Tomorrow we start hiking at closer to 13,000' so I'm carrying a water bottle full of coca leaves – yes!

I'm pleased with my legs and feet holding up. They look odd with all the cactus scratches from last week's Arizona hike but they work well so far and have no fatigue. Other than fearful of falling it was a delightful and physically easy day for me. I'd have liked to climb UP but at this elevation that would be tough so I was probably lucky to not get the opportunity. .

Hiking folks on this tour: Bill is my age and revealed today that he had a stent installed on Monday. This Monday! He raised two boys for many years then married a younger gal some time back. He tried taking grandchildren on exciting and educational trips only to be rebuffed in mid teen years. Ugh. He sounds to be a very successful father.

Barry is the elder at 72 or so. He is holding up really well physically and reminds me of my Swedish uncle – healthy in body like a 60 year old. Last name is Taylor and apparently he and wife Elaine have a children's foundation that serves up camp for children with illness. Very impressive. Both Barry and Bill had been Canon dealers and even after selling out they were kept on for some years which gave them "presidents club" impressive trips as rewards.

Laura had trouble getting down the hill and with one fall she couldn't get up. Juan Carlos is renting trekking poles for her for tomorrow. She works for a Marriott RD and comes from the Carolina shore. I don't think her fishing hobby gives her a lot of muscle tone which her legs seem to need. Or all her huge shock of hair was weighing her down. I was envious of the hair – long and curly.

Phyllis couldn't pull it together for dinner tonight. I always want to be tired but not that tired; Phyllis is full of problems which in my view might be related to her weird diet: She loves salt, white bread,

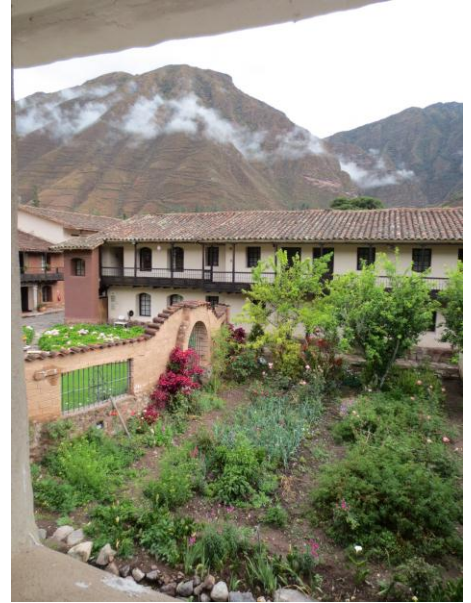


butter and anything sugary. She and her roommate Ilene are super smart gals, one an attorney and the other a CPA. Both impressed me that they could get up those mountains with their extra weight.

Some are whining or having to ease themselves into and out of the van.

We moved into our hacienda hotel with glorious gardens and some ancient attributes remaining. Juan Carlos gave us nearly two hours in our room - enough time to look around and take pictures and do laundry. (Picture is out my bathroom window.) I never save laundry as I can't bear to pack smelly clothing.

Dinner was at La Huacay in an adjoining town called Urubamba by a noted chef from Lima. We had multiple tastings first then three items chosen from menu with a Peruvian wine. Always a pisco sour to start. This was a lovely treat because they book up early their mere five tables. This was a friend of Juan Carlos too.



After dinner we got more of a tour of the hotel where there was much more grounds than I realized. They have a private chapel and big dining room. Waterways and waterfalls. I liked dinner and the tour a lot but not the late hours. Must be up at 6am. I like 7-9 hours of sleep and fade with these 4-6.

### **Sunday**

First stop about an hour drive away is Chinchero at 12,500' where we got an educational and entertaining lecture and demo on yarn spinning, dying and many methods of weaving. All this was under the snow-capped Andean mountains in background and a glacier in sight. Wow they are higher than Kilimanjaro at 21,500. Wispy clouds helped and much of the time we were above clouds.

Lucky it was their Sunday market so the girls had a couple shopping opportunities and took full advantage. Laura carries three packable duffle bags and maybe she will fill them all. In the interim we are to pack in duffle bags for our two nights in Machu Picchu as no large suitcases allowed on the train. I'm the only one with a small enough suitcase to be accepted on the train and at the hotel. A van will take our excess baggage back to Cusco and our small pieces to Machu Picchu while we hike in via THE Trail. Coming up: the main Inca Trail into the Sun Gate overlooking Machu Picchu!



We have another 30 minute more bumpy drive thru wee villages and farming areas where we see they are using ancient plows. Usually human powered instead of by an animal. This is before we arrive into Moray. Shockingly narrow and curvy roads. Moray is also a government archeological site. We find natural 80 meter sink holes with remarkable different temperature changes which have been found to be an Inca experimentation site with different levels for agricultural use. There are three sites with one mostly restored.



Started hike at 10'900, going through farms and tiny villages on fairly easy terrain and ending 2,000 feet lower but with some ups and downs over hill and dale and by many llamas and alpacas.

Our Mercedes van has bucket seats and a microphone. Best yet is that you can stand up in it. They carry a large water container for us to refill from. We have a driver so as to allow us various hops then continue with walks. We again have walks with llamas and alpacas. Without our van driver and van hops we couldn't have seen nearly as much. Walking at 10,000 feet is a challenge unexpected. Ellen warned me.

Lunch was a surprise: We entered a huge open area with the tallest of peaks on three sides of us and there was lunch placed under a tent as well as with a camp porta-potty a ways away. Everything provided including wine which we all declined as there was more hiking to come. We had chicken cutlets stuffed with vegetables, mashed potatoes, cucumbers and tomatoes with a hot relish, Chi mimoya fresh fruit passion fruit pudding and various cold drinks as well as more coca tea.

Then off to more adventures: 1-1/2 hour walk to the salt mines after a ten minute van ride. All under the snow-capped Andes. There are 5000 flats but from a distance it looks like a series of white roofs. Oddly they are thought to be very unprofitable. They only get \$6 a 100 pound bag. Japanese are their clients. Salt farmers are unloading their plots/ mines for a song. Gads but we walked along them. Precariously. Look up Moray salt mines for a surprise. Yes, we walked those narrow tracks between salt beds!

From Moray and the related tour is one hour hike to our next stop. But we would be back to hotel and not enough time for us high maintenance folks to get ready.

This was still another nice surprise prepared by Juan Carlos. We would have dinner at a family home. The son works at the hotel restaurant so he understands and abides by health standards. We had a Purple corn drink - looks like grape juice; Malbec from Argentina; Corn soup with egg drop that reminded me of a favorite corn soup in Taiwan; Cuy i.e. guinea pig; Big corn kernels and big flat Lima beans to eat with fingers; Purple potatoes; Fresh local cheese; Lupine stew of Quinoa Chinese style stir-fry - looked like a salad; Potato grated with meats called a stew; then some unidentified pudding. We were told what it was but I missed the name.

Then, and this proves Juan Carlos likes surprises: Dinner was followed by a Peruvian band called the red hot chili peppers. Joke. Laura loved the guitar player. I had tears over the flute player. One of us were taken by the person and the other by the flute. Smile. I took many videos.



The band played the favorite and usual "when condor flies away" plus many more. Lovely and brought tears to hear the Andean flute. But it was late and we leave earlier and earlier.

7:30am tomorrow. 5:30am Tuesday for our Machu Picchu venture then even earlier the next day to see the sunrise above Machu Picchu. Juan Carlos has arranged a special private bus for us, earlier than the public buses.

Rain has been coming in intermittent showers or at night. When sun comes out it's very strong and though I never burn as I cover well – darned but I did burn today.

I signed up with a group of four for the last day Lima tour which includes a famous restaurant. More on that but Lima is up and coming in cuisine.

### **Monday – If it's Monday it must be in Yucay?**

I just can't fully adjust and the heart beats so hard and so fast. Worse at night; who can sleep with their whole body throbbing? I'm going to try a lighter dinner and less alcohol tonight.

Early start of 7:30am which means 5:30 rise. Good Mercedes van and driver which is needed for our long drive. I have been filling water bottle with coca tea and today I added about 6 extra coca leaves. We would first stop at backpacker's village which is the site of Ollantaytambo which is one of the best preserved and larger sites outside of Machu Picchu.

Juan Carlos is an excellent guide and amazingly knowledgeable. He guides first for Country Walkers but secondly for Abercrombie & Fitch. Here's a shocker: it's not only the high schoolers who do "fly overs" but Abercrombie does too! Just for a headline? It's the only way to explain anyone who wants to see more roadways than real life. If it's Tuesday it must be Belgium.

Oops. Forgot that we finished yesterday's walk crossing the river by a loose suspension bridge. They are common. They are nerve wracking.

Andes are part of the world wide big Ring of Fire. Reason for their frequent earthquakes. They are also a country now very low on crime with very little hunger or true poverty. Natural gas is taking over tourism. They are second for silver mining but have various mining businesses.

In Ollantaytambo i.e. hiker's village for hike up Inca temple probably built for astronomical purposes and called Temple to the Sun. This site is said to be fairly original with about 2 percent restoration done. Fortunately we came early as the town gets heavy with tourists who catch the train to Machu Picchu from here. This is where eclipses were predicted. Walked among year 680 stone work.





Terraces were gardens in the original temple. Extravagance at its best. The big mountain across from it is a sundial for the seasons and solstices built/chipped pre Inca. There is an Inca profile chipped in the mountain as well.

Spanish write of this temple as being a fortress which was absolutely wrong. Spanish stopped its building, diverted the river and flooded the Inca out. I can get pretty pissed at the Spaniards for all the horrible things they did, and then I remember my recent series of books telling how painfully cruel we were to our American Indians.

Went thru town of Markaqocha with old ruins overlooking the river along with the church. Mother and two children were friends of guide and they made for colorful pictures. This is where the Spanish diverted the river. Deep canyon and road for an hour that reminded me of early day in Taiwan when roads were dirt, banked high, and fell off the cliff at times. Then we were into Huulloc village where I was surprised to find the graffiti is political graffiti. Pstachancha was more rustic and overlooked lots of stone work with many waterfalls. At 22km we got out to hike 3 hours but it was only 3 miles! It was a lesson of how little oxygen is at this elevation. This hike would take us onto various peasants village and some at 13,500'. No wonder it was 3 miles in 3 hours.



At one tiny village we were given a demo of potato planting by daddy and momma and were stunned at how labor intensive it is. The next day this family will go three hours hike away where they will serve time for the community. Our host grows 80 varieties of potatoes. The region produced 1800 different varieties of potatoes and a crop can be planted and harvested in a very short time.





The little boy and his momma gave us a lesson in village parenting. Momma had climbed over the stone wall and little boy cried that he couldn't make it. Momma let him be and eventually all was well. Later we found our second village where Juan Carlos was handing out his bread and coca tea packages. Plus we found a lot of llamas or alpacas, I don't know which they were but they have such a feminine face and are so mild mannered. When I hiked at Kripalu with llama they were prone to hiss. I'd guess these animals didn't know to be cautious.



Juan Carlos is godfather to the little twin boys. Everywhere kids and mommas came out to meet him, and get their bread and coca tea.



A few joined in with the potato planting demonstration before I was invited into the house where momma was staying warm near the fire and guinea pigs were squeaking about the floor. Yes, they are all generally with smiles and look healthy.

There is said to be 10,000 little villages in this region. They are all covered by this one school we visited, a school sponsored by Country Walkers. Only about 10 percent of the kids come to school. Objectives to convince parents it's good for entire family for schooling.

School attended by kids of the villages we visited. Some walk 3 miles one way for school. They were just getting out and were doing traditional dance. They all wear their traditional costume and shoes made of old tires with very little western dress seen. It was a very nice project created by Country Walkers: 1,500,000 baby trout for new trout farm. They had built the dormitory but there were problems and said to be premature in that there wasn't enough food for the students so they are working on it with this trout farm. All built by Country Walkers out of Vermont.



Juan Carlos had brought huge garbage bag full of bread for a treat. We hikers who remembered brought school supplies. I failed. Wonder why. Kids knew Juan Carlos. They swarmed us. My iPhone has a story to be added about the students who were very cute in the school.

The story: I was making notes on my iPhone about the school when a group of girls surrounded me having seen Pandora my Parrot picture on the home page. Bill suggested I take a picture of the girls to show them. What a treat! Kids everywhere squeal and poke each other.

Infant mortality is very high. Young momma's sometimes don't own up to births due to legal repercussions if they are under age then the papa gets into a world of trouble. Life span is 60 and 65. But we first met a man of 75 years, then we meet his family. They all got gifts of bread and bags of coca leaves from Juan Carlos who we learned took twins from the village as god children. I was touched and gave a small contribution but through Juan Carlos who was always very careful that there be no begging by villagers and that we not encourage it.



After short 15 minute ride in our van we were in a valley deep and lovely where we would find our lunch riverside: same tent and facilities. Amazing how well they can cook in the boonies. We had a big block of rice with a stroganoff type beef dish and all the accompaniments.

We stopped in the same city with the Temple of the sun again but for ATM and small shopping. Then as we were leaving the city there was routine traffic stop and wow how many documents were required. Turns out the license for transporting tourists was not renewed resulting in a delay and a ticket. Darned and I so wanted some free time in the hotel. We have breakfast at 5am and leave at 5:40 for a 6:40 train.

Dinner our last night before the big climb is gloriously at the hotel. I also like eating in the hotel because then I can cop out early. I only had one course then left. No booze, so I could see if that helped with the strong and irregular heartbeat. It didn't.

Fact: Gas is 15.40 soles per gallon. 2.59 exchange rate = about \$6. Hugely less than European gas prices. Many of their vehicles run on natural gas now which is easily available and gives better mileage too. We saw little tut-tuts that are like motorbikes with a cover and I believe they are three wheels.

It was at freezing this morning but tomorrow will be 57 to 82 with thundershowers.

### **Tuesday - an all new adventure to Machu Picchu!**

We all confessed to having the same screw loose: you don't have enough hours to sleep so you don't sleep. (Tom would never have that problem.)



Started early at 3:45am with coca tea saved from last night and with extra leaves added. 5:00am breakfast opened; 5:30 luggage collected; 5:40 we are in the van to hiker's village again and our 1-1/2 hour train ride to "our" trail head. It was sprinkling during breakfast having poured rain last night. All I ask for is a dry trail on the narrow portions with big drop offs. I'll even deal with the jungle mosquitos and anticipated 82 humid degrees.

Sweet Phyllis kindly offered that after I left dinner early last night that they agreed I was the energizer bunny and strongest hiker of the group. I especially appreciated her sharing that since I've been huffing and puffing and not just up hills either and I'm sure not at the front. Also that I had NOT told of my marathons and only days later did someone ask me how many I'd done.

Train is the dome explorer type which is more useful in these tall peaks and valleys than the explorer domed train to Denali. It does truly rock and roll. It's forgiven for the amazing scenery of the Urubamba river by the side and taller peaks than imaginable with clouds interspersed under the peaks. Every once in a while we could see the tall glacier mountain.

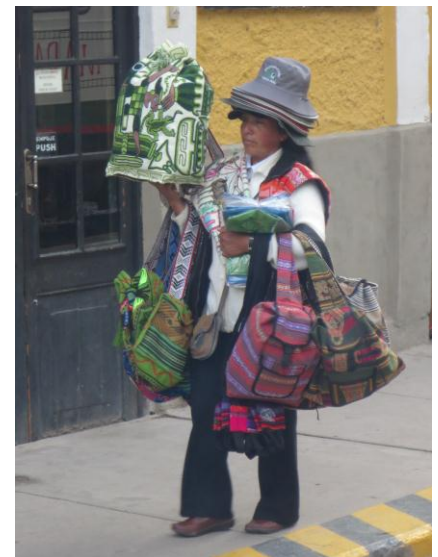
Juan Carlos #2 (JC2) met us at the train station with big bag lunches and more water. (Pasta salad with lots of veggies, two unidentified sandwiches on whole wheat which we all liked, juice, candy bar, granola bar of quinoa, grapes and an apricot.) JC2 will be Laura's personal guide since she wasn't able to get an Inca Trail permit (and probably shouldn't be on that trail anyway.) Only 500 permits a day are issued for entire trail and that includes guides and porters. We worried that Phyllis should have joined Laura but she really wants it and Juan Carlos is willing to stay with her even if she misses the last bus to the hotel which would require a 2 mile walk in the dark. Later: she made it.

The trail is so narrow with thousands of feet drop offs that it's only permitted to hike in one direction. While we only have 1600' elevation gain there's a lot of up and down and big rocks and steep uneven stone steps. (Someone else said 2200' so who knows.) We are expected to be on the trail about 8 hours with about 6 of those hiking.

Only hand carry luggage is permitted on the train. My bag fortunately qualified so I didn't need to part with any of my "junk". So our luggage for our Machu Picchu hotel stay will meet us there. Our excess baggage and anything large will meet us in Cusco for our last day.

Getting started is always painful. Some forget to sunscreen or bug spray or tape etc. until everyone else is ready. I am always miffed but realize they think it's their right to get ready on everyone else's time. Or worse, to be late day after day, night after night. Just a few minutes here and there but so thoughtless. I was afraid to say anything for fear I'd be the next one to be late!

Hiked from 8:15 to 10:45 to the Inca ruins where we were expected at 11:30 but we had lunch anyway. Then lunch again where we were supposed to go after 400 steps so of course going up those steps we lamented having an early lunch.





Got to Sun Gate at 1:45 where there's a full view. Had to walk way around MP to find the exit and later learned that we'd just missed it. Fortunately it served the purpose of getting a bit of tour that day instead of waiting for the next. Took bus to our Machu Picchu Pueblo Inca Terra hotel at 3:10.

**Wednesday - The big tour day.**

But this is not intended to take away from the superb Inca sites we've seen along the way as many have been worth the trip on their own. But Machu Picchu has a calling all its own. It can bring goose bumps to the most calloused.

I expected to be sore today from all yesterday's steps but was not. But I was so tired to have maybe dozed in the shower at 4am. My eyes are bleary. My body likes more sleep.

We left at 5am or pretty close to it. Today's hiker only held us up about ten minutes and I think we all totally forgave him for sleeping through the alarm as we've all been pressed and it was a first and only time to be late.

We easily met our guide's goal of getting in line at the entrance for a 6am opening much because he had hired a private bus. I'm not sure we all fully appreciated his "early and empty MP" until about 9-10am when the crowds roared in and we had already had hours' worth of MP to ourselves. The crowds and stupid questions and inappropriate shoes abound. Hounding the llamas happens too.

The fog rolled in and the fog rolled out. A multitude of times. Though the sunrise isn't clearly seen about 300 days a year - at this time of the year there is a crispness and clarity not expected except spring and fall. We had terraces to ourselves and meditative moments. I've stories but I'm tired. Smile. We had Juan Carlos's guidance and knowledge until leaving at about 2pm. He grew up mentored by his noted tour guide father and the family is friends with many of the archeologists. We were blessed to have him. How he ever kept patience I've no comprehension and again, I've got stories.



So as we watched the Dancing Clouds and the calm llamas we heard of Juan Carlos's love of MP and the surrounding mountains. I'll add a few words he shared to my trip notes but basically we came to feel the Mysticism of humanity and nature combined as he described. There were many Meditative

moments for most of us as we walked through an advanced civilization that is still somewhat a mystery but amazing nonetheless. The Incas had no written history except some by the conquering Spaniards.

We did make it out to the Inca bridge or at least three of us did. Lots more steps which we had been doing all day.

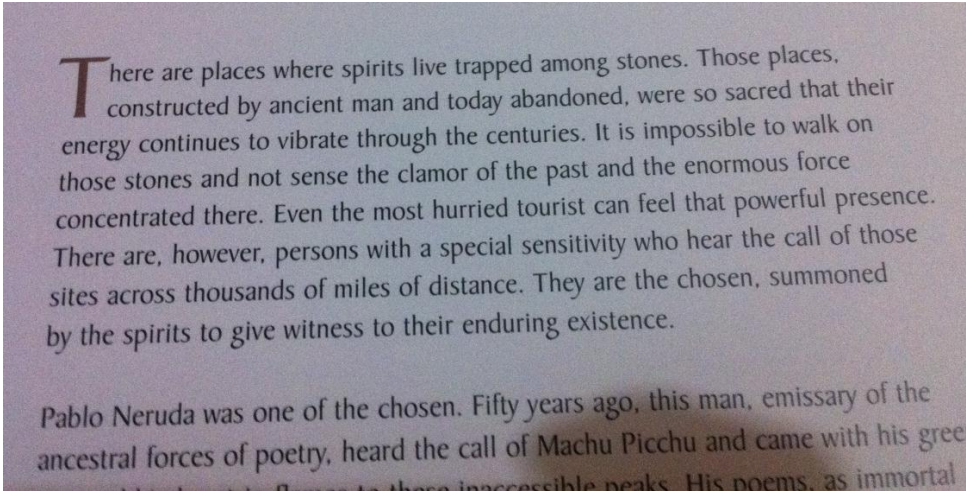
Breakfast was in The Sanctuary - a rich hotel in the sky. The only one there. Lunch was in their cafeteria and was as good as it gets in my book.

I hurried down off the mountain reluctantly and without even going to my room but did check email as soon as on site. I made it to a 2:30 nature walk and orchid tour. And chided my fellow hikers for being dead beats for heading to the spa and a massage.

This Inca terra hotel is tops in Travel and Leisure lists and for good reason. They have magnificent gardens of the Inca style with waterways and cloud jungle plants. It's pristine. They also have more orchid varieties than available in all the America's. Three varieties were found and named here. Later we toured their tea plantation and coffee groves. They process all on site and are self-sustaining. The garden mounds of herbs has the look of giant graves. A young couple from Miami was on the tour. Another story for later.

After a wee bit of shopping I was off to call Tom and then cleanup for dinner. It'll be surprising if we don't all fall asleep in our soup. Many of us admitted to looking at our alarm clocks every hour again last night.

Recommended by Ilene to read "Inez of my Soul" by daughter of Allende, Isabel. It's about her country Chile but she had many books to include one on San Francisco.



There are places where spirits live trapped among stones. Those places, constructed by ancient man and today abandoned, were so sacred that their energy continues to vibrate through the centuries. It is impossible to walk on those stones and not sense the clamor of the past and the enormous force concentrated there. Even the most hurried tourist can feel that powerful presence. There are, however, persons with a special sensitivity who hear the call of those sites across thousands of miles of distance. They are the chosen, summoned by the spirits to give witness to their enduring existence.

Pablo Neruda was one of the chosen. Fifty years ago, this man, emissary of the ancestral forces of poetry, heard the call of Machu Picchu and came with his green

### **Friday - departing Cusco Thursday - a true thanksgiving!**

While I'm sorry to be away from family over Thanksgiving I am truly grateful and blessed to have had this Peruvian opportunity. Physically, spiritually and even financially - it takes it all and probably more to do and appreciate this adventure.

It was really tough getting here with challenges including distance and air fare to elevation with altitude sickness. The itinerary and my extra days at the front end helped make Machu Picchu what it is. There is something about earning a site that makes it worth more. Do it on your feet and you then own it. Learning about the Incas and the villagers then seeing the sites along the trail made getting to the Sun Gate and overlooking Machu Picchu much more valuable than I could have imagined.

Today we had a leisurely morning. Those who took the same tour this morning as I did yesterday afternoon thought it was just okay. I found it enlightening and enjoyable. Others chose to shop. I don't know how to shop and at this stage of life I don't have room for anything anyway. Just no interest.

Speaking of shopping, over the years I've learned that most of what I've purchased either turned to junk or got relegated to the back of the closet. Example: Lovely black leather gloves from Italy turned my hands black. A friend's poncho from France was later seen in a Mexican market mass produced and likely from China. A niece's floccotti rug from the Islands required fumigating the house of bugs thereafter.

Yet there are times when one wants to leave some money behind. I'm still haunted by a village stop where the little boy has a speech impediment that is so easily fixed by a clipping under the tongue. Or the huts where there is no clean water and that's the cause of many deaths. The Peace Corps were ready to install simple \$1 water filters that last up to two years but for some reason the new Obama regime is said to have stopped it. I left my hiking boots for a villager, as did Juan Carlos for Simone.

The Peruvians of the Andes that we saw are well fed and smiling. Friendly and clean. Seemingly happy and sending their children to school despite the 3 mile distance. They are industrious and seem to be all over us like ants selling any and everything. Selling on the train like a duty free cart I had a laugh at the "baby alpaca" otherwise known as polyester.

Peru is rich with silver and minerals. With cheap labor. With amazing sites and UNESCO controlled archeological sites. With lots of foreign interest in their history and museums to prove it. Yale finally agreed to return all the items legally exported by Hiram Bingham 100 years ago. Peru will house the 64,000 items in a museum with Yale's oversight.

I don't say goodbye to Machu Picchu reluctantly because, though it was one of my best adventures yet; I feel that I did it right for me and spent a sufficient amount of time and with a guide who is one of the best with a unique tie to the area. I'm feeling blessed as the train departs and I look up in the ceiling explorer train out the dome windows and see way up as the condor flies where we hiked and picnicked.

We learned there had been some landslides during the night and while our train back to Cusco looked okay, some arrivals were in jeopardy. In 2010 they had mud slides that buried a number of villages and stranded a huge number in Machu Picchu who had to be helicoptered out. They were housed in tents and the school in the interim.



Off to another new adventure. So many have asked why would I want to visit the big city of Lima but I usually like big cities and I know many of them so I'm off tomorrow to check it out. I have four nights at the noted JW Marriott on the cliff side of Miraflores area.

But not until we have completed our 1-1/2 hour train ride, a van ride to the famous pottery factory and an afternoon in Cusco. I came prepared with extra coca tea as I've left 7500' and going to 11,500'.



Our farewell dinner is at MAP at the museum and a pretty special place. I was in there for my pre-days in Cusco.

Departing Cusco tomorrow morning will be leisurely too as my flight is just after noon. The terribly junky Cusco airport fortunately has an executive lounge. Oh - a site for a new Cusco airport has been found and it's sure needed. It's also controversial as it takes up a lot of fertile farm land.

At 6:45pm we had a drive to say goodbye to Cusco. Up high on a hill gives an overview of a larger Cusco than imagined and all under a huge lighted Jesus a la Rio de Janiero. Dinner was full of drinks, much laughter and some pretty fancy food. The setting was in a glass room inside the pre-Columbian museum known as MAP. I'd been there on my own the first night in Cusco. Darned -- very late getting back and needing to pack up: a very long day.

Tidbits:

Incas are second only to the Romans for number of roads built.

Most Machu Picchu tourists only spend two hours there and only see it during it worst of Disneyesque. Reminds me of the Grand Canyon.

Mistake - all three of my chap sticks were lacking sunscreen. I paid the price.

Houston to Lima air is not considered international so no goody bag resulting in a handful of missing items. Also may be wasting a system-wide upgrade whereas I had two regionals expiring.

Novatel is a zoo. Nice location and pleasant hacienda surroundings but too many management problems coupled with their accommodating big tour groups. This morning it is Trafalgar which should be a high rated group but I've learned they "fly over" a city like a high school group with barely a whiff of the culture. Just experienced the leader running through the courtyard yelling to get luggage to doorway. Participants look like zombies. If it's Tuesday it must be Belgium. I'm sure there are some who think I don't stay at a destination long enough either but how can 2 hours in Machu Picchu be for any purpose than as a headline or bragging rights?

I was so very lucky to get a native tour guide and one from a noted tour guide family. Juan Carlos's father and brother are in the business and are friends with local archeologists and historians. He

clearly lives MP and finds it a mystical and sacred place. His father met him in MP, and his brother met him at the pottery studio.

As evidence of my camera enthusiasm I could use a camera chip but just not up to negotiating the streets to get something I don't have to have. Will shop in Lima.

It is so dry in Cusco that laundry done before dinner is dry after dinner. I wake at night not for a toilet visit but so dry that water is necessary. Noses bleed and lips crack.

Yesterday at the noted potterer Paulo Seminario I bought one of his small picture frames which might be my only memento. There is surely a time when I have enough t-shirts and enough dust catchers in the house. It's like the brain - for something to go into the house something has to go out.

Oops at the airport: just when it was all going easy we arrive at the crazy Cusco airport with lines out the door but our guide had insisted on staying with us and he has Soledad the transfer assistant who finds us the Gold Star Alliance line. Bill sticks with me so he has same privileges. But our plane is to be three hours delayed! I explain that delay means we lose our pre-paid Lima tour starting at 3pm and the gate agent then suddenly finds us an earlier 1:45 departure with 2:45 arrival. We had been on a 12:25 with 1:45 landing. I presume my top frequent flyer category gets us the earlier flight. Bill went with me whereas Barry's LAN must not have had a line and his flight remained on time so he will wait for us at baggage.

I have a priority pass VIP club but its outside security and I'm with Bill and Barry so I go into the lounge only long enough to get two bottles of water. They offer a full and free menu of food stuff but I'm stuffed. Our two guides make sure we are all into and thru security before leaving.

I couldn't be more impressed with Country Walkers. I gave up Backroads years ago when they had too large a group on the biking Prague to Vienna with two okay guides but one pays too much for just okay. I am fond of Timberline but its heavy exercise without the culture.

Back to the Cusco airport: Inside security are shops and tight gates and still more zoo but it seems worth it to be on the right side of security. We sit and we hope and we try to close our ears to the cacophony of sounds. The swarms of wee little pretty and happy Peruvians are just everywhere

Then it gets more complicated. Barry's flight on LAN is delayed to 2:30 thus missing the 3pm tour. I'm the only one with a phone so I alert our guide Juan Carlos. A phone call later we agree to get my and Bill's bags then go to chapel to meet guide and Laura then go to baggage and wait for Barry - thus accepting an hour less of tour. I'm fine. I have four nights booked in Lima. Actually I should have gone out on my own from the beginning but I chose to stay with friends not realizing the complications that could arise.

The tour got even more complicated. Barry's plane got more delayed then we couldn't get back into baggage area to get Bill's vote. Juan Carlos eventually found another guide to come pick up Barry but Bill felt a need to stay with Barry. I was fine but Laura had been there since 1pm and this was her

only time to see Lima so off we went on our city tour and eventually met up with the boys at the restaurant. They didn't get to the restaurant until a bit after 6pm as it turns out.

Lima airport needs three hours lead time pre departure to get through lines. The others depart at 1am so maybe tour guide will give us a bit more time than the agreed upon 9pm. TACA even serves us food on our 1-1/2 hour flight. An empanada. It was possible to see huge mountains practically until the ocean showed up. I took lots of pictures out the window.

To be continued in Lima.

Ps forgot a very special event last night: Sacsayhuaman lit up at night with the Christ statue showing up at the end.

Or here, world mysteries: [http://www.world-mysteries.com/mpl\\_9\\_vitrified\\_rocks.htm](http://www.world-mysteries.com/mpl_9_vitrified_rocks.htm). Did they have a way to liquefy rocks? It would seem so!



### **Lima arrival on Friday**

Not without confusion and frustration and finally leaving Barry and Bill since Barry was delayed.

We started 4:15pm with van and driver. We met up with the boys around 6:30 at the restaurant having somewhat wasted \$140 for a tour and dinner. But it was worth more especially for me since they dropped me at my hotel saving a \$50 taxi ride. For Laura it was her only opportunity to see Lima. The three of them had a 1am flight home.

We first saw Chalaca which is port town and location of airport. Other tidbits:

Lima is the oldest capital city in South America.

Guinea pig now available in supermarkets. We ate it twice on trip.

Never rains in Lima but only mists.

Lima's population is 9 million plus 1 million in Chalaca. Rich ocean and lots export. We saw many tankers from the air. Also the giant cliffs. Now I understand how it can be that Lima on the seaside isn't at sea level but anywhere from 0 to 5,000' elevation.



Lima historical district is protected by UNESCO. I would have liked to stay in city center but too many folks told me it was not safe to be there alone or at dark.



June July and August are gray and winter and not good for touring as it's their dismal months. It starts clearing in early December.

Toured the San Franciscan Monastery with underground catacombs. Piles of bones like in Paris and Budapest and Rome. Well, I toured it twice at it turns out.

Amazed at the classy European buildings and unique balconies facing at least two lovely and lively squares. Flowers abound and are changed to different color schemes frequently.

Dinner was in a noted restaurant and with a pre-determined menu we had chosen earlier in the day. Ceviche then paella. They had a big group coming in and tried to move us over of which I found pretty unprofessional and thus refused. We were after all early to our reservations. We were already in Miraflores area so it was close to drop me by the JW Marriott.

I couldn't have been more impressed or happy with the hotel and the deal. For a song I upgraded to concierge floor giving me all my meals and drinks plus the \$21 a day Internet included. Thanks to my adopted family. My room was perfect especially the view at least 180 degrees of the ocean and cliffs with park and market below. Was it a shame that I slept for about 9 hours or a needed rest? Fortunately the extravagant and included breakfast stayed open until 11am.

### **Lima on Saturday - first full day**

Following a city tour yesterday of colonial and modern buildings, which later included a dinner in Miraflores, I am booked on an afternoon tour of Pachacamac, Barranco and Chorrillos. It reads: Visit the Pachacamac citadel, often called the Rome of the Andes, with its temples, streets, pyramids, cemeteries and home of the most famous Oracle in the Andean Empire. People from all over the Tahuantinsuyo Empire visited this shrine to learn what the future held in store for themselves, their communities as well as the outcome of important battles, possible droughts and other catastrophes.



Downtown aka The Old Historic District. Lots of European looking buildings and even more churches built by the Spaniards to encourage the locals to become Catholic.



From one extreme to the other, here is the Cliffside Love Park with The Kiss which seems to be doing more than a Kiss to me too, as are many of the couples who frequent the park and its mosaic park benches. Both tours took me to and inside this old Bar called Cordano said to be the oldest in the city.

Then to the old pile of dirt since found to contain an entire village (see below) and amazing how mud bricks can exist but it's because it's so dry in Lima. Followed by my twice visited San Franciscan monastery complete with a couple live monks. My second visit included a concert.



Then I should be ashamed of myself, with so much history surrounding me, but my hotel being Cliffside with a view and a sunset was perhaps my favorite location and memory. I was here I realized why Lima, being on the coast, can also be 5000' in elevation – there are major cliffs everywhere. Just out my hotel was a three story big shopping and entertainment facility built into the cliffs.



All that after a BIG but late breakfast in the concierge lounge. Everything one could imagine was offered, in the prettiest of settings, all overlooking the 180 degree view of the ocean out the 24th floor. It is and has remained foggy and I suppose this is the 'mist' they get in lieu of never having rainfall.

**People** – There was a piece of art at the John F. Kennedy circle on Sunday where they feature a huge craft fair as well as street art. It nicely captures the look of Peruvians I saw. Happy children, healthy people, always wanting to be seen wearing their native costumes.

The market gave me a look at their churches, singing inside, crafts much beyond what I saw in the tourist centers, as well as various set ups for kids to learn skate boarding and bicycling. Kids were jump-roping with a huge rope like we did as kids and daddies were getting their shoes polished by a long line of shoe polishers. Most were in their native costumes but some had an intermixture of modern hat with colorful wrap. Most were still wearing the \$1-2 sandals made of tires that they might be able to get a full year's wear out of.



I walked the length of the Cliffside down to the lighthouse all in cool, misty but good 70 degree weather. I knew how lucky I was to have experienced this adventure and been able to enjoy and appreciate it.



**More notes from the Saturday tour – sort of the second day in Lima**

KFC, Pizza Hut and Radio Shack make me wonder if I'm really in a foreign country. My tour guide having reverse-immigrated from New Hyde Park on Long Island also gave me pause. The world is flat. We were given headphones and two languages in mini bus of about 12 people. A nice deal for just \$35. Tidbits:

1500s Lima was built near what is now the airport or port. 1800s Miraflores area started but for Holiday homes. 1930s built up to what it looks like today. From 1 million in 1960s to 9 million people today.

There is No subway and limited bus so traffic is horrendous. Rush hour as bad as or worse than other major cities. Both my tour guides have lamented the lack of a subway.

JFK Park not far from my hotel. A walk via what is said to be the best of shopping, by noted churches where there was service and choirs, then to Love Park on the shore with artistic mosaic benches and site of many marriages. Noted statuary that might even be considered x-rated; it's called The Kiss but I think it's much more than that with the two bodies wrapped around each other. Too funny.

No rain ever. No gutters needed. No sewer grates needed. Flat roofs abound.

Train only 22km. Bus limited but much faster and at least they have a HOV lane. Nothing more available and thus just going across town could take a couple hours. My airport trip might take ½ hour or might take 1 ½ hours. Saw some ancient cars on the road but many new ones too.



Archeological site Huaca Pucllana is 200 to 700 year inhabited but found only recently. It had been a pile of dirt until found and they've now identified about 6 hectares of what was once 18 hectares. The brick structure is appealing, with rows and rows of symmetrical bricks made of mud which lasts here in desert climate.

From Time magazine: *You don't have to trek into the Andes to see vestiges of Peru's ancient civilizations. Lima has a large number of historical ruins, known locally as huacas, which can be spotted in many neighborhoods. They are generally fenced off, but that is the extent of the preservation. One of the major exceptions is the Pucllana Temple, or [Huaca Pucllana](#), in the city's upscale Miraflores district. This adobe ceremonial center was likely built around 500 A.D., during the cultural height of Lima's history. Much of the site has been restored and excavations continue to uncover artifacts and the occasional mummy.*

*The huaca is creatively illuminated at night, giving it a movie-set aura. To make your visit even better, there's an [on-site restaurant](#) that serves haute cuisine prepared by an internationally trained chef. There's nothing like dining while taking in 1,500-year-old views. The restaurant stays open long after the ruins close.*

San Isidro area is basically for the wealthy and is full of not just mansions but also ancient olive trees and weddings ongoing in parks of olive trees with amazingly thick and oddly formed trunks. There were about 2,000 old olive trees and we saw at least two weddings going on.

We would next head to the Historical center and though I was there the day before there was so much more to see.

Who lives in Lima? Spaniards then Africans (from slavery). Chinese and Italians then Japanese in 1900s with Germans following and still comprising a big community. 1970s a few came from Middle



East. Guess with a past Japanese president who is still in jail for corruption but half the population insisting they'd still vote for him that there must be many Japanese folks left.

War against Chile holds strong emotions. Saw memorial to Peru general that fought against Chile. Only country the Peruvians didn't fight was Brazil. I suspect by the sounds of their serious soccer stadium (for 60,000 people) that their own kind of war continues in some sort and likely even with Brazil.

Some glorious and European styled buildings intermixed with some original two story buildings. They were all low buildings until recently when they learned to build to withstand earthquakes. They copied the Brussels palace of justice for their Supreme Court. Nearby is a huge multi block white French palace built for a condo that looks more like a Versailles or government building.

Glad to have a walk around the main square. There was a stage and music in honor of women. Remember there was so much abuse of women that a department of the woman was established.

Visited the San Franciscan Monastery and catacombs. Again, but this was a full tour and instilled a better understanding. The Last Supper art had cuy or Guinea pig on the table. (Like in the Cusco Cathedral.) Much was in honor of St Francis of Assisi which coincidentally we studied in Assisi last March with a tour guide.



The catacombs were actually part of Lima's original cemeteries, which were built under churches. Tour guides say an estimated 75,000 bodies are buried under San Francisco Monastery alone, and many of the remains are exposed, stacked in strange patterns in circular stone pits. A catacomb tour is not for the squeamish or the claustrophobic.

Tour was all afternoon to 5:30pm then on my own walked the market and cliffs in front of my hotel and through a bit of shopping all the while under an unusual sunset. With the mist of fog the sky resembled a sepia with a glow for miles.



This is the sea walk in the Miraflores district called Larcomar, a multilevel entertainment, food and shopping mega-complex. The first thing you'll notice about Larcomar is that you cannot see it. The entire complex is built into the cliffside, underneath Miraflores — the entrance is across the street from the JW Marriott hotel after taking the stairs down

just before you get to the cliff's edge. Larcomar has breathtaking ocean views and lots of restaurants of Peruvian fare. Lots of fountains and walkways.

It looked like rain but I was assured that never happens. But I saw hail in June where it never happens (Lake George) and in July where it never happens (Stockholm) and before was in an earthquake (Hawaii) and our home just withstood the worst hurricane in history so why not experience rain in Lima. No it hasn't happened yet but the mist was heavy as we were next to the surf. The mist permeated the ocean view.

Wine and cheese of the concierge floor called loudly where I spent enough time to definitely get my monies worth. I was grateful not to be looking among the KFC and Pizza Huts for dinner. Concierge food is like little tidbits of tapas and artfully displayed in tiny porcelain dishes. Perfect to my tastes.

Whether I will walk the streets at night or laze in my lovely room remains to be seen/felt depending on the results of my wine. I feel lazy and rather complete following the tour and walk.

### ***Feel good note from Judy***

*Q. from Judy to Tom: Goodness gracious, gee willikers and heavens to Betsy. What gorgeous views. Tom, did you know in the early years of your relationship with Diana that she had super human strength and over the top wanderlust?*

*A. No I didn't. In fact she didn't do anything athletic when she was young - not until she was maybe 55 and started weight training and running, then marathoning and hiking did I learn of her stamina. Then when she retired in February '07 (Jacuzzi sold) she started traveling (and traveling and traveling and....). But she's having the time of her life and I'm all for it.*

*Q. That's a thoughtful and kind supportive response about your Diana. Yes, she does indeed seem to be having a ball. So nice that you enjoy each other's happiness as much as your own. You both seem appreciative of your good times and good fortune. That's wonderful.*

### ***On that maybe I should say goodnight.***

After walking miles, my next day was ultra-tame as my looseness of making coffee with tap water and brushing teeth the same as well as eating salads finally caught up with me. I was travel weary anyway so didn't mind staying close to the toilet my last day.

### ***From Time magazine – top 10 things to do in Lima.***

[http://www.time.com/time/travel/cityguide/article/0,31489,1977548\\_1977464\\_1977441,00.html#ixzz2DC9yjyUE](http://www.time.com/time/travel/cityguide/article/0,31489,1977548_1977464_1977441,00.html#ixzz2DC9yjyUE)





That's my JW Marriott hotel in the middle with the blue glass. You can just see the three-tiered shopping center built into the cliffs which gives an idea of the size of the cliffs.

*Peru's sprawling mega capital is actually a mosaic of many smaller cities. Comprising 43 districts with nearly 9 million inhabitants, Lima is a study in contrasts, with ultramodern seaside neighborhoods butting up against gritty shantytowns that cling to barren hillsides. It is one of the world's few megacapitals that can claim a golf course in the middle of the financial district, and where executives can go surfing before high-powered breakfast meetings. Although it's built in a desert — Cairo is the only other metropolis drier than Lima — it's known as the "Garden City" and is home to one of world's largest fountain parks.*

*While many of Lima's stately manors have given way to glass-enclosed apartment buildings, high-rise business towers and hotels, at least one part of Peruvian culture is returning to its roots here: the cuisine. Lima natives — Limeños — are obsessed with food. A 2009 documentary *Cooking up Dreams (De Ollas y Sueños)* profiles the emergence of Peru's national cuisine on the world stage. Meanwhile, Lima's government has established a Boulevard of Gastronomy in the Surquillo district, turning a traditional farmers' market into a pedestrian mall to showcase the fresh ingredients used in Peruvian cooking. And the city's annual food festival, held each September, is quite possibly the most important event of the year.*

*The only thing that rivals Limeños' love of food is their passion for pisco, a grape brandy that is the main ingredient in the national drink, the pisco sour. Don't be fooled by its frothy silhouette — it packs a powerful punch.*



### **From Wikipedia:**

Pictures from top, left to right: Plaza Mayor of Lima, Hotel Libertador Westin, Park of the Reserve, Government Palace and El Metropolitano Bus. All seen on one of my tours.

Heavy on population, short of public transport, this is one of the largest cities in South America and yet the first in public education. It would seem that if they can acquire continued political leaders and not be so enthralled with those who offer graft and corruption, they have a lot going for themselves with a country very rich in minerals and cheap labor.

### **Aftermath**

I came home with more than I intended undoubtedly caused by exploring, eating and drinking more than a tourist should do but I usually believe it's worth it. I am an adventurous eater, I made coca tea from tap water, and brushed my teeth with tap water too, so it was all my fault.

The flight home from Houston was amazingly on the Dreamliner. At the same time the NY Times (Travel section 12-02-12) was featuring all these frequent flyers who paid up to be on one of the first Dreamliner flights and here I was on one of the very first without planning or paying and to top it I had a first class lay-down seat which I really needed.

I also came home with a desire to return to see Patagonia and am looking at the Mendoza and Patagonia trip as one idea.

## **Itinerary**

### **Tues Nov 13**

10:45am Depart Newark EWR via United #1725  
1:20pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change  
3:50pm Depart Houston IAH via United #854  
11:25pm Arrive Lima LIM

Said to take up to 3 hours to clear airport per Taca Air; also Taca asks for 3 hours prior check in.  
Priority Club: There are two lounges in international and one in domestic terminals.

### **Wed Nov 14**

5:40am Depart Lima LIM via Taca#7 (a Star Alliance partner – add freq #)  
7:05am Arrive Cuzco CUZ

To be met by Country Walkers representative for shuttle to hotel

In Cusco 2 days early to acclimatize to 11,000 feet of elevation - acclimate info:  
[http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g294072-i5798-k336134-Altitude\\_sickness-La\\_Paz.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g294072-i5798-k336134-Altitude_sickness-La_Paz.html)

Hotel Novotel, Cusco, Peru – same hotel as tour nights 1 and 7 – 2 nights prepaid  
Calle San Augustin 239  
Tel 011 51 84 581033 Email novotelcuscoreservas@accor.com

This unique four-star hotel was built around an early 16<sup>th</sup> century house located in the heart of the city center. Yes WiFi, yes breakfast, yes coca tea in lobby but no coffee in room.

### **Fri Nov 16 – Day 1**

Start of tour for 8 days/7 nights - From Country Walkers.com - The Cusco region of Peru combines Incan legacy with Spanish colonial architecture in an atmosphere at once provincial and sublime. The chaotic marketplaces where locals barter grain or potatoes for multicolored fabric belie the muted spirituality of the Lost Cities, where Incan stonework conveys order and balance. Such diversity makes this eight-day adventure stimulating yet restful. The blue sky radiates with an intensity achieved only at high altitudes (the city of Cusco lies at 11,400 feet above sea level), while the landscape offers its own intensity of exacting agricultural grids and tangled jungle masses. The Sacred Valley (Urubamba River Valley) lies ten miles north of Cusco. This area offers traditional Indian markets, Andean villages, and Incan sites as well as a pleasant climate, thanks to the lower elevation and its location at the base of the Andes. Pisac and Ollantaytambo are the most memorable due to the combination of all of the above features. For most of the week, these small villages offer little activity other than relaxing in the plaza or visiting the bakery for hot, fresh bread from a clay oven. On market day the atmosphere becomes more festive as farmers and artisans in traditional dress come from miles around to sell their colorful sweaters, weavings, pottery, and produce. Machu Picchu is the most impressive and the least understood of the Incan sites. It was not discovered by the Spanish conquistadors (as were most other sites) and was accidentally stumbled upon in 1911 by Hiram Bingham. Even today the site remains an enigma to archaeologists. It is obvious from the



exceptionally high quality of stonework and the abundance of ornamentation that Machu Picchu must have been an important ceremonial center.

**Day 1 - Cusco** and surrounding ruins; 4 miles, easy (approximate 1,000-ft elevation loss)  
After an early breakfast and an orientation meeting, your Peruvian guides acquaint you with the history and culture of this ancient city on a walking tour. Your meeting hotel is a lovely colonial building situated in the heart of Cusco, one of the highest cities in the world at 11,400 feet. Your explorations take you over the cobbled streets as you visit the main cultural and religious sites within the city, both Inca and colonial. Later, a short drive brings you to the city's outskirts, where you explore the famous sites surrounding Cusco. You begin at **Sacsayhuaman**, the principal Incan temple in the region, where the Inca held religious celebrations. You then proceed to **Quenko**, a ceremonial site for important Inca families. Although Quenko was virtually destroyed by the Spanish, remains of ceremonial altars and gods worshiped by the Inca are still visible. Time permitting you may visit the impressive site of **Tambomachay**, the site of ritual baths and the Temple of the Water. After returning to the hotel, you have a bit of time to relax before dinner. The evening meal is at an inviting restaurant in Cusco featuring local specialties such as rocoto relleno (stuffed peppers) and chupe de quinoa (stew made with local cheese, vegetables, and the local power-packed grain called quinoa).

Hotel: Novotel, Cusco – Nights 1 and 7 of tour

Tel 011 51 84 581030 Email [novotelcuscoreservas@accor.com](mailto:novotelcuscoreservas@accor.com)

This unique four-star hotel was built around an early 16<sup>th</sup> century house located in the heart of the city center.

### **Sat Nov 17 – Day 2**

**Pisac Ruins and Market**; 2-5 miles, moderate, includes steep descent on stairs (approximate 2,000-ft elevation loss), sections of walk may cause vertigo. It was a day of parades and festivals also. After breakfast, you transfer 1½ hours to begin a walking tour of the Sacred Valley at the mountaintop site of **Pisac**. This imposing site clings to steep, terraced fields far above the Peru Machu Picchu & the Sacred Valley and offers one of the finest examples of Incan architecture in the Cusco region. Winding your way on foot through ancient ruins and temples towards the Urubamba Valley floor, you marvel at this Inca burial site ingeniously built into a steep cliff. Along the way you delight in spectacular views of terraced fields used by local farmers for the growth of maize, potatoes, and quinoa. Lunch is served at a local restaurant featuring a hearty buffet of salads, potato dishes, meats, and breads. Afterward, a short transfer to the village of Pisac is followed with time to peruse the Andean market or relax at a café. Late in the afternoon you drive (40 minutes) to your beautiful monastery-turned-hacienda in **Yucay**, where there may be time for a short walk around the farmlands before reuniting for a traditional Peruvian feast.

Hotel: La Posada del Inca, Yucay - 3 nights

Plaza Manco II 123 Yucay, Urubamba, Cusco, Peru

Tel 011 51 84 201107 Email [Posada\\_yucay@el-olivar.com.pe](mailto:Posada_yucay@el-olivar.com.pe)

Yes Wi-Fi

A beautifully restored hacienda with colonial architecture and expansive gardens, located at the base of the Andes. Sonesta Posadas del Inca Yucay is located in the heart of the Sacred Valley of the

Incas, a one-hour drive from the ancient Inca capital of Cusco and close to Machu Picchu. The Sacred Valley produces an idyllic year-round climate of moderate warm weather with abundant sunshine and fresh air. The area is a perfect setting for horseback riding, hiking, rafting and other activities. Near the Sonesta Posada are the craft markets of Pisac and Chincheros, the Salt Mines of Maras, the town of Moray, Ollantaytambo ruins and Machu Picchu

### **Sun Nov 18 – Day 3**

**Chinchero Market; Maras and Moray**, to the Urubamba River; 7-9 miles, moderate with easy option (approximate 600-ft elevation gain and 2,000-ft elevation loss), sections of walk may cause vertigo.

A visit to **Chinchero** begins the day (a 40-minute transfer) where you experience a traditional Andean market. Here Indians from the surrounding communities come to barter or sell their handicrafts and products. Colorful assortments of weavings, fruits, vegetables, beans, and livestock make this a truly unforgettable experience. Afterward, you transfer to the charming village of Maras, from where you begin a walk along ancient farming paths. Along the way you may see shepherds herding flocks of sheep or farmers threshing wheat. You stop to refuel on a gourmet picnic lunch, complete with local wines. A short transfer takes you to the fascinating Inca site of **Moray**, once used for agricultural experimentation (and today preserved by UNESCO). After a walking exploration of the site, you begin a descent through a narrow canyon to the **Maras** salt mines. The snowcapped Andes and golden wheat fields provide a stunning backdrop for a walk to this unique site still mined for salt. Here you learn about the process of harvesting the salt from terraces of pools created by an underground salt-water spring. The entire process is done by hand, and the methods have not changed since pre-Hispanic times. A final 30-minute descent brings you to the Urubamba River and the village of **Pichingoto**, where you are met by your bus driver for the short transfer back to the hotel. Dinner this evening is at a local restaurant.

Hotel: La Posada del Inca, Yucay – 2<sup>nd</sup> night

### **Mon Nov 19 – Day 4**

**Traditional Andean Village**; 5-7 miles, moderate to challenging (approximate 620-ft elevation gain and loss) The village of **Ollantaytambo** is the first stop today. The spectacular Incan site above the village is famous as one of the few places where the Inca defeated the conquistadors in battle. Here you learn how the Inca maneuvered huge blocks of stone from the riverbanks below to the steep cliffs above to build their terraced temple. Afterward you transfer (one hour) to a remote, traditional village which provides an opportunity for an intimate view of mountain life in Peru. You are warmly welcomed by its inhabitants as you visit their primary school and homes. The walk follows ancient footpaths and life here continues as it has for hundreds of years as farmers still work the high Andean terraces harvesting wheat and a variety of vegetables. Residents still wear the traditional dress of the area, and houses are made of stacked stone. You encounter llamas, cows, and goats grazing alongside the trail, and the snow overlooking the Urubamba Valley capped peak of **Mount Alacoma** appears close enough to touch. You descend in time for a pisco sour (Peru's national drink made with clear white grape alcohol) by the fire before a final dinner in Yucay. This afternoon there is also an optional visit to the renowned **Pablo Seminario** pottery studio.

Hotel: La Posada del Inca, Yucay – 3<sup>rd</sup> night

## **Tue Nov 20 – Day 5**

**Train and Inca Trail to Machu Picchu**; 7.5 miles, moderate to challenging, sections of steep stair climbing (approximate 2,000-ft elevation gain and loss), sections of walk may cause vertigo. Option to continue on train for shorter walk into Machu Picchu. After an early breakfast you transfer by bus to the **Ollantaytambo** station to board the train bound for Machu Picchu. The train follows the river and offers magnificent views of the surrounding peaks. Along the way the landscape magically transforms from vast highlands into lush cloud forest. You disembark from the train at kilometer 104, cross a Foot-bridge and begin a walk along the original Inca Trail towards Machu Picchu. After visiting the ancient Incan site of **Chachabamba**, you ascend steadily for three to four hours in the midst of lush mountain valleys and snow-capped peaks. Along the way you pass rushing waterfalls, delicate orchids, and perhaps even spot the native condor. You stop to explore the well-rested **Winay Wayna** ruins, perched precariously on a steep mountain slope and flanked by ancient farming terraces. Winay Wayna, meaning “Forever Young” in Quechua, was named after a brightly colored orchid that blooms year-round. From here, you continue walking approximately two more hours along a mostly shaded section of the Inca Trail before arriving at the stairs leading to **Intipunku**, “Gate of the Sun,” and the entrance to Machu Picchu. You enter the site, like the ancient Inca themselves, through Intipunku and the spectacular view of the citadel unfolds before you. After taking in the fantastic ruins of this city, you descend to the valley floor by bus. Walking the Inca Trail requires a permit which are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Permits are limited and your passport details will be required to apply. We recommend booking as early as possible to acquire a permit. Options for those who do not obtain a permit for the Inca Trail, as well as for those who prefer a less challenging option, are to continue on the train from kilometer 104 to the riverside town of Aguas Calientes. Upon arrival, you check into your hotel, unpack, and enjoy lunch. You then board the bus to Machu Picchu and hike up to Intipunku to meet the rest of the group (or the intrepid might choose to hike **Machu Picchu Mountain** involving a challenging, 2,000-ft ascent along mostly stone steps). Your hotel for the next two nights is a lovely eco-property overlooking a river at the edge of the cloud forest.

Hotel: Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, Aguas Calientes – 2 nights  
Tel 011 51 84 211 032 Email [central@inkaterra.com](mailto:central@inkaterra.com)  
[www.inkaterra.com/en/machu-picchu](http://www.inkaterra.com/en/machu-picchu) Wi-Fi free

A Travel + Leisure "World's Best Hotel." A unique eco-boutique hotel with extensive grounds including cloud-forest gardens, medicinal plants, orchids, and a panoramic riverfront restaurant.

## **Wed Nov 21 – Day 6**

**Machu Picchu**; 2-6 miles on easy to challenging terrain. A Patacancha welcome from local villagers (approximate 900-ft elevation gain and loss). To experience the magic of sunrise over Machu Picchu, an optional bus ride to the site is offered in the pre-dawn hours, just as the gates open. After watching the sun rise over the site, you then eat breakfast at the nearby **Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge** before joining the full group for a guided tour. If you choose not to join the sunrise visit, you have breakfast at your hotel before boarding a bus for the breathtaking climb up a series of switchbacks to the entrance of Machu Picchu. Your guide provides a comprehensive tour of the site including exploration of the Temple of the Sun, Temple of the Condor, and the astronomical observatory. There is time to explore the mystical temples, altars, terraces, and chambers in solitude, or to embark on one of the short walks leading from the site. Later, back at your hotel, you may choose to relax on



the verandas overlooking the river and gardens, browse through the town's market, or follow the fragrant orchid trail at the hotel. Tonight you eat dinner while listening to Peruvian music in the property's lovely dining room above the rushing river.

Hotel: Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, Aguas Calientes – 2<sup>nd</sup> night

### **Thu Nov 22 – Day 7**

Transfer to Cusco, 3 hours; free afternoon. Following a hearty breakfast you will have the opportunity to enjoy some of the many activities offered at your hotel including a guided nature walk through the orchid gardens. Mid-morning you will board the train to Cusco allowing opportunity to further explore this celebrated city in the afternoon. This evening your journey culminates in a farewell celebration and dinner at a Cusco restaurant where you bid farewell to this magical land.

Hotel Novotel, Cusco – same hotel as Day 1 of tour

### **Fri Nov 23 – Day 8**

Departure - after breakfast you transfer to the Cusco airport. Complimentary transfers to the airport are provided throughout the morning depending on the time of your departing flight.

**Lima** - A 3-4 hour walking tour for the group will be offered in Lima.

Taca asks for 3 hours arrival at airport pre-flight. Needs verification. Priority Club has one lounge in Cuzco airport near to boarding tax office.

12:25pm Depart Cuzco CUZ via Taca#10

1:45pm Arrive Lima LIM

Shuttle to hotel; or taxi \$50

Hotel: JW Marriott Miraflores – reserved for 4 nights but 3+ needed?  
Malecon De La Reserva 615, Miraflores, Lima 18 Peru Tele 51 1 217 7000  
Wi-Fi for a fee; Coffee maker provided

### **Sat – Sun Nov 24-25**

**Lima Tourist:** Tours of Lima city historical and cultural, and day tour to Pachacamac; Barrancos art; historical buildings; night tour of magic waters; cemetery tour; Caral is oldest city in Americas

### **Mon Nov 26**

8:30pm? Approx depart to airport; shuttle or taxi? Mercedes and Peugeot Remisse service; fee \$46 (one way) reservation required; possible shuttle also available; Taxi \$50 range; 20 miles

Hotel Retain hotel for Monday night since departure is just after midnight

### **Tue Nov 27- departing just after midnight**

12:40am Depart Lima LIM via United #855

6:30am Arrive Houston IAH for plane change – tight connection for passport and security  
7:30am Depart Houston IAH via United#1146 – new 787 Dreamliner  
11:49pm Arrive Newark EWR

**Participants:**

Ilene Cook, Washington DC  
Bill Curran, Duluth GA  
Phyllis Kimmel, Washington DC  
Laura Spatholt, Calabash NC  
Barry Taylor, Danville CA  
Juan Carlos Yanez Choquehuanca, Cusco Peru – guide

Tourist info: <http://www.machupicchu-inca.com/machu-picchu-altitude.html>

**Emergency contact** from US: EXPLORANDES (the local operator). Caller should refer to the Country Walkers Group, from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm  
Lima office: 011 51 4450532 - Cusco office: 011 51 84238380  
24-hour emergency cell phone:  
Lima: 011 51 999 925 060 - Cusco: 011 51 84 984 620 717

**Misc notes – and see 2008 file of notes:**

From Ellen: Much of Lima is just residential you would not want to visit. The old part of Lima around the square is very interesting. And there are museums scattered around that are interesting. The pottery museum is a must. The Moche ceramics interest everybody because of their explicit sexual depictions. Before pornography became so accessible, people bought reproductions and brought them home as souvenirs. The Gold museum, displaying many of the artifacts unearthed in the excavation of untouched tombs of the "Lords of Sipan" (north of Lima) is a must. This discovery may have been the biggest archeological discovery of the 20th century (after the buried army in Xian). And there are others. Miraflores Marriott would be a nice place to stay, but it's quite a distance from downtown, the historical part of town and the museums. We (members of my Galapagos expedition) actually stayed at a very nice Bed and Breakfast, recommended by the travel agent in the airport. But Lima is a big city. If you have the time and are not in a rush this might be nice. As I remember, the restaurants and the food was good there. Peruvian food in general is tasty and (as I remember) not expensive. But if your focus is on sightseeing, most of what you want to see is not near Miraflores.

The world of pre-Conquest Peru is unique. The civilizations that preceded the Conquest are worth a revisit if you care about ancient cultures.  
[www.gordonsguide.com/suppliers/3458/package.cfm?packageID=22808](http://www.gordonsguide.com/suppliers/3458/package.cfm?packageID=22808) for information about the archeological sites of note on the North Coast of Peru.

The Conquest of Peru makes my skin crawl. It was accomplished by the scum of the earth - the illiterate Pizarro brothers from the backwaters of the world - the nothing town of Trujillo, Spain, in the most barren land in Europe (Estremadura, Spain). I've been there. Imagine a truck stop town out in

the wilds of the southern desert of Utah - with nothing to do by drink, eat and screw. (I use that word to illustrate the level of development of these hoodlums). Imagine 36 illiterate half-brothers, all sired by the same town drunk. Imagine them starting to hear stories of mountains of gold in the New World and people sailing across the ocean, killing the natives and coming back rich. What did they have to lose? They caught fire, talked others into joining them, gathered horses and weapons, talked sailors into sharing in the booty to sale them to the new world. They arrived, with no ethics, unevolved ruffians with guns and horses (never seen in the new world) and proceeded to talk and kill their way to destroying what they found and paving the way for the importation of Spanish Catholicism and the Spanish Inquisition to take control. I just last night discovered a PBS special about a graveyard north of Lima, the excavation of which documents the horrific violence of the conquest. Since the Conquistadores wrote the history, up till the discovery of this cemetery, the brutality of the conquest was unknown. I watched half of it last night on the computer, and can't seem to find it today. It's called "The Great Inca Rebellion." I think it was a NOVA special.

A couple of days in Lima may be enough, but you can look at the websites of the North shore and see if you'd like to see those sites on the trip. They were part of my trip to Peru with Ed Krupp in 1980. I have no recommendation. Depends if you're interested in such things. I am, but I get bored.

From Ellen: It's been about 10 years since I was last in Lima, so I don't know if this will work now. But when I flew from Lima to Quito, Ecuador, I stayed overnight in Lima. The cab driver who took me to the airport knew from my conversation that I was coming back through Lima. He offered to meet my plane and be my driver for the day, taking me to museums, waiting for me, then taking me to the next one. We even agreed on a price.

When I arrived back in Lima, I was met by someone with a sign bearing my name. Turns out my driver couldn't meet me, but he arranged for another driver. He took me to a restaurant for lunch and waited, then to 3 different museums and waited, then took me to a restaurant for dinner and waited, then to the airport. He made the day possible. I never knew how long I would be in any of the museums, but when I came out, there he was, waiting. I think I paid him \$50 plus tip for the day. But that was 10 years ago. It would likely be considerably more now. But if you are going to have several days, the concierge at your hotel can probably make arrangements for you.

Hire a guide in Cusco, who will take you up to Sacsayhuaman, the remains of an Inca fortress above the city - someone versed in the knowledge of Cusco when it was an Inca capital. I was there with Dr. Ed Krupp of the Griffith Observatory, who is an expert in Inca lore.

Where does your walking tour start? The tour company may have a program for participants in Cusco to sightsee.

The train is a good option. It left Cusco around 9:00 AM if I remember correctly (maybe earlier). It goes over switchbacks to get up over the mountains and arrived at the Machu Picchu station in time for us to arrive at the site (bus from the station on the river up to the site) in time for lunch. We left the next day by train around 5:00 PM and arrived back in Cusco for dinner. I can't imagine walking there when the train is so easy. But I also can't imagine running one marathon, let alone 100!



## Lima - Locations of free wifi

Four locations in Jesus Maria for free public wifi - Plaza San José, Plaza Andrés Avelino Cáceres, Parque Huiracocha and the Casa de la Juventud. Article

You can use public WiFi in all Magdalena District due to the strong signal offered by the City Hall but it's so good as a private one close to Brasil Ave around 32 block and in open places like the Malecon Grau and the parks nearby. It's 24 hours, 7 days for your pleasure.

PRETTY HOUSE HOSTEL In Lima, Peru. Wifi, computers, fax, guest kitchen, mini gym. Phone: 051-1-4609358, email: info@prettyhouseperu.com, website

Starbucks near Ovalo Gutierrez Ovalo Gutierrez, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at 25 De Mayo, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at Av De Las Artes Norte, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at Monterrico, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at Camacho, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at Alonso De Molina, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at Javier Prado, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at 1205 Av Raul Ferrero, Lima, Peru

Starbucks at Guillermo Prescott, Lima, Peru

Parque Kennedy Schell nearby Universidad de Piura

Free wifi access throughout the Lima airport

Casa de la Juventud, near the corner at Leoncico Prado and Velarde.

## Cusco, Peru - Locations of free wifi

Casa Andina Classic – Cusco San Blas (hotel) 278 Chihuampata, Cusco, Peru, phone: 84 26 3694

Rumi Punku E.i.r.l. (hotel) Choquechaca, Cusco (Cusco), Perú, phone: 4 22 1102

Casa Andina Classic Cusco Plaza (hotel) Santa Catalina Angosta, Cusco (Cusco) CUSCO, Perú, phone: 484 23 1733

Torre Dorada Residencial E.I.R.L. (hotel) Los Cipreses Mz. N Lt. 5, Cusco, Perú, phone: 84 24 1698

Inversiones Inkari E.I.R.L. (hotel) Collacalle, Cusco, Perú, phone: 84 24 2692

Salcedo Guerra Marlon Edwin (hotel) Nueva Baja, Cusco, Perú, phone: 84 23 4310

Mister Inkas II (hotel) Av. Manco Capac, 420 - Wanchaq, Cusco (Cusco) CUSCO01, Perú, phone: 84 24 2026

Later: turns out many public parks have free WiFi and most restaurants do also. Only the Novotel gave me trouble!

## **An Amazing Adventure in Peru by Linda**

**April 9 - 18, 2004**

**Friday, April 9** - Margie and I flew to Lima (from Miami and L.A., respectively) arriving after midnight. It was an eight-hour flight for me, five hours for her.

**Saturday, April 10** - We took a one hour flight from Lima to Cusco, arriving at 7 a.m. A small band playing typical Peruvian music awaited us in the airport, as well as a van that shuttled us directly to our hotel, the Picoaga. The highlight of this hotel was its beautiful courtyard with a pretty fountain at the center.

We were very tired from being up all night, so we went straight to bed, sleeping until 2 in the afternoon. Once awake, we began our exploration of Cusco, a lovely colonial town. It is set in a valley, surrounded by the Andes. As the city stretches out from the center, you see a sea of red tile roofs and green fields.

I was particularly impressed by Cusco's beautiful – and very large – main plaza called Plaza de Armas. At the center are nicely landscaped gardens and lots of benches to enjoy the views. Around the perimeter are several impressive churches as well as arched walkways that contain shops and restaurants. It was very lovely, especially on a perfect day with blue blue skies and puffy white clouds.

We walked all around this plaza and explored many of the side streets. We were fascinated by the colorful crafts everywhere you looked, the cobblestone streets with ornate balconies, and the beautiful people, many in traditional dress. A comical note to this town stroll: Margie neglected to notice a hole in one street's grate, and fell into it. Fortunately, she wasn't hurt (other than some nasty black & blue marks); once we discovered that she was okay, we laughed hysterically!

We had an early dinner at El Meson de los Espaderos, a restaurant on the second floor overlooking the Plaza de Armas. We had the "best seats in the house" and loved watching the lights come on in the Plaza as dusk turned to dark. We enjoyed a fresh salad and grilled meats, both specialties of Peru.

After dinner, we walked along picturesque cobblestone streets bordered by Inca stone walls to Hotel El Libertador. We explored this famous spot, and then wandered back to our hotel for much-needed sleep.

**Sunday, April 11** - We awoke early, packed and moved to the Hotel Monasterio, where we would meet the Backroads group later that morning. We walked in Cusco some more, searching out side streets, checking out some other plazas, and enjoying music, dancing and festivals associated with Easter Sunday.

Back at Monasterio – a fabulous four-star hotel that was formerly a 17<sup>th</sup> century seminary, now splendid with gorgeous courtyards, a chapel and museum-quality art everywhere you looked – we met our Backroads leaders Pam Fritz and Rebecca Armstrong, and our 15 fellow travelers. After

introductions and a trip overview, we all had a delightful lunch in the courtyard accompanied by Gregorian chant music.

Then we embarked on a walking tour of the city, accompanied by Aurelio Aguirre, our local guide for the week. He gave us lots of background on the culture, history and customs of the Peruvian people. We went to parts of the town Margie and I had not yet seen, and we especially enjoyed ambling down narrow cobblestone streets and marveling at the views across the valley from way up on high.

A highlight of Cusco is the Temple of the Sun, with its magnificent Inca walls. We also visited two amazing churches: San Blas and the main cathedral on the plaza. We stayed on in the latter after the group left, enjoying this church's large expanses, solid silver and gilded alters, and fantastic art.

Back at the hotel, we kicked off this trip's shopping by buying matching wooden vicunas with silver bells at the hotel gift shop. After a quick shower and change, we enjoyed a beautiful dinner at Hotel Monasterio.

**Monday, April 12** - Early this morning, we took a bus to Tambomachay, about a half hour outside of Cusco. Tambomachay is one of many sacred sites with Inca ruins and baths. From there, we hiked six miles to four other ruins: Puca Pucara, the Temple of the Moon, Q'Enko and Sacsayhuaman.

I was particularly impressed by Sacsayhuaman, which is absolutely enormous, with huge Inca walls. The hike to all of these places was glorious: perfect weather (blue skies with puffy white clouds), wildflowers everywhere (Andean daisies, small white flowers, lupine) and lush green farmland. An added treat was an accompaniment by a pack of llamas, an alpaca and their herders in native dress (thoughtfully arranged by Backroads and perfect for photos!).

As we arrived at the picnic spot for lunch, a native Peruvian band treated us to beautiful music. They also showed us their instruments (all hand made by them) and danced with each of us! And what a lunch Pam had prepared! Beautiful fresh tropical fruits and vegetables (loved the beets, mangos and avocados, a trio seen in many of our meals in Peru), a local dish of tuna and potatoes, grilled chicken and much more!

As we made our way back to Cusco, we had fabulous high views of the valley and the city. Before dinner, we stopped at the "Alpaca's Best" shop across from our hotel and bought Margie a sweater. Before dinner, I also bought an alpaca sweater for Paul.

Dinner that evening was in the Pre-Columbian Art Museum, a treat in and of itself. We were able to explore the museum a bit, which had some beautiful and fascinating artifacts, and gold and silver pieces. Dinner that evening was delicious and we got to know members of our group a lot better. It was also fun to see my dear friend Lonna Lynn, her husband Mike and their friends, who coincidentally were in Cusco the same time as us.

We spent another night at the lovely Hotel Monasterio.



**Tuesday, April 13** - Early this morning, we took a bus to Chinchero, a fantastically picturesque small village. It seemed like there was a photo crying to be taken no matter which way you looked, which corner you turned! We walked through this amazing village with Aurelio, stopping to visit the church, admire more Inca stonework, and take photos of women in native dress selling their handiwork in the main plaza.

We then hopped on our mountain bikes and biked 16 miles through the Sacred Valley to Moray. This ride was incredible! It was like being in Switzerland with craggy high snow-capped mountains or in Ireland with its patchwork of green green fields (only here they are terraced amazingly high up the mountains). We cycled through fields of lupine, potato, barley, corn, fava beans and wheat, with wildflowers everywhere. We saw true rural Peruvian life – women and men herding cows and sheep, and harvesting crops. One woman even offered Margie a cup of coca tea!

Along the way, we stopped to enjoy a simple sack lunch along the road with leader Becca. This was the perfect chance to really drink in the views! Once at Moray, we got to see agricultural circles from Inca times, and then took a bus to Salineros. This is the site for salt harvesting, and there are thousands of salt pans. We actually got to walk among them, feel the warm water, and taste the salt. This was truly an amazing site!

The bus then took us to Willka T'ika Garden Guest Lodge, our hotel in Urubamba, the heart of the Sacred Valley and halfway between Cusco and Machu Picchu. Willka T'ika means Sacred Flower in Quechua, the native Indian language.

This small hotel is reserved only for private parties, so we felt very special staying there. We loved its gorgeous gardens with almost every flower you can imagine, and the owners grow most of the fruits and vegetables for guest and staff meals. So we enjoyed the freshest dinners and fantastic teas! Dinner that night was at the hotel's restaurant; the vegetarian meal was excellent, and I particularly loved the super fresh vegetable soup. A lovely bonus at bedtime: water bottles in our beds!

**Wednesday, April 14** - This morning, we took a bus to Ollantaytambo, one of the best preserved Inca cities in Peru. There are amazing ruins there, including a trapezoid door (an innovation of the Incas), along with terraces all the way up the mountains and storehouses for potatoes cut into the north-facing mountainsides. We climbed 200 stairs to get to the top, and this is when I really felt the altitude (over 12,000 feet). I was breathless and had to go up very slowly. But I made it, and the view from the top was worth it. What a valley, with terraces everywhere and the amazing Andes!

From Ollantaytambo, we hiked four miles along the Urubamba River, bordered by wildflowers and cactus. Lunch today was another famous Backroads picnic, this one along the river, where our leaders and staff again erected a tent and put out a feast. After lunch, Margie and I put our feet in the water and rested a bit.

This afternoon, we took a bus on winding roads to a tiny village called Huilloc, a Quechua community known for its weaving. The whole town came running to meet our bus, and every woman, man and child was dressed in red woven ponchos and intricate embroidered hats. We watched a weaving demonstration and took a tour of their homes. They played music for us and the children danced.

They then displayed their handiwork for us to view and purchase – wall hangings, ponchos, blankets and belts.

It was amazing to be a part of this community and to be welcomed by these humble people. We were glad to give back to them by offering notebooks, pencils, fruit and bread to the children, who were greeting us with their shy smiles.

From Huilloc, the next stop was Pablo Seminario's ceramic workshop. Using ancient Incan methods, Mr. Seminario creates ceramics ranging from small bowls to large art pieces, bowls and platters. His style is unique and "of the earth," featuring waves, suns and abstract patterns. Margie bought quite a few pieces while I selected a small candle holder and two wall hangings for the garden.

We had a quick hour to shower and change before a very special dinner. We took a half hour bus ride to a private home which was graciously opened to our group. This was a lovely and spacious Peruvian hacienda named Hacienda Huoyocari. First you walked through gardens, and then into a large anteroom with a huge fireplace. On the walls were a collection of priceless Incan and pre-Columbian art and ceramics. We feted the day with pisco sours (the Peruvian equivalent of a margarita), and then enjoyed a wonderful buffet dinner. This was definitely a highlight of the trip!

**Thursday, April 15** - What a fantastic day today was! We went mountain biking along the Urubamba River, which was so picturesque and allowed us to feel so in touch with rural Peru. We biked among sheep and cows, alongside Peruvians carrying bundles of crops, and through fields of corn and quinoa. Modest homes with adobe walls (with cactus on the top, a symbol of good luck) were set against the backdrop of terraced fields on the rugged peaks of the Andes. The weather was perfect again today – we've been so lucky every day so far!

I was a little timid on the first day of mountain biking (that was the first time I had done it and I was surprised to learn it is quite different than road biking), but by today (now our second day of the sport) I was really enjoying it. In fact, I was getting fairly daring and actually didn't mind going over rocks, in ruts, through the mud and over grassy patches. It allowed us to really see the countryside and it was fun!

We arrived at a countryside hotel/restaurant called Inti Wasi in Pisac for lunch. It even had a shower, a welcome treat after 27 miles of rough riding! There we enjoyed a buffet lunch and a delicious chocolate and dulce de leche birthday cake for Becca.

Next was a bus ride to Pisac, where Margie and I chose to do some shopping. Thursday is one of the major days for this large, rambling open market where women were selling everything from handicrafts and woven goods, to fruits and vegetables and dyes.

We had so much fun! I selected an alpaca shawl, a table runner featuring typical Peruvian handiwork, a cool T-shirt, alpaca llamas as gifts for my friends, and postcards, while Margie bought gifts for the kids' school, place mats, a T-shirt, and earrings. When we bought the woven goods, the vendor took us to his workshop, where we saw how they were made.

Back at the Willka T'ika, Margie and I took a stroll in the gardens, where we saw the famous lucuma tree. Then, we indulged in individual flower soak baths in outdoor stone tubs! There was a gentle rainfall and we were looking up at the stars as we luxuriated in the smell of rosemary, eucalyptus, rose petals and other flowers just cut from the garden!

After our baths, we made a quick stop at the gift shop, where Margie bought a necklace, some tea and we both bought ceramic good luck pieces. Dinner that evening was at the hotel. Once again I loved the soup, which I'm convinced has healing powers! We also celebrated Becca's birthday with another cake!

**Friday, April 16** - We got up at 5:30 this morning for the 7 a.m. Peru Rail Vistadome train toward Machu Picchu. This was so gorgeous, paralleling the roaring Urubamba River, and looking out on Inca ruins and the terraced mountainsides of the Andes.

We got off the train at kilometer 104, where we picked up the Inca Trail for the last eight miles to Machu Picchu. This was a rugged uphill climb in the jungle, but fortunately it was bit overcast, so we didn't melt! The path was lush and green, very tropical feeling, and we saw many kinds of exotic orchids, as well as lantana, bromeliads, Andean daisies, Mexican sage, lupine and gladiolus. This hike was a 2,200 ft. elevation gain, with views down to the river below and up to the misty mountains above, with waterfalls in between.

We stopped for lunch at Huinay Huayna, a hillside complex of Inca ruins. We sat on the stone walls and marveled at the view. After lunch, the trail leveled out, and it was much easier. About 2 hours later, we arrived at Temple of the Sun, the uppermost part of Machu Picchu. The view here is unbelievable – 360 degrees of mountains with Machu Picchu at the center. While we've all seen countless photos of this site, they do not properly prepare you for the size, majesty and magic of seeing Machu Picchu for the first time.

To celebrate our arrival at this impressive spot, Becca had brought champagne! We all toasted our good fortune to be able to make this trip and enjoy this wonder of the world.

From there, we walked to the entrance and caught the bus down to Aguas Calientes. When I say down, I really mean down: it was a series of hairpin curves on a narrow dirt road down the face of a mountain!

We checked into the Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel with its amazing gardens, and walked into Aguas Calientes for dinner. We had lots of laughs with Lucia and Paul during dinner at Pueblo Viejo. Live Peruvian music accompanied our meal of grilled chicken and a terrific salad bar (and I bought the CD).

**Saturday, April 17** - Margie and I got up super early and caught the first bus up to Machu Picchu, arriving about 10 minutes before 7 a.m. When we first arrived, it was raining and overcast. But within 15 minutes, the rain stopped, and billowing fog was coming up from the river, swirling around the mountain tops and drifting through the ruins. Rays of sunlight broke through and it was truly magical.

We had the place practically to ourselves too! Margie and I could hardly believe it. We walked the ruins quite a bit and I took tons of photos before the group arrived at 9:30 a.m.

We then took a very challenging hike up Huanya Picchu, which is the large mountain just behind the ruins that you see in all of the photos. This path had very narrow steps, steep uphill climbs, and, in one section, you had to pull yourself up on the rope. On the way down, we “spidered”: like walking down a ladder, facing into the mountain and using both your hands and feet. This was definitely not for the faint of heart, but the view from the top was worth it! We had amazing vistas of Machu Picchu and the surrounding Andes, with the fog drifting in and out.

Back down at Machu Picchu, Margie and I enjoyed sandwiches, fruit and Snickers bars overlooking the ruins, then went on a guided tour of the site with Aurelio at 1:30 in the afternoon. It was fascinating to learn about the Inca culture and to see such (relatively) modern-day items as a sundial, perfectly engineered walls and fantastic terracing.

We took the 4:15 bus back down to Aguas Calientes, giving us just enough time to shower and change before our farewell dinner. This was bittersweet – we had so much fun, but we didn’t want the week to end! Our group was great, and we had gotten so close over the past seven days! We made lots of toasts with pisco sours, and Pam and Becca surprised with a slide show of over 400 photographs of our trip. They even gave us each the CD with all of the photos! They were truly great leaders and their positive attitudes really added to the trip.

Dinner that evening was a fantastic spinach soup, Andean trout baked in banana leaves, and tropical fruit sorbet.

**Sunday, April 18** - Our final delight: the scenic Peru Rail train in the Sacred Valley from Aguas Calientes to Ollantaytambo, again following the Urubamba River and offering breathtaking views of the mountains and jungle. Then we took the bus to Cusco; this drive was beautiful too, through farmland and small villages.

In Cusco, we said our fond farewells to everyone before taking off for the airport and our 4:30 flight to Lima. Flying home, I arrived at 7 a.m. the next morning, exhausted but exhilarated by one of the most exciting trips of my life!



## Itinerary worksheet for Machu Pichu in '08?

Sofia: IF you are interested, here's another input about taking the trip. Highly recommended and with another provider as an option. We now have 3 tour providers! Can you tell that I enjoy the planning and studying?

Hi, I just reread this and need to make a couple of corrections. In the last paragraph, I talk about "lots of museums in Quito." That needs to be changed to "lots of museums in Lima". Also I left the I off Kapau. In the second paragraph. Ellen

Hi Diana: If you contact Andean Treks, Peter can suggest all kind of extensions to the Machu Picchu trip. I met Laura Friis on the La Paz trip and have been traveling with her to eclipses ever since. She's a part-time travel agent (full time biologist) and knows Peter well. He put together another trip to the Galapagos to see another eclipse. Afterward, he sent us to a wonderful hacienda outside Quito named Hacienda Cusin for a few days I've dreamed of going back there ever since. I met a writer who comes there every year for two weeks and I thought that would be heaven. It's a place to do nothing but read by the fire, (many fireplaces to chose from), go horseback riding. Have 3 wonderful meals a day, meet new people coming and going, and just be. There are very places where I've felt like just "being". This is the best.

He also sent us to Kapau – an eco tourist lodge in the Amazon river system. We had an Aschur Indian guide (the tribe made contact with white people for the first time in 1975 (I believe), and a biologist from the University in Quito. Because I asked to go birding, the guide from the university set up early morning trips. We'd meet at 6:00 AM in the commissary, then walk in the dark over the raised bridges down to the river. The Ashuar boatmen would appear. We'd get into the long boats, start down the river and watch the world create itself, as dawn began to light the mist rising from the river. Absolutely magical.

I figure if you go that far, you may as well take advantage of it. Much to see – including lots of museums in Quite, your jumping off point. On one of my trips through Lima, I took an extra day, hired a cab driver to drive me from one museum to another all day, then drop me off at a good restaurant for dinner, pick me up and take me to the plane to fly home. It was another fabulous day.

Traveling is SO much fun!!!!!!!!!!!!

Best, Ellen...

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Hi Ellen: What a story! Stories. I'm saving this email.

If I pursue the trip, I'll look at your group tour guide too. Similar company name and I had to look again to be sure they weren't one of the same.

The tour I looked at has 'sherpas' who carry everything which would help conserve the effort. I'd write to tell them that I was afraid of altitude sickness and see what they say. Tom has a pill that's not drowsy causing like dramamine is, and for years it made it possible for him to ski. A friend who took a mountain bike and hiking trip with Backroads were put into oxygenated rooms to get through the altitude problem. It was just part of the tour package.

As you tell your story, I now remember feeling absolutely awful in Quito Ecuador and learning it was from the altitude. I also know that I wasn't able to hike well while in the upper mountains of Aspen so I'm quite susceptible.

Thanks for another entertaining story. A keeper!

Dear Diana, Now, THERE's an adventure!!! A wonderful adventure. You're right. I have been there. It was such a magical trip, I've never thought of going back. I'm actually afraid it would spoil the magic. The trip itinerary you sent does have a problem that you need to be prepared for. If you haven't hiked in these altitudes before, you need to know that altitude sickness is very real. Because oxygen is thinner the higher you go, the body starts to be deprived of oxygen at about 8000 ft above sea level. At 10,000 ft, you feel noticeable affects. People hiking in these altitudes walk v-e-r-y-s-l-o-w-l-y. to mitigate the stress on the body. The symptoms are headaches of some severity, nausea for some, and a general feeling that you died somewhere, and your body has neglected to fall over. At around 10,000 ft, you will acclimatize somewhat by sleeping there over night. Your body produces more red or white (I forget which) blood cells to carry more oxygen to the brain. But it takes longer in higher altitudes. When I went to Machu Picchu, we flew from Lima to Cusco (sea level to 9000 ft.). They served coca tea on arrival at the hotel to help with the symptoms of altitude sickness, but the first night I was there, I was in pain all over. I was better the next day. But on our whole trip, we never were as high as the altitudes you list on some of your hikes, and people continued to feel sub-par.

On another trip, I flew from Lima to La Paz, Bolivia (11,800 – airport at 13,313 ft on the plateau above the city). I forgot about the altitude. When I got off the plane and started down the jet way, I felt like I was suffocating. I was walking with a nice Peruvian man I met in the Lima airport. He saw the look on my face. He jumped in front of me, put his hands on my shoulders, and did exaggerated deep breathing. I got the message. With deep, deep breathes, I could function, but by the time I got to my hotel, I hurt all over. Aspirin didn't help. I went to bed hoping I'd be better in the morning. It took two days. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day we started caravanning to our eclipse camp site up on that plateau above the city. We added a couple thousand feet to our altitude. The first night out on the altiplano, the support staff set up the camp site. I crawled into my tent and literally could not move. The leader came by, handed me a bottle of water, and said, "Go to sleep". Keep in mind I arrived by bus. I was not hiking or carrying a pack. The next day I was better, but still wobbly and achy. I got myself to breakfast and felt better. Fortunately (and by design) we were camped at a hot springs with a large bathing pool. I got into that hot water and stayed about an hour. When I came out, I was much better. Not 100%, but much better. The following day, when the eclipse happened, everybody was fine. But we had spent 3 days in La Paz at 11,800 ft, and this was our 3<sup>rd</sup> day out on the altiplano. It took that long to acclimatize for most of us.

Your tour lists hikes to 12,000+ and 13,000 + ft. You need to know that this will not be a walk in the park. You will not feel good. We were riding on trains and buses. You will be hiking and probably carrying a back pack. Your stress level will not be dependent on how in shape you are at sea level. It will be a function of your producing additional red or white blood cells to carry more oxygen here where the oxygen is thin. This takes time.

Seeing Machu Picchu and the Cusco area is well worth it. But if you would like to do so with a little less stress to the body, I can highly recommend any tour offered by the company that planned my eclipse trip. I'd travel anywhere with Peter Robertson of Andean Treks. He has offices in the major cities in South America, with personnel and equipment on site. His website is <http://www.andeantreks.com/> Machu Picchu is one of the great sites of the world. Definitely worth a trip.

Hi Diana, I read Linda's trip report with interest and have some comments. She was lucky to come into Cuzco near sleep time. Having a night of sleep before exploring was very effective in mitigating altitude sickness. She probably doesn't realize this. My trip arrived in Cuzco around noon and by 8:00 PM I was in pain all over. Sleep helped greatly.

Coca tea was available everywhere and was served to us at the hotel when we arrived, because it helps alleviate the symptoms of altitude caused oxygen deprivation.

Years later on the Bolivia eclipse trip I found tea shops In La Paz that sold coca tea, and had at least one cup a day until I acclimatized. So if you go, don't forget coca tea. It's an important aid. It is not an "Oh my, isn't this just too outrageous". It's a real god-send and quite legal there.

An itinerary like Linda's, in my opinion, is much more likely to produce a pleasant trip than the one you previously sent with hikes at 12,000 and 13,000 ft. I applaud the idea of going. I applaud the idea of getting there by bus and train. The idea of hiking the last 8 miles of the Inca trail seems reasonable. But not days of hiking in that altitude. I'm sure you can

do it. But I don't think you'd enjoy it. Her trip missed an important site - the huge ceremonial site above Cusco called Sacsayhuaman. It's impressive. I would consider this a "must see", Inca walls are marvels of construction and engineering. They're made of HUGE stones that are so finely fitted, you cannot slide a piece of paper between them anywhere. The Inca didn't have the wheel to transport these stones and they didn't use any kind of mortar. Only the fit holds these walls together. They are really amazing.

The place called "The Temple of the Sun" was the most sacred site in the Inca empire. The walls were covered with gold and on top where the Catholic church is located now, there was a garden where every flower and plant was made of pure gold. All of this Vanished when the uneducated dolts from Trujillo, Spain, led by the Pizarro brothers, arrived in Cuzco. (These dolts are romantically called the Conquistadores, but they were really uneducated brutes with criminal minds who stumbled onto the one civilization that possessed the most gold on earth. They ravaged the place, and destroyed a very enlightened empire. This is not to their credit. But before I launch into a tirade about the subhuman beasts that did this, I'd better take a side step out of my contempt for these bastards and change the subject. (The term "bastards" is accurate. Their father fathered about 35 bastards in Trujillo. I've been there, visited his house, and read the explanatory info there. It's part of the town's history).

Moving on - If possible, if I were going to Machu Picchu, I'd stay at the Site, rather than in the town down below. There is a hotel at the site, and spending the night there, and getting up at dawn to watch the sun rise is kind of special. When at the site, make sure that you get to see the Inca bridge. You may need a guide to take you to it. It's awesome.

I connected with a dear man who was head of the reconstruction there at Machu Picchu. He took me into the site at night, after it was locked (He had the key). This was magical. He also let me into the site at 6:00 AM and I had it to myself for an hour. He also guided me up Wayna Picchu (the mountain peak in all the pictures). There were carefully chiseled steps most of the way up. I don't remember having to pull myself up by rope anywhere, but he knew a way up at the top that was not the usual route. We crawled under a large rock and came out on top of the slab that sits on the top. A Chinese American guy who was with our group was already on top when we arrived. Franklin (the Chinese guy) had an Andean flute with him, and was trying to learn to play it. Ubaldo (my friend) asked to play the flute. Franklin handed it to him, and we three sat there enveloped in a cloud that obliterated the site below, and carried the flute music past us and out into space. It was as if we were floating in the cloud carried by the sound of the flute. Magical.

When we returned to the site, Ubaldo said that if I'd like to see an Inca bridge, I should meet him at the top of the site at 11:00. I did, and we walked along the ridge until we came to a spot he knew that, with a push, would let us through a bamboo thicket onto a narrow trail through the bamboo, and around a bend. When we emerged from this thicket, there was one of the most awesome sights I've ever seen. There was a sheer cliff face that dropped at least 3000 feet to the bottom of the canyon. The Inca had piled stones (carefully hewn) from the bottom to level with this trail. In the middle of this stone work, they had left a drop-off of several hundred feet. It was bridged with a number of small logs, so you could get across by walking over these logs. To protect the city, they would remove the logs, and nobody could enter. I sat down on the trail with my feet dangling over to take in this awesome construction, when out of the cloud came an enormous bird with a white neck ruff - an Andean condor, circling and circling closer and closer. He passed within 15 feet of me and through binoculars, I got to look him right in the eye as he passed. It was an awesome experience.

I don't know if you can duplicate the condor at Machu Picchu, but you can see the Inca bridge. I was the only one of our group who saw it, but when Ed Krupp (leader) took another group back there the next year, he arranged with the guide for the group to see it. I was there in 1980. For all I know, this bridge may be in plain sight today. But then you couldn't see it from the site or from Wayna Picchu because of the surrounding vegetation. You had to know where the opening to the trail was, and you needed a guide for that. I was extremely lucky to have met Ubaldo. He made my stay truly a magical experience.(nice to remember).

Machu Picchu is awesome. It's well worth the trip. The only question is whether to get there easily or with pain and difficulty. The site won't look any different no matter which way you choose. But the way you choose may make a difference to the way you feel when you're there.



<http://www.andesadventures.com/trekadv.htm>

**Day 1 Friday: Lima/Cusco** - This morning you will be met at the Lima airport by an Andes Adventures representative, who will assist you with connecting flights to Cusco. Depart on a one-hour flight to Cusco, the ancient capital of the Inca Empire and the continent's oldest continuously inhabited city. Our trip leader will meet you at the Cusco airport. Upon arrival in Cusco, we transfer to the hotel where a traditional welcome cup of coca leaf tea is served to help with the acclimatization to the 11,150 feet altitude. This afternoon we will have a guided sightseeing tour of the city, visiting the Cathedral, the Inca temple Qorikancha, and the Santo Domingo Monastery. You will receive a tourist ticket valid for the length of the trip enabling you to visit the many archaeological sites, temples and other places of interest. Welcome dinner and overnight in Cusco.

*Overnight: Picoaga Hotel in Cusco. Today's hike: None scheduled.*

**Day 2 Saturday: Cusco** - Morning visit to the archaeological sites surrounding Cusco, beginning with the fortress and temple of Sacsayhuaman, perched on a hillside overlooking Cusco at 12,136 feet. It is still a mystery how this fortress was constructed. Gigantic stones, some of them weighing 125 tons, were carved into huge trapezoidal blocks that fit together with extraordinary precision. The tour continues with visits to the semicircular shrine of Kenko, Puca Pucara and the Royal Baths of Tambomachay, a beautiful ceremonial bath, adorned with waterfalls, which continues to flow 500 years after being built. After lunch, we will spend the afternoon relaxing, shopping, and sightseeing in beautiful Cusco and its surroundings.

*Overnight: Picoaga Hotel in Cusco. Today's hike: None scheduled.*

**Day 3 Sunday: Chinchero/Yucay** - Our tour takes us on a scenic drive to Urubamba, the Sacred Valley of the Incas. We travel across a high plain with splendid views of the Cordillera Urubamba to the ancient Inca town of Chinchero at 12,350 feet. Chinchero is a picturesque community that combines both Inca and colonial architecture. It is market day and campesinos of the region still use the weekly market for trading food and other items, using the original method of exchange "trueque". We will observe a demonstration of the traditional weaving process and shop for local handicrafts. We visit the salt mines of Maras and continue with an acclimatization hike down a trail leading to the Urubamba River.

*Overnight: Sonesta Posada del Inca Hotel in Yucay.*

*Today's hike: 2.5 miles.*

#### **Day 4 Monday: River rafting/Ollantaytambo**

We are picked up at the hotel for a 2 hour whitewater adventure on the Urubamba River where everyone shares in the paddling. Trained river guides will give us a safety and familiarization orientation. Instead of the rafting you may choose to take a nature walk. After lunch, we visit the village of Ollanta and Ollantaytambo, the best surviving example of an Inca town. Most of its buildings sit upon Inca walls and the street plan is still the original laid out by its Inca builders. Its stonework, narrow cobbled streets, family courtyards and water system are exactly as built in Inca times. You will be able to appreciate the Inca agricultural terraces that create small tiers of fertile land on very steep slopes. We return to Yucay where we rest and prepare for our Inca Trail adventure.

*Overnight: Sonesta Posada del Inca Hotel in Yucay. Today's hike: Optional distances.*

**Day 5 Tuesday: Huayllabamba** - This morning we drive to the trailhead at km 82 "Piscacucho." where we begin our trek above the Urubamba River. The trail reaches the archaeological site of Llactapata "Town on Hillside" at 8,400 feet.

The trail continues along the Cusichaca River and follows it upstream on a gradual climb leaving behind the Urubamba valley and a magnificent view of snow-capped Mount Veronica (18,865'), the highest peak in the Cordillera Urubamba. We reach the Quechua village of Huayllabamba at 9,650 feet, the last inhabited village on the Inca trail.

Upon arrival in camp we enjoy hot coca tea and get settled for the night.

*Overnight: Camp at Huayllabamba. Today's hike: 6 miles – 4 to 5 hours.*

**Day 6 Wednesday: Pacaymayo** - Entering spectacular Llulluchayoc gorge, the trail becomes steeper. We continue our uphill climb through a thick, mossy forest, before emerging into a large meadow - Llulluchapampa high above the tree line. We continue up the challenging climb to Warmiwañusq'a pass "Pass of the Dead Woman" at 13,779 feet, the highest pass on the Inca Trail. If the weather is clear you will be delighted with the views of the Cusichaca Valley and the Pacaymayo "Sunrise" gorge ahead of us. A short rocky descent into the valley brings us to our camp by the Pacaymayo River at 10,950'.

*Overnight: Camp at Pacaymayo. - Today's hike: 7 miles Or 6.5 hours*

**Day 7 Thursday: Phuyupatamarca** - We begin the climb toward the second pass, on the way we encounter the Runkurakay watchtower ruins at 12,464 feet and pass by a couple of small lakes, before reaching the Runkurakay pass at 13,100 feet.

From here you will have excellent views of the glaciated peaks of the Cordillera Vilcabamba. Most of the climb is behind us; the trail descends rocky slopes and reaches the strategic fortress of Sayacmarca "Dominant Town" at 12,234 feet.

The trail enters dense groves and you will find impressive evidence of Inca road construction, with its six feet wide and carefully constructed stone-paved trails. An amazing engineering accomplishment! We will negotiate a 20 meter Inca tunnel with carved steps and soon the trail becomes a magnificent stone staircase leading to Phuyupatamarca "Town in the Clouds" at 11,674 feet. We summit the third pass and have our first look into the deep gorge of the Urubamba River. Just below, we find our camp in Phuyupatamarca.

*Overnight: Camp at Phuyupatamarca.- Today's hike: 5.5 miles or 5 to 6 hours.*

**Day 8 Friday: Machu Picchu** - The trail follows down a series of hundreds of steps, passing by ceremonial Inca baths where mountain water still flows through carved stone channels. As we descend into the cloud forest, we will be surrounded by an abundance of exotic varieties of plants, orchids and flowers until reaching the ruins of Wiñay Wayna "Forever Young." We hike down a dirt trail about three and a half miles to Intipunku, "Gateway of the Sun" at 8,860 feet. Suddenly, the full grandeur of the world's greatest ruins are revealed, the domed peak of Huayna Picchu and the lost City of the Incas, MACHU PICCHU at 7,900 feet. Our evening includes Aguas Calientes, where we will enjoy the thermal baths.

*Overnight: Machu Picchu Inn Hotel - Today's hike: 6 miles.*

**Day 9 Saturday: Machu Picchu** - We spend the early part of the morning with our expert guide, for a tour of the mysterious city, its magnificent temples, terraced hillsides, archaeological curiosities, irrigation channels, fountains, elaborate stone work and chambers of unknown purpose. As we listen to the theories about the mysteries of Machu Picchu, we wonder how and why this city was built in such a remote place and what its purpose might have been. Fortunately this outstanding citadel was never discovered by the Spaniards and was spared from destruction. After

lunch at the Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge, continue exploring the ruins of Machu Picchu, or relax in Aguas Calientes. You may also choose from several additional (unguided) activities such as a moderate hike to the Inca Bridge; a more strenuous hike to the 9,500 feet summit of Machu Picchu mountain; or a steep climb to the airy summit of Huayna Picchu at 9,000 feet.

*Overnight: Machu Picchu Inn Hotel - Today's hike: Optional distances.*

**Day 10 Sunday: Cusco** - This morning we board the train to Urubamba and continue by bus to visit the Andean village of Pisac. Our guide takes us through the village to visit its colorful market where extensive selections of colorful weavings, ceramics, sweaters and other handicrafts are sold at bargain prices.

The afternoon is free for last-minute shopping and enjoying Cusco. In the evening, we will have our farewell dinner in one of Cusco's finest restaurants. Overnight in Cusco.

*Overnight: Picoaga Hotel in Cusco. - Today's hike: None scheduled.*

**Day 11 Monday: Cusco/Lima** - After an early breakfast, transfer to the Cusco airport for the flight to Lima. We will be met at the airport and transferred to a hotel in the modern district of Miraflores, where a day use room is available. After lunch, we are picked up at the hotel and taken on a sightseeing guided city tour of colonial and modern Lima. Highlights include Lima's Cathedral, government palace in Plaza Mayor, San Francisco monastery, San Isidro, Miraflores and a scenic view of the coastline. Those departing tonight transfer to the airport and depart on homeward-bound flights.

*Overnight: Posada del Inca Miraflores Hotel. - Today's hike: None scheduled.*

**Day 12 Tuesday: Lima/USA** - Those departing today will be transferred to the airport this morning. (Or continue on Extension).

Later, from Laura, a 52 year old who does 3 day back to back marathons, truly a marathoner par extraordinaire, warning that this last tour group might be tough for back of the packers. She'd earlier told me the climb with this group was the worse physical day of her life.

Hey, I will read more in detail when I have time – trying to get ready to head out this morning for Little Rock. The last one of these is the itinerary from andesadventures.com and that is the group I went with. Part of it was me – I felt very inferior to the folks on our trip – true hard core runners – many trail runners from Colorado. I did not train well for the event – and felt out of my league. The leader was nice enough – although I had some issues with him from a “back of the packer” perspective. But all the lodging was good, our guides were good, etc. I have heard Active South America is great and one other. I have to look it up before I leave as my family is going to look at each trip while I am gone and try to figure out which one they want to go on.

info@amazingperu.com

Luxury Peru Tour 5

Our shortest Luxury tour offers a Luxury trip to Peru sampling the very highlights in all inclusive luxury. With the finest hotels such as Monasterio Hotel and Sanctuary Lodge, private guides and fine meals, this is the ideal luxury Peru getaway to the wonderful Inca capital.

Lima - Cuzco - Machu Picchu - 7 days/ 6 nights

ITINERARY

Day 1: Lima



Arrival in Lima, reception and transfer by executive car to the deluxe five star Miraflores Park Plaza. Opportunity for a massage before dinner.

#### Day 2: Lima

After breakfast, a city tour of Lima including a guided visit to the cathedral, the main square and the San Francisco Catacombs. Lunch at the International Rosa Nautica. Visit to a museum of your choice.

Return to the hotel. Dinner at Astrid and Gaston.

Sacsayhuaman Cusco

Koricancha Inca Sun Temple in Cusco

#### Day 3: Lima-Cuzco

Transfer to the airport for the flight to Cuzco, the ancient Inca capital. After the one hour flight, reception and transfer to the wonderful five star Monasterio hotel; ancient residence of the viceroy of Spain. After lunch, a guided tour of Cuzco including the cathedral, Qoricancha temple, the Inca fortress of Sacsayhuaman overlooking Cuzco, Qenko and Puka Pukara. Return to the hotel. Dinner in the evening followed by a folkloric show.

#### Day 4: Sacred Valley – Pisac- Ollantaytambo-Chincho

Full-day excursion to Urubamba, the sacred valley of the Incas and to the ancient Inca market town of Pisac. Lunch in Urubamba. A visit will be made to Ollantaytambo, the only Inca town that was not defeated by the Spanish. A chance to explore the ruins before returning to Cuzco and the traditional market town of Chincho. Return to your hotel. Dinner.

Sacred Valley Urubamba Cusco

Sacred Valley - Ollantaytanbo Cusco

#### Day 5: Machu Picchu

Transfer to Poroy, a short distance from Cuzco for the luxurious Hiram Bingham train to Aguas Calientes. Full day's guided tour of Machu Picchu, the most spectacular ancient city in the world. Lunch, dinner and accommodation at Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge.

#### Day 6: Machu Picchu

Opportunity to enjoy a wonderful sunrise over Machu Picchu and some personal time for private reflection. Lunch at the Sanctuary lodge. Return to Cuzco in the evening aboard the luxury Hiram Bingham train. Cocktails followed by dinner aboard the train. Reception and transfer to Monasterio hotel.

Machupicchu Cusco

Machupicchu Cusco

#### Day 7: Cuzco-Lima

Transfer to the airport for the return flight back to Lima and connection with your international flight back home.

Prices start from US\$ 4000 per person in standard rooms & US\$4600 per person in suites. 5\*hotels. Domestic air.

***Reading List:***

The Inca Trail, Cuzco & Machu Picchu by Alexander Stewart

The Incas by Carmen Bernard and Paul Bahn

Lost City of the Incas by Hiram Bingham

Stone Offerings by Mike Torrey

Inca Trail: Machu Picchu, Sacred Valley, Cusco Map

The Machu Picchu Guidebook by Ruth M. Wright and Alfredo Valencia Zegarra

DK Eyewitness Travel: Peru

National Geographic April 2011

Turn Right at Machu Picchu: Rediscovering the Lost City One Step at a Time by Mark Adams

Machu Picchu: The Lost Paradise of the Incas by Jose Miguel Helfer Arguedas