

PERU TRIP  
9/07/2010-9/28-2010

The trip was fabulous! We used Condor Travel in Peru via the internet. They were very helpful making any changes and adjustments that we wanted. They provided both a driver and an English-speaking guide. The guides were only allowed to work in the "Department" or state where they lived; therefore, we had guides for the following departments: Lima, Arequipa (Andrea), Cusco (Celena), Amazonas (Yorada aka Dora the Explorer), Puno, Lambayeque, Ica (Ronny) and a private guide at Machu Picchu.

The guides and drivers were wonderful! They helped with our Spanish, and they were very pleased we knew poquito Spanish. Unfortunately, we had only been able to take one semester of Spanish with a little help from Rosetta Stone.

The guides were required to study for 5 years through the university or 3 years through a "technical" school. They provided a wealth of knowledge regarding their particular regions.

Our flight from Denver to Lima required a transfer in Miami, FL. We thought we would exchange money at the Miami airport so we would have local money when we arrived. We had to pay a fee for the exchange, but they assured us they were giving the best possible exchange rate. Well that was not correct. The exchange rate was higher than what we could find any place in Peru.

However, we did run into a bit of a problem while using American money. If the money had any torn or dirty areas, it was not accepted. Counterfeit money is very prevalent in Peru so any hint of being dirty or torn to cover the counterfeit money is a concern for the Peruvians. Even at a Peruvian bank, they would not accept a bill with a slight nick at the folding crease.

Other than the money issues, things went smooth. We had 7 intra-country flights, 3 train trips, a boat trip on the highest fresh water lake in the world, boats trips on the the Amazon and 2 bus trips. Needless to say, we were exhausted.

We arrived in Lima, Peru on 9/7 at 21:55. We stayed at the JW Marriott across from the beach. A 3-story mall was built in the cliff. From our windows only the top floor of the mall could be seen along with the ocean. This was a wonderful open air mall.

The next day we had a full day of sight seeing. Our first stop was the Plaza Mayor including the Government Palace, the Cathedral, the Archbishop's Palace and the City Hall. All of the important buildings were Spanish colonial. Peru received its independence from Spain in 1824.

In Lima, we also visited the Larco Herrera Museum that houses the largest private collection of Peruvian pre-Columbian art. Viewing all of the artifacts took several

hours. We ate at the Café del Museo Restaurant prior to completing the viewing of the famed pottery exhibit.

We continued the tour with a visit to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology located in Pueblo Libre. The Raymondi Stela from the Chavin culture is housed in this museum. The Chavin culture emerged approximately 1200 B.C. Chavin de Huantas is the largest Chavin site and was designated a World Heritage site in 1985.

We also went to Huaca Pucilana in Miraflores. The Huaca is a huge adobe pyramid built around A.D. 200-700 (Lima Culture). There is a small museum displaying a mummy (1200 years old) with hair extensions. We were allowed to walk up to the top of the Huaca providing beautiful views of the city. The Lima Culture depended on the ocean.

On 9/9 we took our first intracountry flight to Arequipa. This area was a very desirable place to settle because of the climate and soil. The 4<sup>th</sup> Inca ruler and his people travelled here, naming the city Ari,quipy which means Yes, stay. The city is at the foot of the Misti volcano, now extinct.

In 1600, a massive earthquake destroyed most of the city. The rebuilding resulted in designing buildings to withstand another earthquake.

The main square called Plaza de Armas is considered one of the most elegant. It is built with Chachani white volcanic rock. The Cathedral with a 1870 Belgian organ and Carrara marble altar is one of 70 basilicas to fly the white and yellow Vatican flag. The pulpit in the Cathedral was carved in Lille, France.

Our next stop was the Iglesia de la Compania cathedral built in the Peruvian baroque style known as Churrigueresque. The main chapel is covered in gold leaf next to the carved volcanic stone arcades.

The Monasterio de Santa Catalina convent visit was very special. Built in 1580 by the Dominican order, it is still home to a few nuns. Originally, the oldest daughter of a wealthy family was required to enter the convent. The family was required to build a living unit. These living units are all different sizes with appointments based upon the family's wealth. The convent is so large that it is considered a small city within a city.

The next day, 9/10, we headed for Colca Canyon still in the Department of Arequipa. This van trip through The Aquada Blanca National Reserve was a beautiful drive with llamas, alpacas and vicunas freely grazing. Vicuna wool is the best wool. The llamas have a regal air—tails and heads held high.

This reserve is also known for its volcanoes including Misti. Mismu Volcano (4910m) is the beginning of the Amazon River along with the "Continental Divide" for the Atlantic and Pacific. There are 780 cinder cones in the Valley of Volcanoes.

Colca Canyon was home to the Collagua and Cabana peoples thousands of years ago. Their descendants speak Aymara and continue the agrarian life-style. Collagua women wear straw boaters with ribbons while the Cabana women wear brightly sequined felt hats.

Though the women's attire is still very traditional, the men no longer wear the traditional dress except during the donza de amor (love dance). During the donza de amor, the men dress like women with hopes of kidnapping a woman. This festival is called Fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepcion and originally was held on December 8th. Now they perform this dance for tourists.

After 4 hours in the van, we descended into Colca Canyon. We stopped at a restaurant for lunch where we had our first tastes of guinea pig and alpaca. Guinea pig has been a staple protein for hundreds of years. We noticed in Lima and in small villages women with bundles of alfalfa tied to their backs. They were taking food home for the guinea pigs that live in a nook in the kitchen. These nooks were also seen in the convent.

We finally arrived at a small resort, Colca Lodge, in the middle of Colca Canyon where we spent the night. We arrived in the middle of the afternoon leaving us time to explore the area. The resort was built close to natural hot springs. The different tubs had different temperatures along with a small hiking trail.

The hiking trail ended with a swinging bridge across the Rio Colca. As we neared the entrance to the swinging bridge, the guard came out of her house for payment. The entrance fee was minimal. The swinging bridge was safe, but we definitely watched where we stepped as the strong wind blew the bridge from side to side.

That evening we ate with our guide at the resort's restaurant—we had no other option. We ended the evening hoping we would see condors the next day at the Condor Cross or La Cruz del Condor.

Early in the morning on 9/11, we departed the resort in the van heading for the Condor Cross. Along the road, we passed the Hanging Tombs at Chopquetico. The feat of building these tombs on the side of the cliff is still a mystery. The tombs were discovered after an earthquake revealed mummies.

We also passed through the town of Yanque noted for its white volcanic stone church. Also in Yanque, tourists had an opportunity to be a perch for the black chested buzzard eagle.

Our guide kept telling us not to be too disheartened if we didn't see any condors — sometimes they just weren't there. But we were fortunate! Before we had even arrived at a parking spot, we saw the condors in flight. What magnificent birds! We enjoyed watching their graceful flights for hours. Depending on the age of the

condor, the wing, tail, and head feathers are different colors. The mature condors have the silver collar and wingspan of 11 feet.

After enjoying the magnificent vultures, we headed back to Arequipa for the evening. We stopped in Chivay for lunch. Chivay has the oldest church in the region. An interesting food at this stop was the dried potatoes. Potatoes are an important staple with thousands of varieties. These potatoes are dried in the field, and they have been processed this way for hundreds of years. The International Potota Center is located in Lima.

The next day, 9/12, started early with a flight to Cusco for a full day of sightseeing. Our guide in the Department of Cusco was Quechua Indian. She moved to Cusco from the Highlands when she was young. She learned to speak Spanish and then English.

We first visited the city of Chinchero built on an ancient Inca site circa late 1400's. The city is along the shortest route from Cusco to the Sacred Valley (Urubamba valley = El valle Segrado). We visited the plaza where goods and foodstuffs are still bartered. Again, the women wore bright clothing and hats.

We also visited a school of fabulous weaving and yarn dyeing. The dyes are all natural. Some of the wonderful purple corn we had for dessert was used to dye the yarn a beautiful purple. Another natural dye is the cochineal insect living on certain cacti. The soap used in the dyeing process is Chacta root. The looms were very simple, but the designs woven were very intricate.

The archaeological site of Moray was fabulous with the flying steps and terraces built around the natural sinkholes. Recent investigations by Ken and Ruth Wright dispute the belief this area was an agricultural research center. Their investigations lead them to believe this was a religious/ceremonial area based on the ridge and building foundations. We highly recommend their books on Moray, Tipon, and Machu Picchu.

The "flying steps" are an architectural marvel built by the Incas. The steps are not close together! The "flying steps" can also be seen in the photo of the drawbridge at Machu Picchu built along the side of a cliff and even high atop the drop off ledges of Huayna Picchu.

Our lunch this day was at Sonesta Posada in Yucay. A hacienda converted to a wonderful outdoor buffet. The hacienda gardens along with live music by the pan flute player made the lunch a very relaxing and enjoyable meal. We hope you enjoy much of his music on the video.

Salineras de Maras (or just Maras) was our next stop. The salt mines are still manually worked. The people who work the mines receive a portion of the salt. It is a very tedious and time intensive job, but the salt is well worth the effort.

As we arrived at the hotel for the evening, “Pablo”, a watercolor artist, approached us selling his wares. He was very persistent. We told him we would look at his paintings tomorrow. He didn’t fail to be waiting for us the next day. We did find a nice watercolor of a Cusco scene.

We were scheduled for ½ day tour on 9/13; however, our guide suggested Tipon for the rest of the day. Though we had planned to visit the site after attending Ken and Ruth Wright’s lecture on their investigation of it, it had somehow gotten left off our list. She spoke with our tour company who approved the addition.

We were not disappointed in this addition to our plans. Tipon was an impressive Inca site with rock terraces and fountains. The spring was above the site. The fountains began as a single flow with division doubling the flow at every level. The water flow also separated at the different terraces running around the entire site. It was an amazing site!

The other half of the day was in Cusco where we toured Koricancha (Qorikancha) aka the Temple of the Sun. The monastery built on top of the temple obscures most of the previous site. We also walked along Avenue Loretta, the longest Inca wall. The masonry work of the Inca was a major feat—a knife could not be slipped between two boulders. The exhibits at this site also showed some of the “connections” for the walls and fountain grooves.

Overlooking the city, we toured the Inca fortress Sachsahuaman, Tambomachay aka the “Baths of the Inca”, Puka Pukara, and Kenko with the underground cave and temple.

That night we ventured out on our own to the Center for Traditional Textiles, located close to our hotel. It had a wonderful exhibit of the traditional weaving techniques. The Center was started to promote the continuation of the traditional crafts in Peru. Now it has become very successful, and the Center sells the crafts on their website.

Our day began early again on Tuesday, 9/14. We wanted to visit Pisac known for its famous Indian Market along with more Inca sites. We first visited the sites above the current town. Next we visited the market where fresh meat, fruits, vegetables along with traditional crafts are sold.

We continued to the town of Ollantaytambo with its grand fortress. The fortress was immense with a very steep climb to view the carved stone on top.

Wednesday, 9/15, was our first train and bus trip. The floods in February 2010 washed out some of the train tracks, so we first boarded buses at the train station. After a hour long bus ride, we boarded the Machu Picchu train for the lengthy trip. We chose the medium priced ticket for the trip to Machu Picchu giving us a little

more room plus a little less of a security issue. There are many switchbacks up to Machu Picchu so the last stretch of the trip was by bus.

Our guide was waiting for us when we arrived. He gave a wonderful tour of the most important sites at Machu Picchu. Later we would be able to go back to view the site in a more leisurely fashion.

The thatched roofs with the roof pegs were very impressive for the time period along with all of the architecture. All of the terraces were very steep. The ability to build a drawbridge with the flying steps on the side of the mountain is amazing.

Machu Picchu was built between two faults. The foundation was “brought in” to stabilize the area. The use of rocks in situ in the design of the sites is very impressive. The “Condor Temple” uses huge boulders in situ for the wings. No photograph does this area justice.

The Sanctuary Lodge was our abode this night. It is the only hotel/lodge at Machu Picchu. It is conveniently located just outside of the gates.

Steve decided to hike Huayna Picchu the next morning, 9/16. A group of 200 are allowed to start the hike at 7am with another group of 200 allowed at 10am. He had met people who had started lining up in Aguas Calientes at 3:30 am for the bus ride and had not made the cut! Thus, he awoke at 4:30 am to get in the already formed line for the permission stamps to be given at 5am. Surprisingly, many had already hiked up from Aguas Calientes to beat the busloads. At 6am he entered Machu Picchu and got some additional photos before making his way to the line at the entrance gate for the hike. This gate opened at 7 am. Steve enjoyed the hike, though found it disconcerting to learn before starting that search and rescue was looking for a hiker that had not returned the previous day. He had a bird’s eye view of Machu Picchu and the surrounding landscapes.

With the steep terrain and nine days of touring, I elected to relax on the patio of the Sanctuary Lodge. The gardens were beautiful with an abundance of foliage and a waterfall.

That afternoon we returned to Cusco via the Hiram Bingham train. This was the only train with dinner service. It was a long trip back, but very enjoyable and relaxing.

We got up early on Friday, 9/17, to board the 3<sup>rd</sup> train. This train trip would be an all day adventure. We were on the Andean Explorer leaving Cusco and heading for Puno. It was a very pleasant trip seeing lots of country. There were llamas and alpacas freely grazing on the highland pampas.

About half way to our destination, we stopped at La Raya. This was a very tiny village. We departed the train for a short amount of time to look at their wares.

This is a very poor country, and the people always appreciate any sale.

The rails would pass through the town of Juliaca. This was a very interesting stretch of the train ride. Anything you wanted could be purchased along or on the train tracks. As the train approached the “sales” area, the people would cover their goods with newspaper and allow the train to pass over their items for sale. The counterfeit market is huge in this area.

As we arrived in Puno, the evening happened to be a holiday. All of the alumni from the different high schools wore their school costumes and marched with live music. The costumes were beautiful with sequins, feathers, and bright colors. The costumes are passed down from generation to generation.

Bright and early on Saturday, 9/18, we boarded our boat for a 3 hour trip on Lake Titicaca. This is the highest navigable lake in the world with an elevation of 12,500 feet.

Our first stop was at Uros Islands (floating islands). These islands are made of reeds. The construction of one island takes 6 months. These islands last for 25 years adding totora reeds to “freshen” the ground whenever needed. The totora reeds are not only used to build their islands, boats, and huts, but they are also used for food.

Next we visited Taquile Island. After climbing the 600 stone steps, we had a panoramic view of the lake and mountains. UNESCO has honored the textile art of Taquile Island.

Sunday, 9/19, was a very early departure at 4:30 am for our flight to Puerto Maldonado via Cusco. The Amazon was not on our “must do” list, but a friend convinced us we should not miss the opportunity. We would be staying on the Amazon at Inkaterra Lodge for 3 nights. After arriving and melting in the heat and humidity, we were ready to leave but the satellite phone was not working. So we persevered and stayed until Wednesday.

It was an interesting trip. As we loaded onto the boats to go to the lodge, we noticed an unfinished bridge. This bridge is connecting Brazil to the Pacific Ocean via Peru. We also saw the dredge boat operations along the Amazon shores. These dredges are mining for gold.

We saw many interesting animals and colorful birds, but the most interesting was the anteater. After one of the canopy walks, someone mentioned the anteater in the tree. We stood with 6-10 other people watching the anteater enjoying his meal. The anteater had found a large termite nest that he went after with zest.

We also went on nature walks and “putt-putt” boat trips. The trees are immense! There is even one species of tree that “walks”.

We are glad we stayed to enjoy the fauna and flora of jungle, but have no plans to return.

Wednesday, 9/22, was a travel day. We left the Amazon for our next destination of Trujillo. We had a short landing in Cusco where there were riots around the airport. We were so glad we were continuing on the same flight because bus and taxi service were basically non-existent and tour groups were hiring police escorts. Evidently close to an election, the people let their voices be heard.

We arrived in Trujillo around 4:30 pm. We were picked up at the airport and delivered to our hotel. Upon our arrival, we were given a map with the safe places circled.

Our first day, Thursday, 9/23, was filled with museums along with the largest mud brick city in the world---Chan Chan. Chan Chan was the site I wanted to see, but I enjoyed the Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, Dragon ceremonial Temple aka Rainbow Temple, and lunch at the seaside town of Huanchaco. Fishermen were working on their boats, caballitos de Totorá, and nets on the beach as we ate lunch.

Chan Chan was the capital of the Chimu Kingdom. The mud bricks were interesting. The individual workers would mark the bricks so the “management” could count the number of bricks made by an individual.

Friday, 9/24, included another day of visiting magnificent ruins—Huacas del Sol and de la Luna. These set across from one another. The Huaca del Sol has not been excavated. The Huaca de la Luna includes five levels made from mud bricks. The paint has surprisingly remained on many of the walls.

After lunch of a rice and seafood dish including octopus, we visited El Brujo Complex in Chiclayo. This complex is 330 X 330 feet and rises 98 feet from the desert. The walls in this complex are covered with polychrome reliefs including motifs of war, goods, animals, plants and nets for fishing. Senora de Cao, a tattooed mummy, was discovered in this pyramid. We spent that night in Chiclayo. Since everything was bolted to the furniture in our room and a “green zone” had not been mentioned, we didn’t venture far.

Saturday, 9/25, was a very long day and short night.

In the morning we visited the site where the Lord of Sipan was discovered at Huaca Rajada. The gold artifacts are amazing. Obviously, he was an important member of the Moche society since the gold artifacts were found in his tomb.

We continued on to Tucume. This site consisted of 26 pyramids of the Lambayeque culture. The museum at Tucume would not allow photographs. Then we were taken to the airport for a late flight to Lima.



At 4 am Sunday ,9/26, after only 2 hours of sleep, we were picked up at the hotel in Lima for a bus trip to the southern coast of Peru. Our guide had an easy few hours as we slept in the bus along the Pan American Highway.

Our first stop that morning was the Ballestas Islands and Paracas National Reserve. The Reserve begins in the Pisco area where there was a major earthquake in 2007. Pisco is Quechua for bird. The name is very appropriate for the migratory birds that reside in the sanctuary. This was a boat trip to visit Peru's largest coastal wildlife sanctuary. The sanctuary includes 2 islands where pelicans, boobies, cormorants, gulls and many others birds share their habitats with sea lions and pelicans.

After the boat trip and lunch, we continued on our way to Nazca. On our way we stopped by a home turned into a museum of the famed Maria Reiche. This became a National Heritage Site in 1994. She moved to Peru from Germany and became fascinated with all of the geoglyphs in the desert. She walked and measured the lines and discovered the Nasca lines. After recreating the measurements/lines on paper, the figures and geometric lines were discovered. She discovered 30 figures and 10,000 lines.

We spent the night at an old hacienda with beautiful gardens and friendly animals.

The next morning, 9/27, we boarded a small plane to look at the figures/lines from the air. This is the only way to really see them. The geoglyphs were made in the desert 1500 years ago by the Nasca people.

We also viewed the aqueducts of Cantalloc. There are more than 30 still in use today. They were built with a spiral walkway so people could easily clean them.

In the afternoon, we headed back to Lima along the Pan American Highway. There was a dust storm tailing us. It was very thick! We made it back to Lima without any incident with a surprise at the hotel. The JW Marriott had upgraded our room to the presidential suite that has been used by the Pope and President Bush. We treated ourselves to room service that evening.

Exhausted we headed back to the States on Tuesday, 9/28, after a fabulous trip!