

## Our Peruvian Adventure

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Going to Lima, Cusco, and Machu Picchu were worth the trip. The 7,900-foot elevation at Cusco was easier to handle, but we just took our time and enjoyed slow sight-seeing, which we could do on our private tour. If we were to recommend a trip to Peru, we would leave out the south with its high altitude land and floating cities. Our trip was 11 sightseeing days, but you could do the Lima, Cusco, and Machu Picchu area nicely in 7 days.



*Miraflores, a modern district overlooking the Pacific, Lima*



*Cathedral of San Francisco in Lima*

Lima is a mostly modern and beautiful city. Of course, there are areas, like anywhere, where we would not want to go. The city is built around many pre-Inca architectural ruins that are constantly being restored, excavated, and protected. In Lima, we also visited the Cathedral and Monastery of San Francisco and Larco Museum, which opened our eyes to how long civilization has been in the area.

We flew from Lima to Cusco in central Peru for 6 days in that area. This was one of the regions where pre-Inca and Inca history developed. Tourism is a major industry, but nicely done, super clean, seemed to be very safe, people wonderful and welcoming, not being pushy, always wanting to help if they sensed help was needed.



*Cathedral Plaza, Cusco*



*Homes and snow-covered mountains frame a typical stone brick street in Cusco*

We toured the Plaza de Armas and Cathedral of Cusco and the countryside around Tipon, Andahuaylillas, and Piquilliacta. The countryside appeared drier as we drove south of Cusco to see ancient waterways and a small Andean town with colonial churches alongside pre-Inca architectural sites. It is springtime in the U.S., fall in Peru. The highlights were the so-called Sistine Chapel of the Americas, because of the wall and ceiling painting that rivaled the Vatican, and the killing and roasting of guinea pigs at a road-side eatery with take-out, 30 on a slow day and 100+ on a weekend! Actually, many families have guinea pigs running around the kitchen, then they

catch, kill, cook, and eat them at birthdays, holidays, or special meals. We could not get our minds wrapped around eating guinea pig as they were our pets in grammar school, therefore did not try them. They were offered at nice restaurants and were always the highest-priced item. We were told it tasted like chicken, was bony, and did not have much meat.



*Pre-Inca architectural sites*



*Roasting guinea pigs (cavy)*



*Remnants of temple dedicated to Wiracocha, the great creator god of Inca mythology*

From Cusco, we rode south in a 30-passenger bus to Pino and Lake Titicaca, where we spent 3 nights. Along the way, we stopped at a fascinating pre-Inca site. While again unique and breathtakingly beautiful, we would not recommend that part being worth the expense or altitude stress.



*Boat ride to Lake Titicaca floating villages*

Besides visiting floating villages on Lake Titicaca, we spent a night at a homestay. That was a mistake. It was cold, with no heat and no running water, but an indoor bathroom—just no water unless someone outside would turn on the freezing cold water tap. A table with chairs, but primitive cooking over a propane fire, inside, and the kitchen house was the only warm place in the small compound. At over 12,500 feet, this visit was very difficult. We very much suffered, and tried to be the best guests we could be until the boat came to pick us up after breakfast for our 2-hour

boat trip. Getting back to the “nice” hotel and medical services (if needed) was our only desire.

Besides the cultural sights of Lima and the Inca and pre-Inca civilizations, the most interesting thing was the food. Because Peru is a Spanish-speaking country, we expected to find Mexican-type food with lots of hot spices. Other than their national dish of cavy (guinea pig), all food was wonderful, even the national cocktail—pisco sour—which is like a whisky sour. Bottom line: do not wait to make this trip at ages in the mid-70s!

