

Wednesday, 26 August 2009, 9:55 pm International arrival in Lima, LAN Airlines Flight 2515 - Terrific flight, on-time, excellent audio video options, decent seats for coach, typical airline fare, good wine (think Cathay Pacific, Thai Airways – no contest between American and LAN – definitely take LAN

Arrival in evening, reception and transfer to your hotel. – met by our “transfer guide” Daniel (who would we see more of; definitely believed he was not “managements”); also met the first of our many drivers in Lima – a different driver each day, on some days we had a driver for the day and a different driver for the evening – guess your local operator wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to earn tips.

Overnight in the Orient-Express Miraflores Park Hotel -- Executive Suite Ocean View -- King Bed. Note: Guests request smoking rooms throughout. – Hotel was spectacular, lovely fruit basket and pastries to welcome us, room had a limited ocean view (not that we spent much time staring out the window into the fog) and was quite comfortable; our day room at the Miraflores on the way back was really gorgeous (a corner room so the views would have been marvelous if not for the fog). BTW, all rooms in the Miraflores are non-smoking, but smoking is permitted in their lovely lounge on the first floor.

Thursday, 27 August: Lima. Start at 10 am. Morning walking tour in the colonial quarter, visiting the Plaza de Armas and entering La Casa de Aliaga, La Iglesia y Convento de Santo Domingo, La Catedral and La Iglesia y Convento de San Francisco. Lunch at the Café del Museo (if you wish it -- on your own). Afternoon at the Museo Larco and the Museo Amano. – Met Sheila in the morning (a delightful guide) and enjoyed the sites. The Museo Larco was fascinating . . . and a beautiful setting. We had coffee at the Café, followed by “welcome” Pisco Sours at H.Stern (the jewelry store has branches everywhere in Peru – best selection in Cuzco). The Museo Larco was a bit of overkill unless you’re really interested in textiles (and even then, their “official” guides tend to overdo it); fortunately Sheila whisked us through, offering my bad knee by way of apology.

Dine on Criollo cuisine at Astrid & Gastón, one of the highest notes in the Peruvian culinary scene. – Dinner turned out lovely, but first of our problems arose here. Once again, our transfer guide took over for the evening (with driver No 2 or 3) and informed us we had a “choice of 5 options” for dinner, 3 of which included fish (which Gary doesn’t eat). We complained immediately, and beginning that night had a choice of starter, entrée, and desert. One factor that plagued us the entire trip was each restaurant’s insistence that Gary had 1 coke, I had one water, and we each had one glass of wine (at the Inkaterra, we could each have two glasses of wine). Wine selection at Astrid & Gaston was fine – I drank Gary’s after he had a few sips (a procedure we followed through most of the trip). Food was excellent, though my selection of baby goat (their specialty)

caused a bit of a stir – three times they checked to make sure that was really my order (guess not too many Americans pursue the goat).

Friday, 28 August: Lima - Pisco - Nazca Lines - Lima. Early morning drive south to Pisco. Upon arrival, board a Cessna Grand Caravan for an overflight the Nazca Lines and the recently-identified Palpa Lines. Typical lunch (**included in the excursion**) before the return drive to Lima. Early evening arrival at your hotel.

This excursion was definitely worth the long drive – besides we learned something of Lima and the countryside along the way. Actually driving to Pisco and flying from there was one of the shortest means to get to view the Nazca lines (which you probably know). The restaurant we ate lunch at (the Doubletree) was pleasant, a nice break from cars and planes, but the food was quite unremarkable. Fortunately, I only had an appetizer and Gary a pasta dish. We took leave of Sheila after the excursion, but she assured us she would meet us on our last day and be with us until our departure. (Knowing Lima's proclivity for adding/changing guides and drivers, we tipped her for the two days – just in case we didn't see her again; we were fortunate enough to have her as our guide our last day in Lima). A lovely wine, cheese, and nut snack awaited us at the hotel – quite a surprise

Dinner at the extraordinary Huaca Pucllana restaurant, which reinterprets the Peruvian Criollo tradition.

OK, we see Daniel and (another?) driver. The restaurant, on the site of the pyramid, was spectacular for two reasons – the archeological site and its presentation of suspiro limone (the most unusual and best in country!) Here they actually mix the custard with the meringue and shoot it through a pastry tube, adorning it with a great sauce, and serving it in a chocolate or pastry shell. Limited choice of red wine by the glass; however, their malbec was quite good. The lomo saltado was fairly uninspired, but who cared once the suspiro appeared.

Sacred Valley

Saturday, 29 August : Lima - Cuzco - Sacred Valley (Chincho - Maras - Moray). Transfer to the airport. **Flight to Cuzco. Intra-tour flight Lima - Cuzco, 29 August, 9:20 am - 10:35 am, LanPeru 395, Record locator: 34ZSBV**

Daniel again served as transfer guide and we had yet another driver to the airport. Flight was quite good – especially for an intra-country flight. “Naturally,” LAN served a snack – it was only an hour or so since we had eaten breakfast. (We rather doubted that Daniel was management; he was quite pleased to receive our tip – I can't recall what we gave him – around \$20 or so I think)

Reception and drive to the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Visit to the Chinchero market and church. Private weaving demonstration. Continue to the Moray archaeological site and the ancient salt pans of Maras. Gourmet lunch of fusion cuisine in the patio of El Huacatay (**included**).

Once in Cuzco, we were met by yet another transfer guide (Maria – who my husband would later dub “Maria the Clueless”). Also, present were our guide, Doris, and our driver, Jose Carlos. We had our first taste of cocoa tea and then set forth. The weaving demonstration included some corn tortillas and was enjoyable; I purchased a couple pillow covers (to be delivered to our hotel in Cuzco, and yes, they were awaiting us there). Then we explored the Chinchero Church – Gary had picked up a stomach bug in Lima and I began to be afflicted by a tingling headache. Doris later told us we were “out cold” on the way to Moray and Maras, but we were alert during her very lucid explanations of the sites . . . and I was beginning to enjoy the fresh air. Our 4 pm “lunch” at El Huacatay was really fantastic – a great carrot and ginger soup and the best baby alpaca. Gary loved their lamb chops. I think everybody passed on desert – too much food.

Arrival at your hotel. *Dinner and overnight in the Urubamba Villas -- Private Villa - King Bed.*

The Villas were a truly pleasant surprise. As we bumped along the dirt road toward our lodgings, we were actually a bit concerned, but when the gate opened and we saw that beautiful oasis . . . wow! Gary and I had a three bedroom house with a lovely front patio and rear terrace for breakfast. I never even made it to the second floor, but Gary explored and thought it was a perfect place for a family vacation. Bonus for us: we could smoke both inside and outside! The real gem of the Villas, though, was our housekeeper, Berta (Bertha?), who not only cleaned up, delivered our wake-up calls, and keep the fireplace aglow, but turned out great meals. The first night, though, having just finished lunch, I groaned at the very thought of dinner. We told her just to save the wine for the next night and after devouring her quinoa soup, just pushed the food around the plates (we did her cooking justice the next day). It really did get cold at night, but between the fireplace, the space heaters in the bedroom and bath, and the hot water bottles tucked into our beds, we were warm and toasty. Actually, I think we were asleep by 9 pm that first night – the altitude was taking its toll.

Sunday, 30 August: Sacred Valley (Pisac - Ollantaytambo). Hike in the Pisac ruins. Afterward, a short visit to the Pisac market. A lunch of nouvelle Andean cuisine at 3 Keros (**if you wish it -- on your own**). Tour of the Ollantaytambo ruins. Return to your hotel.

Felt much better today. We reversed the itinerary, started at Ollantaytambo, then caught the end of the procession in Pisac, visited the ruins, and cruised around the market while Doris and Jose caught lunch. Doris excelled today . . . as she

would the rest of the journey (I think we were both too asleep yesterday to fully appreciate her skills) . . . filling us in on Incan lore and legend, and adapting our touring for my walking ability. Jose provided me with a walking stick and followed us with “portable chairs.” We loved our “free time” at the market – picked up a lapis and silver medallion which I thought I would see everywhere (but actually saw nowhere else on the entire trip). Gary got a new pipe fashioned to include a shell by the bowl – for all of \$6 (later, he was sorry he didn’t buy a few more). When we returned to our Villas, we met another two couples who were likewise exclaiming how much better they felt the 2nd day in the Sacred Valley (We would see them again in Machu Picchu and Cuzco.)

Dinner and overnight in the Urubamba Villas -- Private Villa -- King Bed.

Wonderful evening—we actually got to enjoy a few glasses of wine Berta’s cooking.

Machu Picchu

Monday, 31 August: Sacred Valley - Orient-Express Vistadome - Machu Picchu. Transfer to the train station to meet your guide. Vistadome to Machu Picchu. Transfer to the ruins. Day entrance. *Dinner and overnight in the Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel -- De Luxe Junior Suite -- King Bed.*

Interesting train ride, with Doris pointing out spots along the trip. First impression of Machu Picchu: awesome; photos do not do it justice. Sun Temple was amazing. We toured the upper town today, but I couldn’t make it to the top of the observatory. Japanese tourists chasing llamas provided great entertainment. No rain – another day of good weather.

Inkaterra – a fabulous hotel. Doris wanted to make sure that our room did not require me to climb any more steps, so they upgraded us! Our suite included an indoor shower, an outdoor shower, a private plunge pool, and a daybed on the patio. What luxury! We learned how to get the fireplace going (not something we Floridians know much about) and were impressed by everything about the hotel – the facilities, the service, the food. The room included a complimentary mini-bar and complimentary Pisco brandy (I don’t think they needed to worry that the guests would abuse the privilege.) The restaurant only served one red wine by the glass – fortunately, for me, it was an excellent Peruvian merlot. If there was a regret we had, it was that we didn’t have another day in the area just to enjoy some of the hotel’s facilities and excursions (we did the orchid tour our last day here and loved it). We really should have stayed here one day more and cut a day from Cuzco. A caution for all travelers to the area (even those staying at the Sanctuary): if you’re sensitive to insects, wear 99% DEET all the time (even when sleeping). The mosquitos feasted on my elbows and fingers. Our “friend” from the Villas (who stayed at Sanctuary) sported ankles swollen to twice their size by bug bites.

Tuesday, 1 September: Machu Picchu. Early morning transfer to the ruins for sunrise over Machu Picchu. Day entrance. Private guided tour in the morning. Buffet luncheon in the hotel (**if you wish it -- on your own**). Afternoon exploration with your guide or own your own. Twilight walk upon return to your hotel. *Dinner and overnight in the Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel -- De Luxe Junior Suite -- King Bed.*

We skipped the sunrise and the twilight walk, but toured the lower town today, including the Temple of the Condor. More Inca lore and legend – spent some time just enjoying the magic of Machu Picchu. As anticipated, we passed on lunch on both days – breakfast and dinner were plenty. The bus ride from Agua Caliente to the ruins really should not be missed – what an adventure!

Cuzco

Wednesday, 2 September September: Machu Picchu - Orient-Express Vistadome - Cuzco. Morning bird and orchid walks at the hotel. Lunch in the Café Inkaterra (**included**). Transfer to the train station. **Awesome Day! Hated to leave.**

Vistadome to the Poroy Station, on the outskirts of Cuzco. Reception and transfer to your hotel. **Dinner not included.** *Overnight in the Orient-Express Hotel Monasterio -- De Luxe Room -- King Bed -- WITH OXYGEN.*

Good decision to skip dinner – we could barely stagger to our room (trouble breathing and sleeping in Cuzco). Maria (transfer guide) and Jose met our train and transferred us to the Monasterio. It was here that Maria earned her “Clueless” moniker as she insisted on pounding on the door of the Hotel’s Chapel, rather than entering through the main lobby (even though Jose tried to explain where the lobby was – I think). Although the hotel is lovely and beautifully situated, I think the Monasterio was the least favorite of my hotels. The rooms were smaller than most and had no lounge chair (just two hard-backed chairs near a desk and small table). Like our other hotels (aside from the Villas), smoking was not permitted in the rooms – nor **anywhere** inside (and it was freezing once the sun set). Our fruit bowl was not refreshed once in the four nights at the hotel, and prices for a mere cup of coffee transcended Starbuck’s.

Thursday, 3 September: Cuzco (A Walk in the Colonial Quarter). Start at 10 am. Morning walking tour in the colonial quarter. Inca monuments include Qorikancha (Temple of the Sun), the fine Inca walls of Inti Q’ijillo, Ajlla Wasi (House of the Virgins of the Sun), the Stone of Twelve Angles and Huacaypata (Leisure Square), now dominated by the Spanish colonial Cathedral. **We also visited the Cathedral and the surrounding two churches, but never made it to the Church of San Blas , the artisans quarter, the Museo Inka, La Compañía de Jesus or the Iglesia y Convento de la Merced.** The convent is famous for its jeweled monstrance, encrusted with diamonds and precious stones, including

rubies, topazes and emeralds. Carlos Chaquiras shop was a complete disappointment – it's really a small jewelry shop with a very limited selection. The best sculptures were really at the shop directly across street of the Monasterio (work displayed in the hotel), and had we been more alert, we would have purchased a piece there. As it was, we visited some shops near Leisure Square and were soon parted with our shopping money. Only after, did we really see museum-quality sculptures – too late. Still, we are pleased with the Tumi and condor sculptures we bought. Even the so-called “fixed price” stores in Cuzco entertain bargaining – especially if you buy more than one piece and/or pay in cash. In the evening, Doris met us for a tour of the Museo de Arte Precolombino. Afterward, a dinner of nouvelle Andean cuisine in the museum's courtyard. The MAP restaurant was one of my favorites in Cuzco – very nouvelle Andean cuisine – an inspired chef! We were back to the 1 glass of wine per person thing, so I just drank Gary's.

Friday, 4 September: Cuzco (The Collasuyu Road). We strolled around a bit on our own in the morning and then began at 2 (our choice) with an excursion beyond the ancient fortress that guarded the Valley of Cuzco. Coming back from the colonial village of Andahuaylillas on the Collasuyu Road, follow the route of early travelers from the southern quarter of the empire. Pass through the ancient gate of Rumicolca, gaze at the pre-Inca ruins of Pikillaqta, taste the traditional bread of Oropesa (did not visit the royal garden of Típon) This evening, dinner at chef Gastón Acurio's Chicha (**included**).

In retrospect, we could have done without this day's excursion—it was even higher than Cuzco. Probably, it would have been better to see what we missed the first day in Cuzco – or to have stayed another day at the Inkaterre near Machu Picchu. We were tired when we got back and were looking forward to Chicha. Maria (transfer guide) showed up to take us to the restaurant and was hailing a taxi in the middle of the rain so we could get there (only time it rained was that evening). Restaurant was a long two flight of stairs up . . . featured excellent service. We got the impression it was definitely the new “in place” in Cuzco; unfortunately, it was, in our opinion, **over-rated**. Maria showed up to take us back to our hotel, this time hailing a taxi that was burning gas and oil so badly that Gary had to open the window despite the rain.

Saturday, 5 September: Cuzco (Nearby Inca Monuments). Morning free to stroll in Cuzco. Lunch (if you wish it -- on your own) of Italian-Peruvian cuisine at Incanto. Afternoon excursion to the nearby Inca monuments of Saqsaywaman, the Temple of the Moon, Puka Pukara and Tambomachay. Dinner of at the Restaurante Illariy (**included**).

This morning, we got lucky. Originally, we were sad to learn that all of Cuzco's processions were on Sunday mornings (when we were leaving), but Doris told us of a procession being sponsored by the travel and tour companies, so we got to enjoy a lovely parade at Leisure Square.

Again, we left at 2pm (our choice) to visit the Cuzco fruit and bread market (my request), the “Labyrinth,” the Christ the Redeemer Statue (of Cuzco), and Saqsaywaman – the latter best photographed from a distance. Doris and Jose were terrific about stopping for photos, taking photos, etc the entire trip.

We had a very tasty dinner at the Monasterio; however, the Illariy was closed for renovations, so we really ate in the same room where breakfast is served (El Tupay?). The Monasterio’s regular dining room, though, is not quite like the Inkaterra’s and what works for breakfast, doesn’t do justice to dinner. As you will read below, we also ran into a slight problem with dinner at the Miraflores our last night. I guess I really would recommend not using hotel restaurants except where necessary (the Villas and at Machu Pichhu).

Lima

Intra-tour flight Cuzco - Lima, 6 September, 9:20 am - 10:40 am, LanPeru 115, Record locator: 34ZSBV –

Flight went fine – Maria and Jose got us to the airport and connections were fine; Sheila met our flight in Lima – another driver in Lima (plus a different one to take us to our international flight)

Sunday, 6 September: Cuzco - Lima. Transfer to the airport. **Flight to Lima.** Arrival, reception and transfer to your hotel. Morning drive to Pachacamac, the most renowned pre-Inca and Inca pilgrimage site of the coast. Upon returning to Lima, lunch (**if you wish it -- on your own**) at T'anta, directed by chef Gaston Acurio. Afterward, continue to Barranco for visits to one of the country's finest crafts shops, the Museo de Arte Colonial Pedro de Osma, La Puente de los Suspiros and La Iglesia de La Ermita. Arrival at your hotel, dinner in its Poissonnerie.

Loved our visit to Pachacamac. We sort of did a driving tour of Barancas, stopping to visit the Bridge of Sighs – took a short break – went shopping (decided we were really tired of shopping) – took another break and went to dinner – at the top of the hotel. Poissonnerie is closed on Sundays. We ended up at a barbecue buffet. The food and service were excellent and we had a great view of a fireworks show from the 11th floor. Frankly, it’s not what I would have selected for dinner my last night in Peru; Gary felt our stomachs might have thanked us for the barbecue (we really made good use of our Lomotil on this trip). Sheila did a super job of getting us through airport formalities .

International departure from Lima, 7 September, 12:20 am, LAN Airlines Flight 2514, Record locator: 4CHAW7

Monday, 7 September: Lima - Home. Morning transfer to the airport. Relax in the **VIP Club** while awaiting departure of your flight home. **Really nice touch !**