

Peru Travel Journal – Volume 1

Wednesday, July 2, 2025 – Lima, Peru

Hola from Peru. We arrived in Lima, the City of Kings and Peru's capital, today with Lori's brother and sister-in-law, Marc and Marla. Lima is a bustling metropolis and one of South America's largest cities. Peru was home to the ancient Inca civilization and where the Amazon River starts. It's also home to over 4,000 varieties of potatoes. That seems excessive. Do we really need that many types of potatoes? Guinea pig is a culinary delicacy here, and I can't wait to try that. Lake Titicaca is in Peru, and although we won't be visiting there, it's a great name. We're staying in the neighborhood of Miraflores, which is Peru's answer to Miami with cliffs and even more ceviche than South Beach.



After checking into our hotel we walked around Miraflores, ending up at a seafood restaurant where we had pisco sours, the national drink of Peru, numerous Peruvian dishes, and the largest mound of ceviche we've ever seen. Everything was fresh and delicious and quite inexpensive, and we quickly realized why those pisco sours are so popular.

Thursday, July 3, 2025 – Lima

Today's mission was to eat our way through Lima. After a morning walk around town, including a tour of some ruins from 1,000 years ago, we embarked on a food tour throughout the city, sampling more ceviche, lomo saltado (a Peruvian stir-fry), picarones (sweet potato donuts), and more pisco sours, a good way to stay hydrated in Peru. No guinea pig dishes yet, but I remain hopeful.



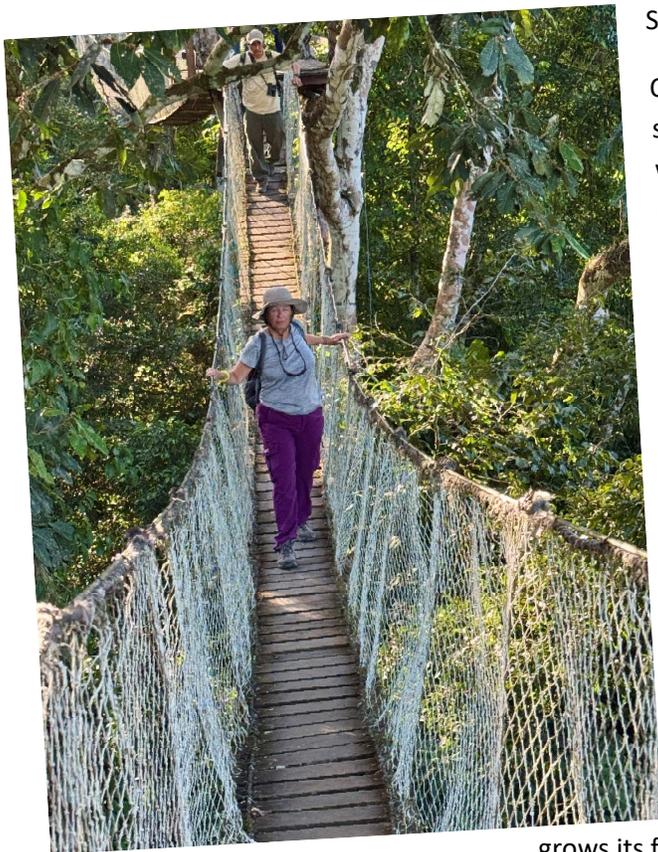
Friday, July 4, 2025 – Amazon

Today we switched from ocean breezes to mosquito swarms. We flew from Lima to Puerto Maldonado, a town that's a gateway to the Amazon rainforest. After what was supposed to be a short transfer but became an ordeal because our bus got a flat tire, we boarded a motorized canoe on the Madre de Dios River for a 45-minute ride to our jungle lodge.

Our lodge, Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica, is remote and completely off the grid. If Osama Bin Laden didn't want to get caught, he should have hidden out here. The only mode of transportation is motorized

canoe on the river. It has no phone or internet service and is a

dream for anyone who's ever wanted to sleep in a mosquito net while listening to nineteen different species of birds and other animals making noises all night long. Before dinner and settling in for the night, we took a twilight river cruise, where we saw capybaras, the world's largest rodent, on the shore of the river. Think one-hundred-pound rats.



Saturday, July 5, 2025 – Amazon

Our first Amazon excursion today was canoeing on Lake Sandoval, a serene lake teeming with wildlife. We glided across the lake in wooden canoes, spotting caimans (South American alligators), monkeys, birds, turtles, and giant otters. Our guide is excellent; he starts every sentence with “Really, guys...” and can spot and identify any animal within a ten-mile radius.

After lunch, we hit the Inkaterra Canopy Walkway, ninety-five feet up in the trees. Suspension bridges swayed as we looked for monkeys and tried not to think about the lack of safety standards in Peru.

At night, we returned to the rainforest for a walk, flashlights in hand, spotting nocturnal creatures and trying not to walk into any spider webs. We succeeded on the first objective, finding various types of spiders, including a few tarantulas.

Sunday, July 6, 2025 – Amazon

Today we explored the Gamitana Farm to see how the lodge grows its fruits and vegetables. It was like an outdoor Amazonian Whole

Foods with monkeys stealing whatever they want.



In the afternoon, we went to Hacienda Concepcion, supposedly an environmental research center. We walked through the lodge’s rainforest garden, learning how native plants are used for everything from medicine to aphrodisiacs. My mouth is still burning from the leaves we sampled.



Monday, July 7, 2025 – Sacred Valley

Today we bid farewell to the Amazon and its lack of full-time electricity and flew to Cusco, then drove to Urubamba in the Sacred Valley. The altitude here is a thing. I knew we were high up because just walking to the bathroom felt like a cardio class. Our hotel, Tambo del Inka, is stunning, with luxurious rooms, river views, and oxygen available upon request. We went to a nice Peruvian restaurant for dinner, where I had alpaca for an appetizer and guinea pig for my entrée. Both were delicious.

Thanks for following our trip. Stay tuned for more. Love, Lori and Stephen

Peru Travel Journal – Volume 2

Update 1: We've now heard there are 5,000 varieties of potatoes in Peru, not the 4,000 previously reported. That's second only to Russia, which apparently has 7,000 (they make a lot of vodka). So apparently there's an international potato race underway.

Update 2: Alpaca and guinea pig both taste like chicken.

Tuesday, July 8, 2025 – Sacred Valley, Peru

Today's tour had us sightseeing throughout the Sacred Valley, a region located in the Andes Mountains. It was once the heart of the Inca Empire, serving as a key agricultural, spiritual, and political center. That was before the Spanish toppled the Incas in the 1530s and exploited the valley for its resources.

We spent the day zigzagging up and down the one main road that slices through the valley. There's no official speed limit on the road, so you can go as fast as you want between the potholes and constructed speed bumps, spaced about one minute apart. The road was so bumpy I may have chipped a tooth bouncing so much.

We started at the Ollantaytambo ruins, a massive Inca fortress with large stone terraces on a hillside that ascend ten stories. We climbed to the top to see the ruins of the Sun Temple and to see if our lungs still worked at altitude. They mostly did. The village's old town is an Inca-era grid of cobblestoned streets and adobe buildings that look like they've seen a few centuries and a few tourists who've forgotten how to walk on uneven surfaces.



lessons. I think I'm wasting my time at the dance studio.

Next up: the Pisac ruins on the other side of the valley, which afforded wonderful views of the many agricultural terraces at this well-preserved site. There was also a nearby silver smith shop where I haggled for a pendant for Lori that she'll never wear but thinks she will.

Lunch was an over-the-top buffet paired with a Peruvian Paso horse show. It was equal parts cultural performance and digestive challenge, and the horses danced better than I do after four years of

In the afternoon, we visited Moray, a series of circular terraces dug into a natural depression. Historians believe it was an Inca crop laboratory for testing different growing conditions, or maybe it was simply created by aliens. Nobody really knows.

Our final stop was Maras, home to hundreds of salt ponds that cascade down a single mountainside. The salt is harvested by hand, consistent with the inefficiency we've witnessed in the rest of Peru.



Wednesday, July 9, 2025 – Machu Picchu and Aguas Calientes

Today was the main event: Machu Picchu. We took the scenic Vistadome train through the Urubamba Valley to Aguas Calientes then boarded a bus that zig-zagged up the mountain to Machu Picchu, the ancient capital of the Inca Empire.

Steeped in mystery, the mountain citadel of Machu Picchu was discovered by American historian and explorer Hiram Bingham in 1911. Believed to have been constructed sometime around 1450 and abandoned just over a century later, it is one of the world's most prized heritage sites and is now considered a Wonder of the Modern World. Even though Machu Picchu was built over five hundred

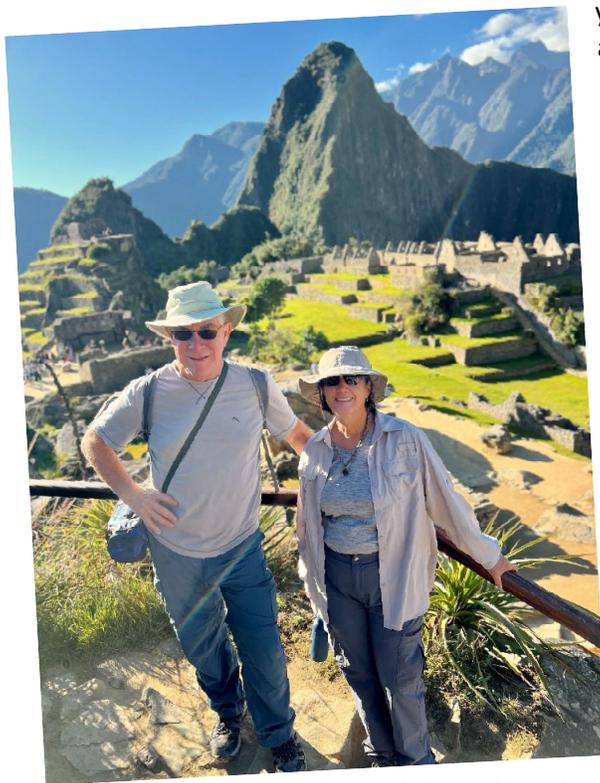


years ago, with no mortar used to hold together its stones, and sits up a mountain, on an earthquake fault, the city's five hundred stone buildings are, amazingly, still standing today. Meanwhile, I can't keep my umbrellas from falling apart in a light breeze. The site in the Peruvian Andes and is 8,000 feet above sea level.

Machu Picchu did not disappoint. It's ancient and majestic, and completely lacking snack bars and bathrooms. I'm glad I skipped the second cup of coffee at breakfast. Our guide was fantastic, walking us through temples, terraces, and theories, like how they built this place without steel, mortar, or YouTube videos.

Thursday, July 10, 2025 – Machu Picchu and Cusco

Today we went back to Machu Picchu, because once is not enough. We explored different areas and hiked up an adjacent mountain for a view from above and a reminder that thin air plus



steep trails equals lots of breaks. Spectacular.

In the afternoon we took the Vistadome train back to Cusco, our last stop.

Thanks for following our travels.
Love, Lori and Stephen



Peru Travel Journal – Volume 3

Friday, July 11, 2025 – Cusco, Peru

Cusco (elevation 11,152 feet above sea level) was the capital of the Inca Empire until the 16th-century Spanish conquest and is now known for its archaeological remains and Spanish colonial architecture. In 1983, Cusco was declared a World Heritage Site, and since then has become a major tourist destination, hosting over 2 million visitors a year.

We started our day at Coricancha, the most important temple in the Inca Empire. It was once covered in gold and is now covered in tourists with selfie sticks and altitude headaches. We then ventured out to Cusco's outlying historical sites. First up was Sacsayhuamán (pronounced like someone sneezing), a citadel on the northern outskirts of Cusco built by the Incas in the 15th century. The site sits at an elevation of over 12,000 feet. The views were spectacular, the stones were gigantic, and the oxygen level was somewhere between thin and hypothetical. Then we moved to Q'Enqo, a natural limestone labyrinth that hides a ceremonial altar once used by the Incas for animal sacrifices. We



finished our ancient ruin crawl at Puka Pukara, which sounds like a snack but was really a fortress used in the defense of Cusco and the Inca Empire.

We returned to the central square of the old city, toured the main cathedral, much of which is covered in gold and silver, had lunch, and wandered around town like acclimatized pros (read: we were no longer winded after a single staircase). Back at our hotel, Palacio del Inka, a colonial-era palace turned hotel, we joined a tour of the property that included a demonstration of traditional Inca music that, surprisingly, wasn't interrupted by anyone's cell phone going off.

We had dinner at a farm-to-table restaurant with our new friend Rob, whose family was in our excursion group in the Amazon and was staying in the same hotel as us. The rest of his family of six tapped out early. The food was delicious, but our waiter had the personality of one of the fish we ate.





Saturday, July 12, 2025 – Cusco

We channeled our inner chefs today at Rooftop Kitchen, which comes with spectacular views and a cutting board. Our chef, Kini, picked us up at the hotel and took us through San Pedro Market, where we grabbed some fruit for dessert and gawked at everything from giant corn to salted meat. In the kitchen we cut, sautéed, and stirred our way through quinoa, peppers, and other locally grown ingredients to prepare our own lunch of tiradito (Peru's version of sashimi) and a quinoa and vegetable stir fry. Best of all, we sipped pisco sours that we made ourselves. Gotta stay hydrated at such high altitude!

Sunday, July 13, 2025 – Cusco

Today is our last day in Peru. We spent the morning

wandering and shopping through Cusco, soaking in the sights and the thin air. In the afternoon we joined a walking tour to see some areas of Cusco that we hadn't yet trampled. Tonight, we catch our flights to Lima and Miami. We're heading home full of stories, photos, and more alpaca souvenirs than we need. Peru delivered on every front: jungle, mountains, markets, mystery, and magnificent meals.



Thanks for following our travels.
Love, Lori and Stephen