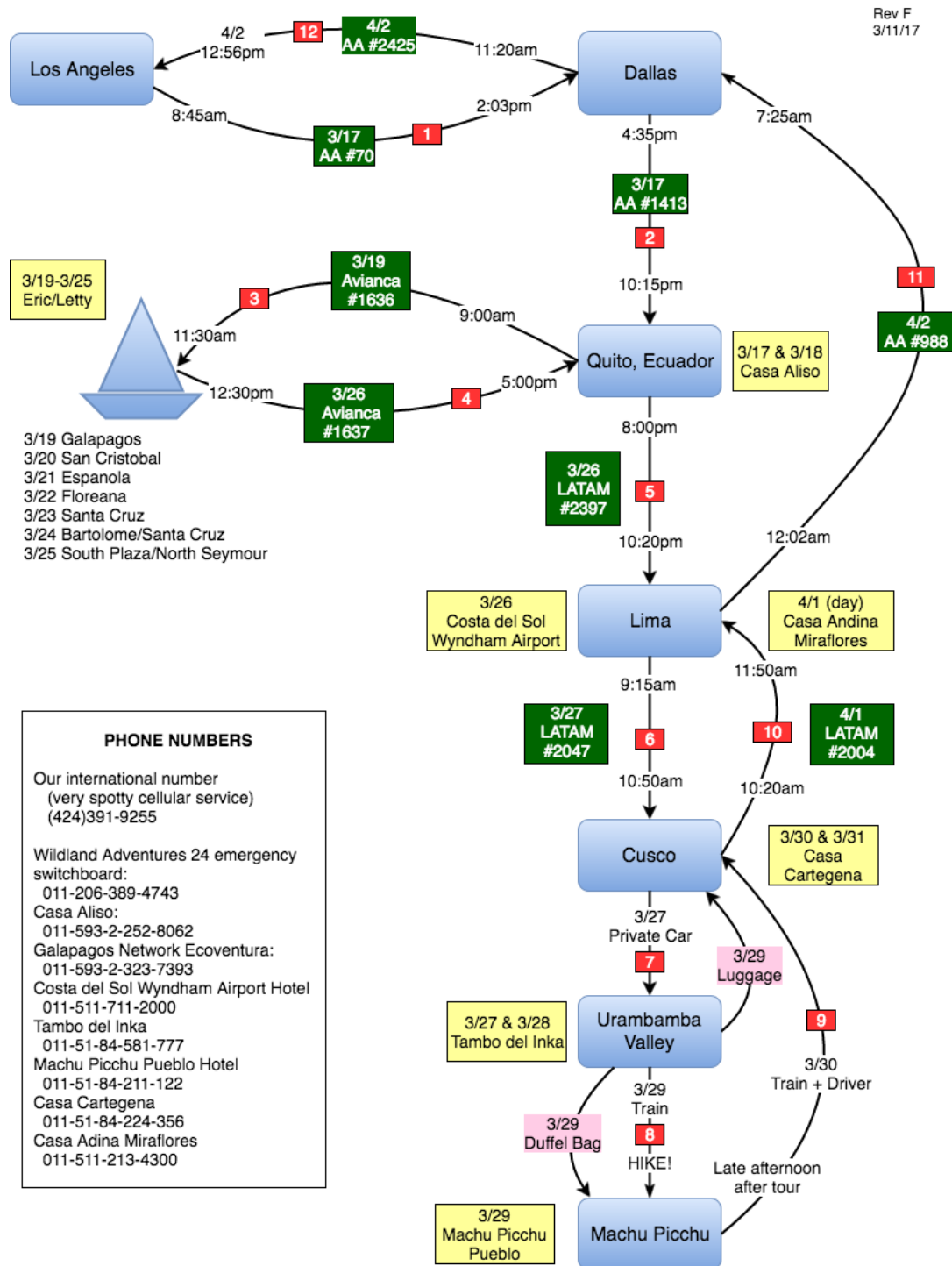


# Peru Machu Picchu Travelogue (after Galapagos)

Let's start with the diagram:



## **Peru Day 1 - Cochahuasi Animal Sanctuary & Pisac Town**

Our water days are over. We got off the boat, checked into the airport on San Cristóbal, and then they let us loose on the town. We were hanging out with Miles and Sonia again so we went to an upstairs bar, but since it was 10am, they wouldn't let me have a drink, so we had chocolate milkshakes!

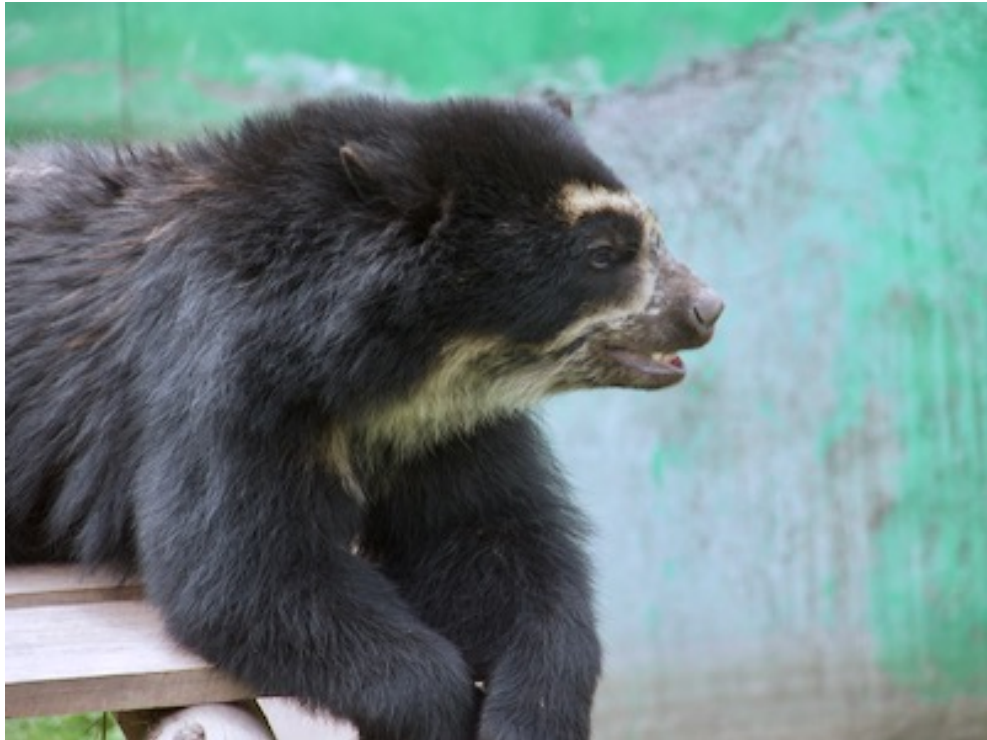
Back to the hottest airport I've ever been in in my life, where we sweltered till our plane took off. We landed in Quito, Ecuador, went through customs, and checked into our flight to Lima, Peru. With 3 hours to spare, and Mark and Jeff with us, we went to a bar ... but we did not have milkshakes.

Our flight to Lima landed us at 10 pm, where we scuttled across the street to an airport hotel, possibly the worst hotel for the money we've ever stayed in. \$375/night, and there was no hot water, but luckily the room was 80°.

After a "refreshing" 6 hours of sleep, we were onto yet ANOTHER plane, this time for Cusco, Peru. When we landed we were met by our guide Nick and our driver Edwin, who will be with us for the week. Edwin doesn't talk much but Nick is adorable. He's only 26 so he's not as experienced as some guides we've had but he makes up for it with his enthusiasm and joy.

Ok, better get some photos in here before you get too bored. Nick took us to the Ccochahuasi Animal Sanctuary where they rescue animals (mostly exotic) who have been abused. It was a terrific opportunity to see them up close and personal. They rehabilitate the animals and then release them back into the wild.

Here's a Spectacled Bear who had just arrived recently:



My favorite, the baby Vicuña - they let us pet her and she was soooo soft!



They had a couple of Macaws:



They had a blue-eyed llama that we swear the guy said was technically an albino. Sadly blue-eyed llamas go blind quite young so this guy won't be released into the wild.





Probably the coolest thing we saw there were the Andean Condors. They've released three of them already and this guy had a big "4" label on him showing that he was next up to get sprung. But here's the crazy part. They let us INSIDE the area where they kept them.



They have to force the condors to exercise, so they make them fly. Here's a guy convincing this one:



But they did NOT tell us they would fly directly at us!!! This photo has not been cropped!



Here's Steve with some of the condors.





Needless to say we donated to their cause. As we were leaving the sanctuary, we ran across a most unusual dog dressed in what appeared to be Mickey Mouse garb. Pat and Rick would appreciate his choice of clothing.



Next up we drove to the town of Písaq. This area was first Incan and then later the Spaniards took over. The Spanish era architecture is called colonial. Písaq is actually two towns: the colonial part was built in the 16th century (1540) and the upper, terraced area built by the Incas is from the 13th century. I explained to our guide, Nick, that there pretty much isn't anything older than 200 years old where we live.

Here's Steve and Nick walking in the market in Písaq town. These colonial stones are perhaps the most annoying surface I've ever walked on in my life. They're basically nice flat stones that have been turned on edge so you're walking on super lumpy rocks.



In our only shopping opportunity since this entire vacation began, we went to a high-end silver market. They explained that their silver is 95% silver (5% nickel) while in the UK and US it's only 92.5% (sterling) silver. Harder to work with 95%, but it doesn't tarnish as easily. I might have bought some stuff there....



Here's the raw silver:



Time to get out of this "new" area and off to the Inca Fortress of Ollantaytambo. Here's some hut things (that's the technical term). I'm sure Nick told us what the structures are in this picture, but I can't remember.





The terraces were built for two reasons: to stop soil erosion and for farming; mostly potatoes and corn. Time again for a selfie!



Check out the stairs they built into the sides of the walls.



The views from up here were extraordinary:



It was a relatively easy day, after which we were dropped off at one of the most beautiful hotels we've ever stayed in, the Tambo del Inka. Nikki will be entertained that they spent quite some time explaining to us that they're part of the Starwood Hotels and that they'd just merged with Marriott and did we want to earn points from our visit.

This is the LOBBY:



Dinner was extraordinary (won't bore you with details) and they had an unusual musical group (guitarist and flautist) playing for us. This guy had about 12 different flutes. He's holding two sets together where he'd play both of them at the same time. We really enjoyed the Andean music, so Steve bought their CD (Allpa Mayu, Musica Andina) that he can use for his videos of the trip.



We collapsed into bed, ready for more adventure.

## Peru Day 2 - Patachanca Trail

Ok, this is going to be REALLY hard to write, because it's been three days since I've had access to my computer to actually write things down. Bear with me, but what did we do on Peru Day 2?

Our trusty guide, Nick, picked us up to go for a day hike. On our drive up to the hiking spot, he told us that he wanted to stop in a local market to get bread for the children we'd see on the hike. He bought 12 pancake-sized mini loaves of bread. This seemed curious, but you'll hear more about it later.

As I've mentioned about 238 times to anyone who will listen, I was trepidatious about the Machu Picchu hike the next day. I was worried about altitude, I was worried about my strength, I was worried about whether I would have *fun*.

As soon as I started talking to Nick about it, my fears washed away. He told me I could do it and that we were going to have a good time. He's got an engaging way of convincing you that everything is going to be great. I started to relax.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Nick told us that we would have a picnic at the end of this day hike, but it would be a picnic like we'd never had before. As we were driving up the valley to the start of the hike, he noted the location where the picnic would be at the end as we hiked down the valley.

And then we drove...and drove...and drove. I was getting increasingly freaked out by how far we were going to hike. We finally stopped on the side of the road, and it started to rain. We donned our trusty ponchos on top of our windbreakers on top of our hiking shirts on top of our t-shirts, so we were ready for anything Mother Nature had to throw at us.



Nick is the king of the photobomb:



Here's Steve by some river when we were a bit dryer:





Two rivers are better than one, right?



We saw sheep and alpaca:



And more sheep for Maryanne:



Steve said it reminded him of Scotland:





I should have said this up front, but it was getting boring with so much text. This hike started at 12,000 feet in altitude! We eventually learned that Nick was actually testing us for the Machu Picchu hike to see how well we would do at some serious elevation.

And then we saw a baby alpaca!



And then we were greeted by a Quechua woman and her young child. Quechua is the native language of Peru but also the native people, descendants of the Incas. They wear this colorful clothing when in their homes. They were so happy to get the bread (the little girl didn't show it but when I handed it to her she had the slightest little smile, touched my heart).



And then these two little darlings showed up later. Their grins when we showed them the photos we had just taken of them were just delightful. You may notice that they have very red cheeks. Nick explained that the weather gets bitterly cold up here, and that causes their skin to almost burn from the cold.





After the hike when we were almost out of bread, these four showed up. They giggled when Steve adjusted the baby doll in the stroller to be more upright for the photo.





We survived the 2,000-foot downward hike, and our treat was the “picnic” Nick had promised. Check it out - we had TWO chefs who prepared a meal for us with a dining table in a tent, including wine and tea and tabouli, and local trout. This trout was EXACTLY like salmon, in color, texture, and taste. So much like salmon that I questioned Nick’s knowledge on the subject. He said the locally farmed trout in this region was a close cousin of salmon.



As Steve’s mom, Merlee said, we’re really roughing it!

## **Peru Day 3 - We survived the hike to Machu Picchu**

When we first booked this trip, I wanted to go to the Galápagos. Then our travel agent, Sherry, at Wildland Adventures, said, “you know you guys will be *right next to Peru*, you really should go check out Machu Picchu.” I had no idea what I had gotten into until after Steve and Sherry hatched their plan.

Machu Picchu is actually a mountain, but according to historical records the westerner who “discovered” the ancient Incan city

(Hiram Bingham) mistook Machu Picchu as the name of the ancient Incan city.

You can take a train to a town close to Machu Picchu and then a bus ride up several switch backs to the base of the city. But noooooo, that's not what Steve decided we should do. He convinced me we should get off that **perfectly good train** and instead HIKE the last 7.5 miles up hill.



I loved the train ride. Nick just got his first iPhone and insisted that I teach him some tricks. You know that's the way to my heart, right? But here's the fun part. I was showing Nick how to use the iPhone as a magnifying glass, and these two women across the aisle said, "Wait, we go into Settings, General, Accessibility, and then what?" Their names were Joanne and Mary and they were United flight attendants off on their own adventure. We yakked the whole way there about iPhones. I loved them and wanted to stay on the train with them and let Steve go on ahead.

But back to the Machu Picchu 7.5 mile hike. If you have been paying attention, you know that I walk farther than that every day (torturing poor Tesla), but this isn't a flat 7.5 miles. This is a hike that at one point goes up 2,000 feet in elevation in just 2 miles. That sounds fun, right?

Let's make it more entertaining. It starts at 8,500 ft elevation! Now if you read yesterday's email, you'll remember that Nick took us on the hike of death starting at 12,000 ft. We found out that it was part of his method to see if we could breath and not fall over at extreme altitude. Here's how humorous he thought it was testing us:



Evidently we passed the test, because he took us on the hike to Machu Picchu.

Spoiler alert: we LOVED it.



The hardest part of the hike is actually at the beginning, so we actually have very few photos showing how steep it was, but here's one of Nick and me on part of the harder downhill climb:



And here's Steve taking a much-needed rest for an uphill part:





I fell in love with the flowers along the way. Nick explained that they have a ton of different varieties of orchids (he used a real number, but it escapes me right now). Here are a few examples:





Ok, this one is a bromeliad, but I thought it was cool.





Here's Steve on a nice rickety bridge (I kept thinking how much Diane would LOVE this...)



This is a special orchid called the Wiñaywayna orchid. Wiñay Wayna means “forever young”.



Speaking of Wiñay Wayna, it's also the name of an ancient Inca citadel that was at the end of the hardest part of our trek (but only about a third of the way along the trek). Wiñay Wayna was stunning and dramatic. I told Steve that I didn't need to see Machu Picchu; this was beautiful enough.





It's impossible to really get the feel of the place, so instead I'll give you this pic of Steve being goofy.



Here's a butterfly for Bart!



I couldn't get over how GREEN everything was on this trail; it 🎵 took my breath away 🎵.



The peak of the trail is called the Sun Gate. By this time we've hiked 5 miles (out of the total of 7.5 miles). The only way to help you feel the approach to the Sun Gate is with a short video:

And THIS is why we hiked the last portion of the Inca Trail. Our first view of Machu Picchu.





I have to say that Nick is a bad influence on Steve. Here they are once we've gotten down a bit closer:





The odd thing about this hike is you don't end up going into Machu Picchu at all. Tomorrow's letter will be from within the city of Machu Picchu.

I know a lot of you are thinking, "Ok, this culture stuff is cool, but how many calories did you burn on your Apple Watch?" My goal is 600 calories and you'll be glad to know that I got my first 300% calorie burn badge!



After the hike, Nick tried to get us to check into the hotel, but we weren't having any of that. I simply sat down in a bar and ordered a

"large" beer. They have a different idea of "large" around here. The Cusqueña beer you see here is one liter!!!



I might have shared some of it with Steve, but not much. And then guess who showed up? Our flight attendant friends from the train showed up! Joanne (the geeky one) and Mary had in tow Griffin, who is a crazy gadget guy, and Dave, who is just darn good fun!

We laughed and played with them for a long time. SUCH fun people!!!



I'll end this missive with our favorite shot:





## **Peru Day 6 - Actually seeing Machu Picchu City**

Alert reader Dorothy asked a good question about the last letter. She asked, "Wait a minute, you hiked to Machu Picchu but didn't SEE Machu Picchu? I need a map!" I see that I was not clear, so here's the scoop.

The hike we did was 7.5 miles, at which point you see Machu Picchu from above, and then immediately jump on the bus for a 30-minute ride to Machu Picchu Pueblo City (where beer drinking can commence). All of the hotels (except a ratty one) are in Pueblo City.

In the morning of Day 4, we hopped back on the 30-minute bus back up to Machu Picchu and were toured around by the lovely Nick.

I found a map that I wish I'd seen before. On the middle left, you see Km 104 "start of 2 day hike", which we did in 1 day. You can see the path goes from 6955ft up to Wiñay Wayna at 8366ft (the hardest part), and then goes across and up some to Inti Punku (the Sun Gate) where you look down into Machu Picchu. Then the wiggly line is the bus ride down. Evidently, Aguas Calientes is the 2nd name (or 1st name?) for Pueblo City. Then there's an unmistakable train icon showing how to get back down and out of the area and back to Cusco.



Ok, now that we're all on the same page, we can talk about Machu Picchu proper. Well, *technically*, it was misnamed by Hiram Bingham when he "discovered" it. First of all, it wasn't lost; the Incas knew where it was, the Spaniards knew where it was, and some native Ketchua people were living there when he "found" it. Machu Picchu is actually the name of the mountain behind the city. But enough with the technicalities!

When we arrived at Machu Picchu on tour day, we found we were in the clouds:





I should take a pause here to give a bit of info on how these Incan structures were built. They did not have iron yet, and they did not have the wheel. In spite of the lack of tools, they were able to build structures that remain centuries later. Each stone was split and polished to rest perfectly against the next. In order to do this, they used the tool of time.

They would take a stone made of hematite (which has a lot of iron in it) and chip a hole or crack into the granite. Then they would put dry wood into the hole, add water, and wait for the wood to swell, which would split the granite. Now think about how long that must have taken to cut one rock! Not only that, but they actually used the technique of mortise and tenon. That's where you carve one piece to have a channel in it and the other to have a corresponding rectangle that sticks into it to hold them firmly together (like Lego blocks).

Check out a typical seam:



Isn't that crazy? This insane level of perfection was used on buildings meant for royalty. The techniques were the same for storage and workers quarters, but they're much more coarsely done.

They also used trapezoids for windows and the walls tilted inward by exactly 9 degrees, which made them more stable to withstand earthquakes.



But these techniques only work if you get to *finish* building. The Incas were taken over by the Spaniards, and didn't get to finish some of the buildings in Machu Picchu. Here's what happens if an earthquake hits when the structure's not done:



Another sign that portions of Machu Picchu weren't finished is that the quarry from which they built the structures is still there:





It really was spooky being up in the clouds:



Time for an artsy fartsy pic - and Lindsay, I did not crop, edit color, or enhance this one in any way!



And then we found a chinchilla just chillin' out. See what I did there? You laughed, Bill, you know you did.



After the walk around Machu Picchu, Nick announced that we were going to get the best craft beer in Cusco. He knew we were interested in craft beer, so we trusted him to show us the best.

Nick took us to the home of Dario Casapino González, where he showed us his microbrewery, Willkamayu. As soon as we came in, Steve was accosted by "The Beast", Dario's tiny dog. Steve has a weakness for clothed dogs. And yes, Linda, it was chilly out.



Here's the tasting room:





Here's the brewing room. We did say *microbrewery*:



We absolutely loved the beer. Steve had an IPA and I had the brown ale and they were fantastic. Talking to Dario in his living room about how he got into the business was absolutely magical.



He told the story of how he'd quit his job at a bank to take a job in Africa, but just days before he was to leave, he was called and told that Ebola had struck and that no one was going to be hired. He was devastated.

He started looking online for possible businesses to start, and everywhere he looked, he saw microbrewing as the hot opportunity. Finally, he tried making some beer himself, and it was dreadful. His repeated experiments were all equally bad. Not surprising since he had no idea what he was doing.



He took a job in Lima at a craft brewery and spent 2 months learning the process. He bought the equipment, but there was one more thing he needed.

He found out that there was a microbrewery in Cusco that closed in the 1930s. He found the grandson of the guy who ran it and convinced him to

give him their recipe. And that's when Willakamayú really got going. The beer is available in only 3 places around Cusco and in Machu Picchu but if you're ever in that area be sure to ask for it.



I know it sounds silly to say this but I found meeting Dario and hearing his story (and drinking his beer) to be a bigger experience than walking around Machu Picchu during the day. Not cooler than the *hike* but still. He's a kind, sweet man with a lyrical voice, who we only understood through Nick's translation.

We collapsed into bed in a unique hotel called the Casa Cartageña (see Ron? I told you I was going to Cartegena, and you didn't believe me!). The place was extraordinary because the room was more than 1000 square feet! Here's a screenshot from a video we took. The anteroom in the background is about the size of my living room, there's probably 8 feet of space behind where I'm standing, and the bathroom is much bigger than ours at home!





Outside on the cliff, a small (about 30' tall) replica of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro. Small but powerful.



Only a few more days of adventure left!

## Peru Day 5 - Cusco

After the excitement of Machu Picchu, I think Steve and I figured the tour day of the city of Cusco would be a let down, but it definitely wasn't. It might have been one of my favorite days. Many people believe that Machu Picchu was the center of Inca society, but in fact, the center was Cusco.

As we got to know our guide Nick better and better, he started telling us about his fiancée, Alexandra. We asked him whether she might want to join us on the Cusco day. She's training to be a guide and jumped at the chance.

Spoiler, I LOVED Alex. She was so awesome. Really glad she joined us, and I'll explain more as we go through the day.

We started with a short walk around Quenqo Temple. It's a series of cool tunnels carved out of granite where the Incas used to sacrifice llamas to the gods. They wouldn't let us go in the really *long* tunnel, but only because some people went in and never came out...



Selfie time! That's the city of Cusco in the background:



We went from there to the Market in Cusco. a vast area filled with everything you could possibly want. Think Costco, but about 4X as large. Here's a little tidbit: the name of Cusco was originally Costco, so there you go. Here are Nick, Alex, and I in the Market:





I begged Steve to not make me put this picture in, but he insisted (and it's not the grossest one he took in the market, so thank me for that):



While he was taking pictures of stuff like that (and worse), I was focusing on the fruit:



Nick and Alex told us about the *amazing* soup you can get at the market for only a dollar or two. Then they explained that even they can't eat it because they will immediately have intestinal issues. We decided against partaking.

When we talked to the flight attendants after the Machu Picchu hike, they showed us this REALLY cool formation they got to hike, I think it was called Rainbow Rock. Nick said he'd take us to a tiny version of it. Sounded good to us. Nick slid down the smooth rock like a slide, but since we were down to our last pair of clean pants, we just climbed back down like big babies.



Next on our tour, Nick and Alice took us to Sacsaywaman. If you look this up in Wikipedia, you'll see it spelled Saksaywaman, Saqsaywaman, Sasawaman, Saksawaman, Sacsahuayman, Sasaywaman, or Saksaq Waman. We asked them why it was spelled so many ways, and it's because we have no record of a written language from the Incas. If you look up just about any of the Incan places we've told you about, you'll find many spellings. The only way these names are spelled is by phonetically recording the native Ketchua speakers. And yes, Ketchua has many spellings.

But it's not the spelling of Sacsaywaman that's the fun part. It's how it's pronounced. We recorded Nick and Alex explaining:

Here's a wide shot of Sacsaywaman:



Alex explained to us where the name originated. There was this massive battle here, and the area was covered with dead soldiers. The Andean Condors swooped in and pretty much ate everything. So the Condor's appetite was satisfied. Sacsaywaman means "satisfied condors". Not a sweet story, but still interesting.



The photo below is of Steve standing in front of the largest carved rock in the walls you see above. You can see the expert way the edges are carved (remember, using wood and water to crack them and then polishing later with rocks that contained iron). This single rock weighs over 128 tons! Remember that the Incas didn't have the wheel, right? The question remains on how they moved these rocks into position.



Enough fun at Sexy Woman, time for the Qoicancha Monastery. How many ways can you think of to spell Qoicancha?



This monastery was raided by the gold-loving Spaniards. They found walls inches thick made of gold, and solid gold llamas. Sadly, they took the gold home and melted it down to make jewelry.

We showed you the 128-ton rock carved into a wall, here's the tiniest one Nick could find:



We asked Nick and Alex if they'd be our guests for lunch, and since Nick is a foodie, we let him choose the restaurant. I have to say his choice of the restaurant, MAP, was spectacular. I'm not a fan of food photos, but I wish I'd captured the presentation of the food. The finale was when they broke a glass cup of fruit into our chocolate and ice cream dessert...the cup was "glass" made of sugar!

Here are Alex and I out in front of MAP:



We had to say goodbye to Alex and Nick, but we know that we've made lifelong friends. They invited us to their wedding next year. Remember when that happened in Australia, we ended up going to New Zealand for Devon and Maryanne's wedding!





## Peru Day 6 - Bonus Days in Lima

Our adventure was supposed to end with Alex and Nick and our fearless driver Edwin dropping us off at the hotel in Cusco. The plan was to get up in the morning, have a “keeper” named Melvin pick us up to ensure our safe transit to the Cusco Airport. Then we were to fly from Cusco to Lima, stay the day at a hotel in the Miraflores district of Lima, Peru, and then board a flight from Lima to Dallas to LA, starting at midnight and landing in LA at noon.

Well that doesn't sound like enough fun! Instead we decided to stay two extra days in the beautiful Miraflores eating and relaxing. Aren't we wild and spontaneous???

Melvin and a driver did pick us up at the hotel in Cusco. She helped us check our bags at the check-in desk and be ticketed for our flight from Cusco to Lima. She told us to go to the top of the escalator and there would be food and coffee before the gate, but if we went through the gate, we'd have no restaurants.

We sat down in the waiting area and Steve got us some coffee. When he went to throw away his cup, he looked next to his seat on the right, and realized that his backpack was no longer there. Someone had swiped it. Sadly, it had an older Mac laptop, two GoPros, his video camera and other electronics. But that wasn't the real problem.

His passport was in the backpack.

And this began the latest adventure of our trip. We looked for the police (asked 5 people) and no one could tell us how to find them. At the check in desk they told us that he would be able to board the plane from Cusco to Lima with just his driver's license and his boarding pass. We figured our ability to get out of the country would be improved by moving from an ancient Inca city to the capital of the country, so we got on the plane.

Here's where the network of Wildland Adventures, our travel agency, came into play. We texted Nick who contacted the local company Wildland had contracted for our travels, Exploriandes. The head of South American operations for Exploriandes, Mari, took control of the situation.

When we landed in Lima, Mari had arranged for Walter to meet us at the airport and have us whisked immediately to the police department to file a police report. They knew we'd need the report for insurance, but more importantly we'd only be able to get an emergency replacement passport if we had a police report. Without Walter's English/Spanish translation skills, we'd never have been able to succeed.

The good news was that a replacement passport can be generated on the same day. The bad news was that the U.S. Embassy would have to be open for this to happen. We arrived in Lima on a Saturday, and they wouldn't be open till Monday. Hence, our "bonus days" began.

We figured we had two choices at this point. We could sit in a hotel room with the curtains closed and rage against the thief and the people who refused to work on the weekend. Or, we could go outside and play. Which would you choose?



We went to dinner at Saqra and had a fabulous meal, along with the drink of Peru, Pisco Sour.



The Pisco Sours improved our mood!

The next day, after filling out paperwork and getting passport photos taken, we took off on foot to explore Miraflores. It's a beautiful and vibrant district where walking is popular. The main drag is called Avenida Larco and it runs from the center of town near our hotel down to the ocean.

As we got to Larco on Sunday morning, we found that they had blocked off the street for an outdoor exercise class! I had no choice but to join in:



Steve enjoys hanging out with the local animals in Parque Central Miraflores:





We walked 5 miles round trip down to the cliffs above the ocean.



The Peruvians are fairly demonstrative with their affections. Proof is this statue at Parque del Amor.



Steve was sure in a silly mood:



Steve and Barrington hanging out:



We found an “iStore” so we followed the time-honored tradition of setting the home screens to [podfeet.com](http://podfeet.com):



We noticed a lot of vultures catching updrafts from the tall buildings near the cliffs. We checked online to confirm they were vultures and found the weirdest article. Turns out there’s been a huge trash problem in Lima (for hundreds of years), so they’ve started employing vultures as part of an advertising campaign to discourage and monitor dumping of trash. Some of the vultures wear GoPros. I don’t even begin to understand this, but here’s a link if you want to read more:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/01/peru-vultures-garbage/431709/>







Steve wanted to show his support for the local llamas in Peru:



My favorite picture of the day:



For dinner, we did a search in the area for craft beer and found Nuevo Mundo right near the park. We had fabulous burgers and a nice IPA called Estrella.





When we went outside, we found the park full of happy people, including what appeared to be a spontaneous dance party.



We spent the next day going from the hotel to the Embassy to the hotel to the Embassy. One more tidbit on getting an emergency replacement passport. I'm not sure this is true of all countries, but in Peru you cannot leave the country unless your passport has a stamp showing when you *entered* the country. But even after he successfully received his temporary passport, it didn't have the required immigration stamp. That meant a trip to the Immigration office in Lima.

We entered Immigration without the aid of a translator and wandered up and down stairs, in and out of rooms that looked much like the Department of Motor Vehicles filled with bored people waiting their turn. After about 15 minutes we found someone who spoke English and wrote for us in Spanish on a piece of paper what it was we required so we could hold it up to people asking where to go. Finally we were escorted into yet another room of bored people, and taken to an open window with a lovely gentleman who spoke English. He assured us all was in order, we paid the \$4 fee, and Steve got his stamp.

Joyful success!



Here's how we celebrated (are you surprised?)





When we got to the Lima airport at 10 pm that night, we were issued boarding passes, and we waited in line to board the plane. When we got to the gate, Steve put his boarding pass into the scanner... and the light turned red instead of green. The airline personnel asked us to step aside. His ticket was marked "inhibited". Seriously.

They showed me the computer screen where it said inhibited with a notice telling them to "call the United States" and a phone number. They called, and no one answered. For about 15 minutes, while every single other passenger boarded the plane, they called and called and called. We were sick to our stomachs with anguish. And finally, the "United States" answered, and must have said, "sure, Steve's cool," because "Inhibited" disappeared, and we boarded the plane out of Peru.

We had to pry our eyes open to get this photo, but here we are (drinking water) on the final flight home:





Before we close, we wanted to add one more piece of good news. If you've read this long, you must be wondering, if we lost the GoPros, did we lose all of the GoPro photos and videos?

Well, no, we did not. We did one brilliant thing on the trip. Before we left the hotel in Cusco, we backed up all of Steve's photos and videos to a backup drive we brought along. We put the backup drive in MY backpack. Then we took the memory card out of my camera and put it in his backpack. That way, we had two copies of everything in both backpacks. All of our fabulous underwater pics and videos of snorkeling with sea lions, sharks, manta rays, and penguins were safe.