

South America Trip Diary (Peru trip portion) (Day 9 & 10 – *March 20 & 21*, Monday & Tuesday)

Day 9

Ana came to the hotel at 7:30 a.m. with another driver, David, and we drove to the International Airport on time for the flight to Lima via Santiago. Ana was in a bad mood, and we thought she had a fight with her husband. However, David, the driver was a jolly good guy who likes talking. He asked me, “what do you think about Trump?” and I laughed, and he said that “that is a good answer and you don’t have to say no more!” He then asked where we are heading and I said, we are going to Peru. He was very happy about it because that must be his favorite subject. He likes to cook; especially Peruvian dishes and he recommended a few dishes we should try in Peru. One is Ceviche, which is usually not cooked but rather marinated fresh fish with chilly and onion and quite spicy, and another is Lomo Saltado, which is a fusion dish of Peruvian ingredients with Asian style spicy beef dish.

The flight left at 11:30 a.m. and it took about one and a half hour to get to Santiago. Santiago seems to be an interesting city surrounded by high mountains. We then transferred to another flight to Lima, which took about 4 hours and the time difference between Lima and the three places we have been to is 2 hours. The time in Lima is the same as Atlanta of the US.

Peru seems to be the poorest of the three countries we have visited during this trip. When we arrived in Lima, it was about 5:30 p.m., which means that it had been exactly 12 hours since we left our hotel in Buenos Aires. By the time we arrived to the hotel in Lima, it was 6:30 p.m. Our guide here is Shirley, a slim and nice-looking lady of 32 years of age. Here, the first question the guides ask seems to be where we are from and then how old we are, because we look old, I am just guessing. As soon as they found out our age, they deny that we are that old, which could be a compliment on their part, and they tell us their age. It is a rather strange ritual we have to go through. However, this makes a good start of dialogue.

Shirley took a picture of us in the car with her cell phone and told us that her mother would like to see us on the picture. This is the first time she met her clients who are Korean/Americans. She told us that she has never met Korean or Japanese tourists before but met many Chinese. She is very talkative and has a boyfriend who is a Russian and now is in England. The boyfriend she had right before the Russian man was an American, who was too arrogant, and they had broken up their relationship because of that. She is very happy now because her boyfriend is so kind and nice. She met him through an Internet Dating System. She told us that she is the fourth child of the family and likes to speak English and is not shy about bragging about her talent. She told us that Peru has about 30 million people and about 10 million live in the greater city of Lima.

The quality of the hotel wasn’t the same level as those in Argentina and Brazil but clean and cozy. We were so tired to go out to a restaurant and so, we had dinner at our hotel. The cook looked like an Indian (from India) who was very tall and kind, but do not speak English at all. I had curry on rice and Helen had Omelet, which is one of her favorites. The curry was excellent but somewhat salty. We went to bed immediately, realizing the fact that tiring is a good medicine for good sleep!

Day 10

We had a good rest last night and got up reasonably early this morning. The breakfast here in the hotel was not par with those at the other hotels in Brazil and Argentina. However, we had filling meal with nice coffee, which is universally true in South America. In the morning we hopped on a taxi and drove to the Amor Beach, a famous beach in Lima. It is regarded as one of the best attractions in Lima. We had a panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean with high tidal waves and there are many parks with beautifully decorated flower beds and various sculptures along a mile long beach. We had to get some sands for Helen's friend, and I had to go down a steep slope with more than 200 steps and tried to collect some sands down below of the ocean road. However, when I got down to the beach, to my great disappointment, it wasn't normal beach but pebble stone beach but was beautiful, nevertheless. There is no question that Lima is the hottest and most humid place among all the places we have visited this time.



We had lunch at a Japanese Restaurant and found a little refreshing to have Japanese food after enjoying South American foods for more than a week. I had Tempura Udon and Helen had Mini-Sushi 12 pc and we enjoyed them a lot.

At 2:00 p.m., Rosario, the tour guide came to the hotel to pick us up. There were 10 people on the bus but later we were divided into two groups: six English speaking people and 4 Spanish speaking people. The Amor beach was included in the itinerary, but we enjoyed the place as good as fresh. Rosario is a short lady but intelligent and possesses a wealth of knowledge of Peru. She mentioned that Peru is a multiethnic country with Amerindians, Europeans, Africans, and Asians. Their official language is Spanish, but a significant population speaks Quechua, the native language. Peru possesses one of the oldest human histories in the world along with Egypt, China, and India. There are evidence of human presences dated back to 9,000 B.C. Peru's major industry is mining producing copper, silver, gold, and many more. Their production in copper ranks the 2nd in the world following Chile, which I didn't know. (In fact, I have not fact checked on this.) Other industries include fishery, agriculture, and tourism in that order.

She also mentioned that among famous dishes in Peru is Guinea Pig dish. We were so surprised and felt awful to hear that because our granddaughter, Lia has two Guinea Pigs, Coco and

Bambi and we love them as part of our family.

We toured mansions where rich people or foreign ambassadors' residences are located, and also visited a place called Huaca Pucllana, an ancient Pyramid built about 2000 years ago is located. The scope and skills involved are not quite close to that of Mexico but impressive. We then visited the Plaza Mayo, where the Cathedral, President's House, and City Hall are located and also known as the place where the major political demonstrations are taken place. We then went to a shopping complex, where some people of our group bought souvenirs. Our tour guide then took us to the St. Francis Chapel, where we spent a considerable amount of time visiting the church as well as Catacomb, an underground cemetery, where nearly 25,000 people, mostly politically high ranking or rich people were buried during the 16th through 18th centuries.

By the time we came back to our hotel, it was nearly 6:00 p.m. We went out to Chili's Restaurant, where we had fajitas. Since we have to leave early for the airport tomorrow, we had an early night. The day in Lima was fun and memorable, but at the same time, we are a little tired. We look forward to a new and exciting adventure in Cusco tomorrow!



Day 11

Julio, a guide came to our hotel at 7:30 a.m. to give us a ride to the airport. Julio looked quite old and later he told us that he is 76 years old. He has been retired but couldn't be idle at home and therefore, he started working again as a part-time tour guide. He is very efficient and careful in driving through the traffic and the ticketing process at the airport so fast that we had a lot of time to spare before taking off at 9:45 a.m. to Cusco. It was an hour and half flight to Cusco and when we arrived in Cusco, the weather was so hot and humid. In addition, the elevation is more than 3,700 m and we felt a little dizzy. When we open the shampoo bottle, a lot of liquid came out uncontrollable due to the high elevation.

Jamilet, the tour coordinator while we are in the Cusco area told us that we should drink a lot of water and perhaps Coca tea, which will help the unease feelings due to the high altitude. She told us that Cusco City is a part of Cusco Province and has a population of about a half million.

She asked us where we were from and when she found out our origin and current residence, she told us that we were the first Korean/American she had met. She told us that Korea is a dream country of hers, and the reason is because she watches many Korean dramas, and she loves them very much. They are so good and interesting and some of her friends are learning Korean from the Institute of Korean language which has just started. She told us that Che-ju Island that she learned about through the dramas must be one of the best places to visit as a tourist.

After a brief lunch, we have joined with a group of about 20 people riding a bus for the city tour starting from 1:20 p.m. It was so hot and humid in the morning when we arrived, but the weather suddenly changed to a chilly and cloudy. Most of the people in the streets were dressed in sweaters or long sleeve wind-breakers. We later found out that it would rain in the afternoon, and the weather would turn to cold, which is typical in Cusco. Clara, an elderly lady, relatively speaking, was our tour guide and we all had a tour-guide receiver so that we were able to listen to her talk in the bus as well as at various sites. The first place we visited was the Plaza Arma, the city center. We visited the Santo Domingo Monastery, one of the most important temples in Peru where Peru citizens worship for the Sun. There are also temple of the Moon and that of the Stars. The construction of the monastery fascinates and surprised many archeologists in that the construction was made during the 1400s to resist frequent earthquakes taken place throughout the history of Inca period and even until very recent years. The key word of Cusco is "Inca," which means king but also refers to the center of the universe.

Right next to the Monastery stands the Cathedral Basilica that is also known as Cusco Cathedral, which is one of the major attractions in Cusco. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983. It holds many archeological artifacts and relics. I have seen so many cathedrals over the world, especially in Europe. This one is no less than any of those Cathedrals I have seen in its scope, arts, and historical value. After a significant amount of time spent in this sacred place, we headed to the ruins of Sacsayhuaman, where we saw a huge stone wall built during the Inca era. We also visited the amphitheater of Kenko, and also the Red Fortress of Puca Pucara.

Helen had been concerned about her immobility due to her back and knee problems. However, she was able to handle most of the walking today. There was a considerable amount of walk involved today. Walking along the vast area of the ancient ruins with strong wind wasn't fun at all. When we visited Tambo Machay, the temple of water, it rained and we had to walk along a relatively steep dirt road, and she asked her companion ladies who were much younger than her to go ahead, since she had decided to stay behind in a shelter. These ladies were headed to the target area but couldn't continue and came back to the shelter and stayed with Helen for the rest of the trip. Considering her age and handicap, Helen handled today's tour quite well and her walking stick really helped her completing the tour successfully today. She is a little concerned about the most difficult walk waiting for us when we will be in Machu Picchu in the next two days but is optimistic about the challenge. By the time we came back to the hotel, it was nearly 7:00 p.m.

We were so tired partially because of a long flight but mainly due to the altitude sickness. However, the day has been very successful, and we felt very happy about the day. We look forward to another long day in this area tomorrow.



Day 12

The hotel we are staying in Cusco is very good. It is relatively new and located in the center of the city and therefore quite convenient. The quality of breakfast was also excellent. We had to get up early because the day will begin early.

At 7:00 a.m. we had to check out the hotel but leaving two pieces of our main luggage in the hotel, since we will come back to this hotel two days later and we will drive in a small bus to a town called Sacred Valley, where we will have a tour through the valley on the first day and then of course, the Machu Picchu on the second day. We packed two small pieces backpack with daily essentials and drove along the valley.

It is important to understand the Inca Empire for better understanding for the next couple of days tour to this area. The Inca Empire was the largest empire in South America, perhaps in the world in the early 16th century. Cusco was the center of this empire and it stretched out through the sacred valley, since it provided rich land along the Urubamba River. During the 13th – 16th century, Inca people had established their source of living, which was agriculture along this valley and established rows of terraces for agricultural purpose as well as for the purpose of the foundation of the castles built on the basis of this foundation. We saw such terraces today, especially at two famous sites.

Adriel, the guide of the day and Aemevico, the driver took us all day for the day 12 tour in the Sacred Valley. First stop we made was a small town where hand weaving is famous. The guide introduced to us how various colors used in the wool products of alpaca used in weaving. It is interesting to learn how these people dye their wool using various vegetables, rocks and even children wee. They showed us special ants that produce dark red color and children pee gives purple color. The houses we saw in that town were very similar to those houses we used to live in Korea in old days. The house roofs are made of straws, while Koreans used rice straws for the same purpose.

The next stop was at the top of a tall and rugged mountains which is called Pisac, which is a Peruvian village built by Incas. It is most known for a place where large markets used to be held in old days, although that tradition is still going on with less frequency. We climbed up more than 200 steps of the steep hills to get to the top. Most of our group, which consisted of 11 people declined to climb up to the top except myself and Bob, who is from Canada. The view from the top was magnificent.

We then came down to the town of Sacred Valley and visited jewelry shop, where we watched a demonstration of making silver based jewelries. Along the street, there were many shops selling various merchandises. After the short visit of the markets in the street of the town we were treated for a buffet lunch at a local restaurant. This was the first lunch provided by the tour organization.

After the lunch, we then moved to another Incas ruins called Ollanta Tambo. Here, we had to climb again to the top of rows of terraces that the ancient Incas had built. The climb was not so hard as the one we had in the morning. Many people of our group did make to the top of the hill this time. We saw some of the finest Inca masonry as well as a panoramic view of the village down below.

Helen has been surprisingly active in following the group by walking with her walking stick. However, she decided go easy on walking today to save energy for the final clime at Machu Picchu tomorrow, and therefore, she dropped out in the middle of the walk today and stayed behind with the driver and guide.

We had a good work out today, since we had climbed up the two high hilltops. By the time the bus took us to the hotel, it was nearly 5:00 p.m. We had to stay in the hotel of this small town so that we could ride on a train early in the morning to Machu Picchu tomorrow.

We had dinner at the hotel. I had tenderloin Peruvian Style and Helen had Empanada, a typical Peruvian meat pie. We had early night to get up early to complete our final destination of the South American Trip, Machu Picchu.





Day 13

The final destination of our Grand South America Tour has arrived! We had two places that we thought that we must see during this trip: Iguassu Falls and Machu Picchu.

Machu means “Old” and Picchu, “Peak” and therefore, the name stands for an “Old Peak” in Quechua, the native language. The archeologists believe that it was built in around 1400 AC and was abandoned 100 years later when Spain invaded Peru. It was an Inca estate which contains residence, school, and temples. At the top of a mountain, they laid a foundation first and on top of that foundation a town was built using local rocks.

We left our hotel in Sacred Valley early in the morning to catch the train leaving at 8:00 a.m. The train is a modern 4-5 cabin train, and it took about one and a half hours to get to the bottom of the beautiful site. One of the most impressive scenes of the trip was the spectacular sight of high mountains and the river along the way to the destination. We have marbled many mountainous scenes such as Yosemite, Glacier, Banff/Jasper and beautiful and magnificent mountains in China, Norway and New Zealand, but this place surpasses all the other places we have been to. As soon as we arrived in the town, we took a bus for half an hour to this historical site, which is now considered as one of the seven top man-made wonders in the world.



Paul was our guide for the day and we had 6 people in our group. I was so proud of Helen who was able to climb up those many steps to get to the top of the site. The view of this historical

site cannot be described with limited words I can manage.



We had lunch at the bottom of the site and by the time when we came down to the village by a bus, it was 5:00 p.m. When we checked in our hotel, we were pleasantly surprised to see such a high-quality hotel existed in such a small town.

We were so happy to witness such a wonderful place in our lifetime and to be able to enjoy the most memorable day in our life. We thought about our children, grandchildren, and friends who have not been here yet, but will be in the future, and were sure that they would also share the similar feelings we now have.

Tomorrow, we will be heading back to Cusco and then fly out to the Titicaca Lake to enjoy our final day in South America by riding a boat in a beautiful lake.

Day 14

According to the original schedule, we were supposed to take the bus to Machu Picchu and spend the morning there. However, Helen felt very tired because of the hard time yesterday and I didn't feel to go there again by myself and therefore, we stayed in the hotel until the checking out time, 11:30 a.m. We then strolled around the small town and went to a huge market to look around. The town is small but the size of the market is rather impressive. They say that since it is not a tour season, only 2,000-3,000 people visit this place. However, in September through November, they expect 7,000 -8,000 people a day. The weather is unpredictable here.

We felt it was chilly and everyone wears long sleeve cloth. Since shower comes without notice, everyone brings an umbrella or a rain coat handy. It was very warm yesterday when we visited the site of Machu Picchu but it was rather chilly today.

In the town



Our train returning to Sacred Valley left at 3:48 p.m. In the train, there was a local dancing exhibition with colorful costumes and a fashion show of local costumes was also exhibited. It was a fun ride coming back to Sacred Valley. When we arrived in Sacred Valley, Jamilet, our local coordinator, who likes Korean Dramas, came all the way from Cusco, which is about 60 miles, with a driver to pick us up. It was nearly 6:00 p.m. and darkness comes early in the valley. It took us nearly two hours to get back to our hotel in Cusco in the dark along a narrow highway. We drove a small van of 7 seats but only four of us, the driver, Jamilet, and two of us were riding the van. Although I felt very thankful to the coordinator and the driver, I couldn't believe the way the tour company wastes the manpower and the time.

We had a simple dinner at the non-alcoholic bar and when the service lady there found out we were from Korea, she turned on Korean songs sung by Korean vocal talents. She also wore local costumes and we took a few photos with her.

Today has been a relatively uneventful and relaxing day for us. We are looking forward to visiting the city of Puno, where we will be relaxing, visiting a few historical sites, and riding a motor boat on the famous lake, "Lake Titicaca."

In the Train



At the Hotel



Day 15

The hotel we checked in last night is the same hotel where we stayed two days ago. This is the hotel where we left two pieces of our main luggage before we left for Sacred Valley/Machu Picchu. The people working at the counter recognized us and gave us a mini-suite as a service. The quality of breakfast is very good.

Jamilet came to the hotel at 9:00 a.m. to pick us up and we drove to the airport just on time. The flight left Cusco at 11:15 a.m. and we arrived in Juliaca, which is the largest city in this region with a population of a half million. Abel, the tour guide while we are in this area with the driver, Urbano greeted us at the airport. It took about one hour and 15 min to get to our hotel located in Puno, which is located along the shores of the Titicaca Lake. Abel told us that Puno used to be the largest city in the region, but now it has a population of about 250,000. He also mentioned that the Inca Culture began around the Titicaca Lake. But the weather here is much colder than that of Cusco and as a result they moved to Cusco to establish the culture. The temperature in the Juliaca area is nearly constant throughout the year but in winter, it can get below freezing point only at night. Due to cold weather and low in rain fall, Incas moved to Cusco, which had become the center of the Inca Culture in due course. Cusco is famous on corn,

while potato is the main agricultural product in the Juliaca area. Juliaca is also the world largest producer of quinoa. There are about 400 kinds of potatoes, which is one of the major sources for the local economy.

The hotel we checked in is a branch hotel with the one we stayed in Cusco and Sacred Valley. The room is large and clean, and we felt very comfortable in it. Only the huge difference between the two places is the weather. It is much colder here than Cusco. We were a little tired and the city center is too far away and therefore, we decided to have a light dinner at the hotel. Helen had Risotto with mushrooms and vegetables, and I had Grilled Chicken. We look forward to a motor-boat ride and visit floating islands tomorrow.



Day 16

The highest elevated place I have been to was Juzhaigour (구체구) in China, where the elevation was about 3,000 m. When I was in those beautiful mountainous places, I didn't feel any ill-effect due to the elevation. However, in the Puno region, of which elevation is 4,000 m, I felt a little dizzy and as a result, could not sleep well. This was despite my constant drink of coca tea during the daytime, as I was told by experience people here.

Abel, our tour guide came to the hotel to pick us up at 7:15 a.m. and it took us not more than 15 min to arrive to Lake Titicaca. Lake Titicaca is the largest lake in South America with about 110 miles long and 40 miles wide. About 57% of the lake belongs to Peru and 43% to Bolivia. We rode a 25 seat motorboat heading to floating islands. There were about 20 people on board, of which 10 were under our guide and the others were Chinese under a different guide. In our group, there were three Mexicans, four from Spain and three from the US. There are 87 floating islands with about 800 inhabitants. The original people who used to live during the pre-Inca era were Uros. During the invasion of Incas, most of them became the slaves to the Incas. When the Incas moved to Cusco, they have re-established their villages on these islands.

We landed on one of the Uro Islands and listened to our guide and the president of the island

about how the floating islands are made and their daily lives. One of the interesting stories we heard was that they have a trial marriage system, where a girl and a man start living together and if they have a child, they get married permanently. If they don't have a child born during this period, they can be broken up back to the individual life. Their transportation is done by boats made of local totora reeds. Their islands are also built by these local reeds. About 1 by 1 m block of this reed-based blocks are netted together into a big mass which then becomes an island. At least 3-5 families should get together to build an island, where houses are built, vegetables are grown, and animals are fed. They have solar panels to supply electricity and they own TV's and modern gadgetries. We bought a weaved decorative pillowcase as a way of supporting their well-beings. We also rode a special boat, referred to as a "Benz" for 10 sols (about \$2) for each person.



Demonstration of building the island using Totora reeds



Happy dancing Uro people with the visitors



A special boat, "Benz"



Uro Islands at a distance

There are three big well known islands in Titicaca Lake: Sol Island in Bolivia side, the largest; Amantani, the second largest in Peru side but most populated; then Traquile, the third largest but most beautiful attracting most tourists. Traquile was our final destination. I told Helen that the walk in Machu Picchu was the last place involving hard walking in this trip, but unfortunately, I was wrong. We had to walk along a steep slope to get to where the restaurant was located. Although it was a hard walk, we were treated with a yummy and interesting local menu, which consisted of their traditional vegetable soup, grilled trout, and muno tea.

The people of this island are known for their fine hand-woven textiles and clothing, among the

highest quality handicrafts in Peru. Their handcraft and skills were recognized by the UNESCO some years ago. After lunch, some of us took an optional hiking to the top of the island, where a plaza is located.



Hungry group waiting for lunch



the Plaza



After a fun time in the island, we headed back to Puno. Although it involved a little heavy walking along the hill-side of the island, it was overall a pleasant and relaxing day. We were so happy that our trip to South America has been ended with a fine finale!



Part of Puno seen from the boat



Our hotel seen from the boat



A guinea pig saying, "Good-bye"

Day 17

Abel, our tour guide came to the hotel at 8:00 a.m. and we started for the airport immediately. On the way to Juliaca Airport, we visited the ruins of Sullustani, where we saw the ancient Aymaras buried high class priests in column shaped tombs. There were two kinds of the column shaped tombs; one representing pre-Inca era and the other, Inca era. It was very apparent that those constructed by Incas was superior to those built by Aymaras. The shape of column constructed by Incas symbolizes the shape of phallus, which meant that the source of energy coming from men's body directing toward to the sky. The doors of these columns are facing to the east meaning it greets the sun rising from the far end of Earth. The guide told us that this high ground tombs emanate high energy and those who visit this sacred place will absorb high energy. He also mentioned that this site will become almost equally famous as the site of Machu Picchu in a few years time. I could not say what he is saying is reasonable but the scenery at the top of the hills is quite spectacular. There is a huge lake, Lake Umayo surrounding the site giving a special meaning to the place. Lake Umayo is 10 km long and 3 km wide and because of its beauty, more than 1,000 visitors come here daily.





When we arrived at the city of Juliaca, we saw many houses that are incomplete. For example, a three story house is built to only two stories and people move in and don't complete the house. The reason is that if the house is completed, the state tax goes up very high and people are cheating the government. This reminded us of the comment made by the guide when we arrived in Peru. She mentioned that Peru is very rich in mineral resources, agricultural products, and fishery products but is still poor mainly because of the corruption running through the government and its citizens alike.



On the way to the airport, Abel told us a couple of jokes.

Joke 1:

A doctor in Juliaca had a plumbing problem at his home and called a plumber to fix it. The plumber took for an hour to fix the problem and charged him for 100 sols. The doctor was very surprised and kind of mad about the amount he charged. He told him, "I am a doctor but I only charge for 60 sols for an hour service!" The plumber replied by saying, "Ya? I was a doctor before becoming a plumber!"

Joke 2

A native Juliaca man is known to be very smart, wise and spiritual. He can tell a time very accurately by looking at the sun in the sky. A man was very curious about this and asked him

about the time. The wise man looked into the sky holding an ox tail to his eyebrow and told him that it was 11:15 a.m. The guy looked at his watch and was surprised to find out that it was 11:15 a.m. Sometime later, he asked the wise man again for the time. He repeated the ritual and told him it was 1:30 p.m. and to his surprise, it was exactly correct. With a profound curiosity, he asked the wise man, "I am so pleasantly surprised about your wisdom and accuracy of reading the time by just looking at the sun. But, why do you hold the ox tail to your eyebrow?" He replied to say that "I am looking at the clock on the tower but the sun light bothers me and therefore I have to use the shadow of the ox tail to improve my visual."

We arrived in the airport a little earlier than expected and said good-bye to Abel, our tour guide. When we arrived in Lima, our old travel representative, Jasio, a 76 years old gentleman was waiting for us. He kindly drove us to our hotel, which is the hotel we stayed last time when we were in Lima. Since we didn't have lunch, we had lunch/dinner at Makoto Restaurant, a Japanese restaurant located near our hotel. We had Tempura Udon, which was very delicious and we felt home. Since our flight will leave Lima at 1:05 a.m., we left our hotel at 9:00 p.m. to be at the airport at least two hours lead time. This meant that we stayed in the hotel for just 4 hours because of our flight time, what a waste!

The flight to Atlanta was delight and we felt that we were already home. It has been a long trip for us, an aging couple and we were totally agreeable to the saying, "travel should be done when you are young and energetic." However, we also admit that this trip has been very special to us and we have enjoyed every minute of it and will treasure the experience we have had for a long time to come. ***