

Ruins near Cusco, Peru

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Wednesday, October 13, 2004

The floor is heated! In the hotel bathroom. I don't believe it! Very new and very clean. Much nicer than the Lima hotel. Cusco itself seems much newer and nicer than Lima also. But still it is not totally safe. There is a safe in the room and I'm supposed to leave my passport and airline tickets in it. And keep valuables in my front pockets. And stay within certain areas.

Flight from Lima to Cusco was amazing. So many snow-capped mountains. And it is spring time here, just south of the equator.

No autobahns here. To cover a hundred miles, you might have to drive a few thousand miles, it seems. If it is even possible! Only dirt road switchbacks. Very dry and heavily terraced.

While landing in Cusco, I saw a herd of Llamas. You know the origin of the name, right? Spaniards kept asking "what is that thing called?" Como se llama?

Went on a 4 hour tour of Cusco and vicinity today. Started as the Tour from Hell. 29 people on a bus that holds 29 little people. Lots of ugly noisy Americans today. First stop, Korikancha, the Temple of the Sun. Horrible. Must have been 1000 tourists in there. People pushin'. People shovin'. Temple was boring and forgettable, except for the rock construction details. The Incas were amazing at being able to form rocks to fit together without any mortar.



[Korikancha. Cool rock construction.](#)



[Korikancha outside.](#)

Stop #2 was awesome. A Cathedral from the 1500's. Very large. Tons of gold, silver, wood sculptures, etc. One statue was called "the Black Jesus". A huge earthquake hit Cusco in the 1700's. It stopped as soon as they took the statue out of the cathedral. So, every year, they take the statue out of the cathedral and throw roses and things on it. For insurance against another earthquake. So, after many years, all the flowers have darkened the statue of Jesus to the point where it is pretty much black.

Clever Incans hid their own religious icons in the Spanish Catholic statues and sculptures. You can find gowns in the shape of the mountains (they worshipped the Andes), dress ornaments with snakes (for wisdom), corn, etc.

Next stop was the coolest, Sacsayhuaman, which sure sounds like Sexy Woman to me! Huge rocks and fields a thousand feet above Cusco. Erroneously called a fortress by my Peru tour book. Covers probably a square mile. Huge. Definitely cool. Got to walk around on huge rocks, up to 10 meters tall, which had been carried from up to 20 miles away.



[Sacsayhuaman](#)



[Huge rocks at Sacsayhuaman](#)



[Sacsayhuaman](#)



[Sacsayhuaman](#)



[Sacsayhuaman](#)



[Sacsayhuaman](#)



[Sacsayhuaman](#)

Leaving Sacsayhuaman, I bought a little obsidian llama. 35 soles. Lady wanted 45 then 40 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 38 then 35. So I gave in. Then I got mobbed! Senior! Senior!

Sat next to a Japanese person on the bus. There were three traveling together. So I said, "Sumimasen, Nihon-jin desu-ka? Watashi-wa Amerika-jin desu." Thought she was going to lose it! It was funny. They were from Osaka.



[View of Cusco from the bus
near Sacsayhuaman.](#)



[Tambo Machay. People would
come up and place one hand in
each little stream of water and
pray.](#)

Three more little stops, a spring with three little aqueduct like rock cuttings (Tambo Machay). A fort (Kenko) at the entrance to the Inca Trail. The other end of the Inca Trail is at Machu Picchu, and it is a 14 day hike from here. And a cool limestone rock formation (Puca Pucara) split apart by a seismic fault. They did both animal and human sacrifices here. Each at about 13,000 feet.



[Hotel in Cusco, Los Andes de
America.](#)



[Coca tea. Legal and non-
hallucinogenic.](#)



[Heated floor!](#)

Dinner was interesting. A very traditional place right on the main square in Cusco (Plaza de Armas). Buffet style with a performance. Five musicians and four dancers. Muy lindo! Lots of large groups there, including about a group of about 30 high school girls. Almost all were from Peru or Brazil. I was put at a table by myself up front with a little American flag. An Italian couple that I saw several more times later on invited me to join them, but I was feeling a little ragged and declined.

Started with a small (3-4 oz) Pisco Sour. Tasted just like a whiskey sour to me, but with rum I think. Round one of the buffet was (1) duck or goose. Carved off a very large leg. Tasted like pork to me. (2) home-made potato chips. too chewy. (3) some pickle or squash like vegetable. good, but I only sampled it. (4) rice soup with peas, etc. mostly broth, but very good. (5) stale bread. (6) chicken legs. fried. cut-off or something so it was easy to grab. Tasted just like fried chicken here. (7) some cake like thing that I thought was lemon cake ... but it had tuna or something in it! Odd! (8) some rice.

Ordered an Inca Kola which tasted like a Mountain Dew mixed with bubble gum. Horrible! Ended up costing 5 soles. Not worth 1 sole.

Round two was (1) roasted lamb, quite good. (2) duck breast. Very tasty, just like turkey. (3) an awesome spicy pasta with veggies. Best! (4) beignets without powder. good. (5) tiny slice of pie. a small layer or cheesecake covered with blueberries or currants, I couldn't tell. very tasty.

I left early due to a headache and the loud music. Easy to get at this altitude, 11,000 feet.





[Five musicians. Strange instruments.](#)



[Two male and two female dancers. Quite good.](#)

I must have heard Yesterday from the Beatles a hundred times in Peru. And the Titanic song from Celine Dion. Jeez, enough already!

Tomorrow is the Sacred Valley. Bring mosquito repellent and a poncho.

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