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Inca Trail – Day 1

Nice walk in the morning (i.e. flat).

Stairway from hell in the afternoon. I walked with Laura as the steps put her bottom at eye level. ☹️ The steps went on and on and on. We were Sam and Frodo climbing Mount doom (apparently I was the fat gay one). We sang hi ho. Repeatedly. Finally we reached the campsite. It wasn't ours. Boy can Laura swear.

Inca Trail – Day 2

The delightfully named 'Dead womans pass'. 4200 metres. Getting up there was tough. Then my world went to hell. Goat paths in the mist with 1 kilometre drops are not my thing. Crawled across the wood bridges in tears. Josie (one of the guides) had to cuddle me and tell me I was ok. Eventually I was given my own guide and sent off on my own. Did much of the Inca trail on my arse. I can safely say I have never been so scared for so long.

Inca Trail – Day 3

As day 2 but with steeper downhill steps. Alvis (my guide) and I chew lots of coca leaves and pray to the Mountain gods. We reach the final campsite. Beer is drunk. The only good thing is that there are a number of other truck parties at the site and we are easily the prettiest. Boy, there are some ugly people about.

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Machu Picchu

Off at 5am to the sungate. The first view of Machu Picchu. I never thought I'd say it but the pain and fear was worth it. Incredible.

We tourist. We bar. We get the train back to Cuzco. Emily & Sarah tie me to the train seat by my poncho and steal my beer. Everyone has a real post trail buzz. I retire, drunk & knackered at about 2am. The girls go clubbing.

2 more days in Cuzco.

We chill, we eat, we drink in a leisurely fashion. Myself, Sara, Helen, Brendon & Laura (major body language happening with the last two) go to a really cool restaurant called Fallen Angel. Tables are old bathtubs with fish in. There is a large evil angel statue. The steaks are bloody & perfect. My shoulder is better (but not good). I am having a great time.

Cuzco – Puno.

Long drive. Nice restaurant. All having lots of fun watching Brendon & Laura pretend their not together.

Puno – Lake Titikake

To the reed islands. Fairly bizarre. I have to say the reed museum full of badly stuffed animals may not be a trip highlight. Visited an island with some stunning views, then on to another island

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Where we stay with local families. Some of the boys take on a team of 6 year olds at football and get beaten 6 – 9, they blame the altitude.

Where Phil and I are staying there are reed mattresses and a thatched roof. Perfect resting place for the assassin bug. One bite & you have chaggers disease. 10 years late your heart explodes. Fortunately its rare. In fact it only occurs in rural areas of lake Titikaka where they still use reed mattresses. Ho Hum. The children from our family come and sing to us. We are fed (I am forced to hide mine in my bag as its vile but I can't be rude & leave it).

In the evening we don local costume and go to a dance. Sarah looks sexy, most of the other girls are not flattered by the outfits. It's a good night but we're all pleased when it ends.

Puno to La Paz

An early morning boat ride back to Puno, then a stunning drive to La Paz. At lunch a few of us visit an inca sun temple. Not much of it remains but there is a giant phallus for the girls to pose with. Arrived late in La Paz and had an early night.

La Paz (2 days)

I go shopping with Emily. Its Tourist Tat heaven. I get a couple of attractive new outfits. We do a tour of La Paz. Its fairly frantic. The gold museum was ok. The nice thing is that no one haggles, the price is the price and its fairly soft sell compared with Peru.

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Spitting. Apparently the local pickpockets, not content with robbing you, first spit on you to distract you. The first time it happens I easily beat the guys hand to my wallet. The second time I am surrounded by four blokes, get a massive gob in the fac & they all cry and look up. I am obviously expected to look up as well. Instead I cry “Emily their spitting at me again” in a very non macho fashion. She drives them off & produces a wet wipe. I have to say that the thieves here are crap compared to Africa – I still have not been robbed. Back at the hotel I wash in dettol. It turns out that no one else has been spat on!

So, although I have acquired some cheap junk, a fake camera that already doesn't flash and more alpaca socks that I can need, La Paz really has failed to mug me. Then I venture to the witches market alone. I am lured into a shop come grotto by a toothless crone. We have an extensive conversation in mime, interspersed by insane cackling. I get the two clay tiles I want, although my choice is clearly not meeting with her approval. More importantly I resist the lama foetus and stuffed armadillos. However, I am clearly in need of some lucky charms if I am not to be gored by chickens (the mime wasn't entirely clear). I get a charm to bring me luck and wealth. Or, possibly to bring her my wealth. I get a three headed earth goddess to bring me health, happiness and love. Some heavy duty miming reveals that this is spiritual love rather than bonking. Fortunately a third charm ensures that I will get some serious jig-jig in the near future. She even throws in a turtle charm for free –

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So I am fully protected against death by turtle.

La Paz – Potosi

Truck, scenic views, steak dinner, bed.

When Sarah's (welsh totti – nice bod) eyes aren't bloodshot she does have the sexiest eyes.

Potosi – uyni in a crappy bus.

Enjoyed the fact that the driver got off to watch the girls pee. Not much else good to say. Played cards in the evening, lost & had to run round the hotel in my pants. Will get my own back on Laura and Emily.

Salt flats in a 4 x 4.

First a salt factory. Or rather, a man with a shovel, and oven and dozens of scabby children. I will never eat salt again. Then on to the salt flats. They are like nothing I have ever seen before. Just flat sparkling white hexagons vanishing into the distance. We visit an 'island', a rock & coral outcrop in the salt covered in giant cacti, some over 1000 years old. On to a cave cemetery where Emily pulls down my trousers. Unfortunately I am 'sans pants'. Laura has hysterics. Those two are now on my hit list (but both have nice bottoms so I may forgive eventually). Visited a cool cave (if you like caves) and then on to a hostel. A bit down market from what we have experienced before. Reminded me of the flat in Worcester. Walk to a nearby cemetery. Creepy desiccated mummies sitting in lava bubbles. Then we walk back.

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Sandstorm. Suddenly you can't see a foot. It stings. Sand is driven into every orifice. Its rather scary. Fortunately it doesn't last long.

Bolivian desserts in a 4 x 4.

The scenery is just amazing. We lunch by a lagoon with flamingos, visit strange carved rock outcrops, climb old lava flows beneath a gently smouldering volcano. Every time you think you can't go 'Wow' again something Wows you.

The hostel is not posh. 10 boys in a room. The final wow occurs when the boots are removed.

Out of Bolivia – into Chile.

A final glorious lake amongst the mountains and on into Chile. San Pedro a hippy border town come shit-hole. The girls find a "Great Bar". I suspect it is a gay joint frequented by drug dealers. (The fact that 3 different men asked me to bed and one tried to sell me cake gave me the clue). Some of the girls claim their drinks are spiked, although since most of them consumed several Pisco sours with beer chasers before dinner, drank serious quantities of wine with dinner and then switched to shorts, meant that any drugs were pretty much wasted. Fortunately the bar closes at 11:30pm. The bar manager knows somewhere we can go for more beer and since that seems like a really bad idea we follow him. About a mile out of town we reach a deserted shack where he attempts to sell us cocaine. I leave the others demanding beer and head back to town. I have no idea where the hotel is and wander aimlessly. Finally I bump into Emily,

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Who has found more beer and a non-homosexual bar worker. She points me to the hotel 10 yards away. I wake Phil (now a tradition) and go to bed.

San Pedro

Post opportunity has arisen.
Having a fantastic time.
Rich