Hello, I'm Lyn Jarvis, Contributing Editor for Across the Fence and our show today comes from South America and the country of Peru, with stops at many of the sacred Inca sites. We'll begin here in the capital city of Peru, beautifully located on the Pacific coast as you can see, with a population of almost a million people. We'll begin our tour by hopping on a bus to go to the Government Center to watch the changing of the guard.

In Lima, the transportation system is privately owned and with more than 400 bus companies competing for business, resulting in organized chaos, I would opt for a taxi. But thanks to our Spanish speaking video editor for today's show, Marco Ayala, we got off at all the right stops, a good beginning to our Peruvian adventure.

The Government Palace, located in the Plaza de Armas, was just around the corner, and is the official residence of the President. The site has spiritual meaning as the last Inca ruler lived here until 1535… when Francisco Pizarro, conqueror of the Incas, took the place for the first Spanish palace.

At noon sharp the band started and the ceremonial changing of the guard commenced behind a protective wrought iron fence with military protection. When I asked why all the security, the response was overly aggressive tourists and disgruntled locals who used the event for protests. With vision somewhat obscured, we still enjoyed hearing the band while we joined the crowd to look around Lima's central square. Close to the Governor's Palace is the San Francisco Monastery designed and dedicated by Pizarro himself, laying the cornerstone soon after conquering the Incas. Built in the Baroque style, it is one of the oldest and most beautiful buildings in the city.

By now the changing of the guard, made up of representatives from the Peruvian military and National Police Force, was over and they made their way back into the Palace. Nearby is the Central Reserve Bank of Peru, now a museum with some beautiful examples of Inca artifacts, from modern to Pre-Columbian. Many antiquities in the collection, taken away by early explorers and grave robbers, only recently have been returned to Peru and are now on
display. Here is a quick look at just a few of them to give you an idea of the Inca's artistic and creative genius.

(Music)

We stayed in a part of Lima called Miraflores, which means "Look at the Flowers." I admired these peach colored roses many times a day, as they bloomed at the entrance to our hotel. Close by, we were surprised to find Kennedy Park, named in honor of John F. Kennedy, our 35th President.

With the rise of Cuba's Fidel Castro he wanted to stave off Latin American Communism. To accomplish this he initiated aid programs and sent Peace Corps volunteers and the park is a tribute to him and a reminder of that critical time in our history. Nowadays, the park is a magnet for tourists who come to look for bargains from the many local artists and crafters who set up shop here.

When darkness falls on Lima, the Circuito Magico del Agua is a must. It is the city’s newest attraction and locals and tourists agree, it is awesome. What was once a dusty park on the edge of downtown has been transformed into a magical array of multi colored waters with laser beam dancers to perform for you. I've never seen anything like it.

(Music)

Another new attraction best seen at night is the Maria Reiche Park, dedicated to the German scientist who dedicated her life to the study and conservation of the mysterious Nasca Lines, like this figure that represents a monkey. But best seen from the air, these mysterious lines are located in an arid and remote area 280 miles south of Lima. First recoded by Pizarro in 1537 when he wrote "There are lines in a remote part of the dessert, so the Indians can find their way." But they are much more than that and we traveled by bus, for 7 hours, through the same dessert that Pizarro explored some 500 years ago.

We finally arrived at the small airport where we waited for our flight over the Nazca lines. Adjacent to the waiting area is a nurse who dispersed pills for those of us prone to motion sickness. She told me not to worry, and somewhat reassured, I climbed aboard…hoping for the best. The engine started and the pilot pulled the plane onto the tarmac. At full throttle the single engine Cessna sped down the runway….lift off. Soon lines and wondrous figures laid in the sand centuries ago, stretched out beneath us.

Sixty treasured minutes later, I was left awed by what we had seen. The motion pills had done their job and I needed to know more about these mysterious lines in the sand.

The nearby Maria Reiche Museum had the answers. Her former workshop is left just as it was the day she died, June 8, 1998 at the age of 96. In her own words, here is her story.

“I decided that my life work will be in Nasca. The God's themselves have taken me from the beginning to their sand castles and have locked me up here… to play with their giant drawings until one day I find the reason for their existence. The drawings are very superficial furrows never more than 12 inches in depth. For this reason time and winds obscure them. I cleaned...
them with a broom, one broom after another throughout the years. I went through so many, rumors circulated that I might be a witch. I believe these figures and lines represent an astronomical calendar to please the gods and remind them that the desert needs water and the crops their blessings.”

Without her tireless work and discoveries the lines would have been destroyed and their significance lost in time. In 1994 they were designated a UN World Heritage site, forever to be protected. She was honored many times, but always said the most meaningful, was being awarded Peruvian citizenship, truly making her a daughter of Peru and her beloved "Spirits in the Sand."

Lyn Jarvis / Across the Fence: We have arrived at the Sacred Valley of Urubamba scattered with ancient ruins…and once served as the gate-way to the Amazon jungle. Today it is considered one of the most important tourists’ attractions in Peru.

Fed by snow melt from the Andes, River Urubamba, is one of the country's most important waterways flowing 450 miles into the mighty Amazon. Considered sacred by the ancients and still by many, the river provides much needed water for crops and animals.

(music)

Our first stop was the mountain village of Chinchora and we were ready for lunch with vegetable soup for a starter.
It looks delicioso. And yes, it was as good as it looks.

We were seated at a long table adorned with a beautiful handmade tablecloth, the perfect setting for the main course…consisting of corn, potato, rice, a round tortilla with a sauce of quinoa (keen-wah), a leafy plant related to spinach.

An all vegetarian meal we thought…how healthy. But no, there was something else on the plate. It was guinea pig, that the call jaca, a vital source of protein here, but this one was too salty for my taste.

Compared to the Peruvian lowlands with bright flowers and ocean sunsets, it's bleak here. To compensate, they wear bright colored clothing created from yarns like this. It's made from alpaca wool that is cleaned with saqta root found high on the slopes of nearby mountains.

All hues come from natural dyes using skills passed down from mother to daughter and we had fun guessing what color yarn would come out of the pot. And then hours are spent knitting and weaving the brightly colored yarn into clothing, decorative items, and souvenirs for us tourists. As a preview to the most visited Inca ruin, Machu Picchu, we were taken to Ollantaytamba with its impressive Sun Temple, where this street musician welcomed us.
Situated 9,100 feet above sea level, it was the center for Inca resistance during the Spanish conquest in the early 1500's. Nowadays, it is the most common starting point for the three day, 25 mile Inca Trail hike that ends at Machu Picchu.
On the steep cliffs of Pinculluna, the sacred mountain that rises above the town, are the ruins of several ancient houses once used for food storage. And as an offering to Inti, the Inca sun god, whose face was carved by man or nature, no one knows for sure, into the sheer stone precipice.
Some 200 steps lead to the Temple of the Sun, considered one of the masterpieces of Inca stone work.
Six giant monoliths of red granite are perfectly slotted together with thin slices of stone placed to glow with the rising sun.
Nearby are the ruins of Moray. Along with being skilled architects, the Incas had knowledge of agronomy and perfected farming techniques.
These enormous terraced circular depressions sink nearly 100 feet into the earth creating a temperature difference of as much as 27°F from the top to the bottom.
This range in temperatures enabled the Incas to study the effects of climate conditions on their crops, making it the world's first agricultural experiment station.

The Incas say there was, and still is, good energy in this sacred valley, once home to their royal leaders.
And even today, these fields continue to produce the finest crops grown in all of Peru.
In the valley is the small village of Urubamba, once the home of tribes ruled by chieftains and the entry point to the jungle for the Incas.
It is now one of the most beautiful and peaceful cities in the Sacred Valley with a nearly perfect climate year around.
Since many tourists pass through, the locals, especially school aged, are anxious to practice their English speaking skills … and like everywhere, proud mothers want you to take a picture of their baby, and who could resist?
The bus climbed higher into the Peruvian Andes. At about 10,000 feet, we made a brief stop. It was cold and windy and I felt sorry for the ladies who had gathered hoping to make a sale.
From here, we were able to see the first snow covered peaks on our journey. September here in Peru is like March in Vermont…and it sure felt like it.
As we left a flock of llamas and alpacas, with their babies waited for spring to arrive with greener pastures.
(music) The best way to experience a place is to take the road less traveled and on a free afternoon, that's just what we did.
Here the people do not engage in conversation…only tolerate…but even without words these pictures tell a thousand stories.

(music)

One of the most moving things for me was happening upon this farmer taking his herd to water.
Watching him, I knew these animals were his companions, reason for being, and life itself.
We waited on the shores of the lake to watch his thirsty animals come to drink.
(music)
Lyn Jarvis / Across the Fence: If you enjoyed what you saw today, I'll be back tomorrow with more adventures from Peru, South America. I'm Lyn Jarvis for Across the Fence and thank you for watching.

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