

Good afternoon, I'm Peter Cullens, amateur presenter and mispronouncer of Spanish.

Before I begin I must admit I did have **two** concerns with this talk: **one**, I am having some trouble recalling names and facts and **two**.....er two er something else. Bit close to the truth!

I was hoping for a dull day so that you could see my pictures, no luck, so perhaps you should close close your eyes and use your imagination and I will kid myself you are still awake

This is an account of my visit to Peru in 2005. A land of **volcanoes, mountains and deserts**. It was organised by Cox and Kings with local guides.

Machu Picchu is somewhere most people have heard of and maybe visited, an ancient **city in the clouds** that the Spanish failed to find but which was abandoned and then, many years later, re-discovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911. However, what has fascinated me was how a bronze age people, who did not know about **wheels, writing, horses** or even **money**, ran a large empire that extended 3000 miles through **Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile**. The only written descriptions are those taken down by Spanish Jesuits interrogating older inhabitants some time after the conquest, and they had their own agenda. And so **Inca history** is a mixture of **facts, myths and propaganda**.

In the time allotted I can only cover part of what we saw, but hopefully I can give you a flavour of Peru.

This is a map of Peru with our journey a red dotted line **Lima, Pisco, Paracas, Colca Canyon, Arequipa, Puno, Cusco and Machu Picchu**

It was in early October that we flew from Schiphol to **Lima**, a tedious 14hour flight.

Lima is both the capital and transport hub of Peru with a population of about 10million. London is 2 million less. 30% of Peruvians live in Lima, a sub tropical city where it hardly ever rains, water comes from rivers and wells fed by the Andes snow melt and, every morning, there is a sea fog from the Pacific. The "**mild Desert**" conditions there are helped to be **mild** by the Humboldt current ☼

The **historic centre** of the city was built in the 16th century in the grand Spanish Colonial style using money generated by the silver mines and looted gold; but has often been damaged by earthquakes.

On the **first full day** we toured Lima in what is their Spring, warm, dry and sunny.

This is the **Main Square** with the Cathedral and Town Hall and a horse bus for the tourists. **Everywhere else** the numerous minibuses pick up anywhere and tout loudly for custom as they rush by, racing their rivals. In English when they spot you. ☼ ☼

The **Art Market** is aimed at tourists and influenced by Beryl Cook it seems. There are people at the Airport who will pack up anything, any shape, on the spot, for a small fee,

There are few trees in Lima and the local sea birds take advantage of the Lamp Posts on the **coast road**. More Guano!

We visited the The **Monastery of St Francis** with its Church, Ancient Library, Cloisters and, in the crypt, a **bone store**. We weren't told how long the bodies had been buried, but the bones were quite clean. It was suitably spooky, dim light with bins of thigh bones, rib bones etc all sorted. Lack of burial space in Lima was given as the reason, There is still not enough space and the bodies of the poor are put into concrete pigeon holes in above ground cemeteries ☼

Perhaps this is **St Ignatius Loyola** who helped found the Jesuits and had been a soldier, or perhaps it's Pizarro slaughtering the heathen, NB the heads? I expect you will be aware of the stories of Spanish **treachery and blood lust**

There were wealthy Spanish Aristocrats and Entrepreneurs living here in the 16th century under the adventurer and by then, **Viceroy**, Francisco Pizarro, and their houses reflected their wealth. We were able to look round the house of **Heronimo de Aliaga**, Pizarro's lieutenant. Built in 1535 it was **cool, dark and opulent** but originally without glass.

The University, top right, is the oldest in the new world founded in **1551**.

Most Peruvians are now **mixed race** Spanish/ Amerindian and they seemed friendly, **very short** and jolly but are obviously romantics as the **Lovers Bridge** had to be screened off to prevent suicides there. And there is a **statue near by** for inspiration

There were frequent political demonstrations but the **heavy police presence** ensured calm.

The slums or **Barrios**, which we **didn't** visit, were like any South American slum spreading up the hillsides around Lima and the **middle class suburbs** are similar to any subtropical city.

This is a **tyre shop**; in Peru you build what you can afford at the time and I wanted to show a range of buildings

Next day we set off by minibus in the dark at 4am along the **Pan American** Highway and were surprised to see street lights in the Barrios, which have no mains water or power. The answer was a socialist prime minister, had provided these lights as a sop to the poor and so now some of the shacks have a free, illegal, but pretty dangerous power supply!

A desert village and this is a **lone shack** in the desert built of rush mats but at least they have a Television
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Puis, piles of stones built at **sacred high spots**, are good luck offerings or prayers, a bit like coins in a fountain. ✿

A government approved **deep trench latrine** with solar panel roof. Sanitation and a little power.

After a long hot drive we took a boat around the Nature Reserve of **Paracas** with its thousands of birds, sea lions, sea Otters, penguins etc all living off the **Guano Islands** that were once 30m high. Now most of the Guano has been mined and sold as manure. However the birds are still working hard to restore the height.

A **sea lion harem**; the male is about 8ft long weighing 700 lbs

We saw Inca Terns, Guanay Cormorants, Brown Pelicans, Boobies, Turkey Vultures, Humboldt Penguins etc etc

Next day we drove through the town of **Pisco** famous there for Pisco Sours, local Brandy Sours. The Peruvian wine was dreadful and everyone who could afford it drank Chilean wine

Next we visited the **Nasca Lines**, the incredibly huge, mysterious drawings in the desert which can only be seen from a plane, balloon or space ship. The Nasca were the local Indians. We flew over the Nasca Lines in a **small plane** which needed to spin on its wing tip for us to see the drawings, and some people did **not feel well**.

Aqueduct Flute Player

Further along the Pan American Highway we came across the only **oasis** in the Atacama Desert with the **tallest dunes in the world** with people snow boarding down them. Dune buggies take you up to the top. The water is now pumped into the pool as the water table has dropped. Some of our group had **a paddle** while we waited for lunch
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The Protected **Huarango** Trees, shown here, **were** essential for maintaining the stability of the soil; providing nitrogen, as peas do, and timber and fodder. Their roots go 40ft down, but the Nasca cut them all down to plant crops and so helped the desert to form

Along the Highway we passed a few **fields of asparagus**, possibly for export to UK. The road is vital for transport to Lima and Pumped water is used for irrigation.

Later on we passed the **Valley of the Olives**. Olive trees for miles and miles but the only olive grove we saw
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Peru has some mineral and oil exports but agriculture can't compete, so they need tourism and there are **museums** in the major towns despite vast quantities of historic artefacts having been looted or destroyed. You may know that Europe suffered hyper inflation in the 16th century because of all the **gold and silver** flooding in. The Spanish melted down most of the golden artefacts.

We visited a small museum at **Ica**. Some aristocratic Incas bound their babies' heads and produced **strangely shaped skulls** which may have impressed the peasants. Their dead were embalmed, dressed and stored in cliff tombs where many **Mummies** can still be found. The Inca people were particularly good at textiles both fine and coarse with multiple, colourful patterns

The **shrunk heads** are produced by the Shaman of the Peruvian Amazon Jungle, The Amazon rises in northern Peru and flows east

The Inca produced very varied pottery with decorated plates, cups etc and also **pipes** which were used to smoke **Coca leaves**. We were given **Coca Matey** to drink at several stops, it was a bit like Green Tea, no buzz, but one woman in our group ate the leaves with slaked lime and was very ill afterwards. The Spanish used that form of cocaine to keep the Indian slaves working in the mines with little food, consequently there was a high loss of life. **Smallpox** and other European diseases also took their toll.

The **Inquisition**, trying to stamp out the old religions altogether, also reduced the population. **Obsidian Knives**
As you may guess, we got a fairly **anti Spanish and Catholic Church** slant from our local guides.

Some Indians still **farm** traditionally and we looked round such a farm. We were invited to sample their roast potatoes which often grow wild. I did try one, which was unwise, it tasted fine but the **Inca took his revenge** next day!

Each Indian tribe wears a distinctive hat. **Bowlers** are said to have been brought in by British railway workers, or alternatively, by a very persuasive **salesmen**, who knows which, not Wikipedia **Foot Plough**

This object is intended to ward off bad luck and is seen on many houses. It is an amalgam of the crucifix and two bulls who, in older versions, were just two alpacas alone. These were protectors of people and houses. So now, **combined**, they are backing both the old and the new religion.

Crops cultivated across the Inca Empire included maize, beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, peanuts, cashews, squash, cucumber, quinoa, carob, and avocado. **Livestock** was primarily llama and alpaca herds but the poor often ate guinea pigs. I enjoyed alpaca stew but did not try guinea pig.

At the Incan civilization's height in the 1400s, their **system of terraces** covered about a million hectares throughout Peru and fed their vast empire. They built complex terraced structures that were the best for **irrigation, drainage and warmth retention** at night. Terraces and aqueducts are now being restored in certain areas by charities like **Practical Action** but the Indian population is thin on the ground and there is the lure of the city

Arequipa 2,300 m is called the White city as it is built of white stone formed of compressed volcanic ash however there are many brightly coloured buildings. Large areas of Peru are covered with layer upon layer of **Pyroclastic** ash, Volcanic fallout.

"El Misti" is the volcano that has dominated the Arequipa skyline for a millennium, but last erupted in 1985. It was treated as a god in former times and looks like the snow capped Mount Fujiama in winter ❄️

An Arch catching a glimpse of the foothills of the Andes, Cordillera Oriental ❄️ ❄️

We had a chance to visit a preserved **Convent of Saint Catherine** and this is our cheeky guide to the convent, Carlotta, and our tour manager George pronounced Hor hey, but not by those who patriotically stuck to George. Carlotta spoke in English and Spanish with asides in Spanish for those who could understand

The convent was a little town in itself. The nuns were aristocratic Spanish women who paid a substantial "dowry" and they had their own maids and were loath to do any work even after the church was reformed. ❄️❄️❄️❄️

We drove on to see the **Colca Canyon** which is 3400 m deep, compared to the Grand Canyon's 1600m and Mount Snowdon at 1000m would easily fit in it. However, a large part of the canyon has been silted up and provides fertile fields. The sides are terraced for agriculture too ❄️ ❄️

This is a **far wall** a lava cliff with ice falls showing white.

We viewed the Canyon from the **Condor Cross** and even saw one or two Andean Condors, no doubt the tourist board puts out the odd carcass. No EU abattoir rules here ❄️

At the hotel that evening we were able to take a hot, sulphurous, open air bath. Good for you they said, and we later viewed a BBC documentary about Peruvian Shaman getting high,

Next day at **Lake Titicaca 3,800m** we visited the floating islands on the world's highest navigable lake and the Uros Indians who live there. The Islands are made from cut reeds with fresh reeds added to the islands to every year,

Our hotel on the edge of the Lake near Huliaca looked like an ocean liner

This is a **Toll station**, the tourist should contribute of course ❄️ ❄️

Wiracocha is the old God of creation. I believe Thor Heyerdahl was inspired by these boats when building Kon Tiki

The only concession in boat building today is that **polystyrene string** is used.

The **decorative heads** are moved on to new boats as boats don't last very long ❄️❄️

The **Uros Indians** were selling craft goods and souvenirs they claimed they had made. They were attractive and ridiculously cheap. To my great regret a very stylish black jaguar in polished basalt, five dollars, was stolen from me in UK

Peru rail had originally been a British owned company and they also ran the ferry across Lake Titicaca. The business was sold to help pay for WW2. This boat **SS Ollanta** was shipped from Hull in parts and assembled and launched here in 1931. The previous, smaller, ship had been built the same way in 1905

We had been gradually gaining height to **Puno 3,800m** which helped avoid altitude sickness but I had a bottle of fizzy water which burst forth over me, due to the **low pressure**.

Very few houses have or need window glass outside the cities and the railway runs through the middle of town with markets alongside and on the track.

Next day we travelled on a special train run by the Orient Express Co from **Puno Station to Cusco** a 10hour journey. The single line, with passing sections, is 3ft, narrow gauge, which was cheaper to build and copes with tighter bends. It is the highest railway in the world apart from the new Chinese railway in Tibet

The **views from the train** are spectacular and there were catering facilities, a bar and entertainment on board. A fashion show, with tall Peruvian models, was one diversion as were Folk dancers, Folk Groups etc. The Beatles "Let it be" and "Yesterday" were still popular. There were also hawkers selling their wares such as bags, embroidery, craft ware etc all along the train ❄️ ❄️❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

At the **passing point** while the train waits everyone got out to stretch their legs and there is a market and a church. The train doesn't need to take on water now-a-days

An old **steam locomotive** preserved at Cusco station

For the next few days we stayed in **Cusco 3,400m**, which had been the Inca capital. The streets are often those left by the Inca and the foundations of many buildings are still Incan.

Cusco is now a **modern city** with many prosperous businesses ❄️❄️

Taxis are not allowed to park in the city centre and you get **slow convoys of bumper to bumper taxi cabs** circling round and round, stopping briefly sometimes until the police move them on

A coach dressed up like a **tram** for the tourists ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

Examples of **Inca of water supply**, they are often covered over now. It is said the **Spanish admired the Inca sanitary arrangements but not enough to emulate them**. In fact the Incas always burnt incense in their presence because they thought they stank.

It says "**This house is not for sale, it is the subject of a law suit**"

A monastery built on **Inca foundations**

It is cheaper to hire **six workmen** than a truck. Our luggage was moved from the train, each porter carrying at least two large cases at a run, so as to make as much as possible

This is **Inti**, the sun god, fountain, he still seems to be well remembered

One day we popped into the Cathedral to avoid a noisy demonstration. There is a picture there of a dark Madonna by a local artist who is dressed in a robe giving her a triangular shape, and looking very similar to the old volcano god according to our guide.

A **church entrance** in the highly decorated style. The Indians had difficulty accepting that a god could allow himself to be crucified and in many places the cross is shown in this form with the "holy relicts", ladder, lance etc. In another effort at conversion a lot of gold and **especially mirrors** were used in churches to impress the locals.

Outside our hotel a **tiny shoe-shine boy** operated. All the English he knew was “Shoe shine mister”, “2 sol” and “No thank you, maybe tomorrow” which is what everyone said and he parroted. In the end I gave in and had my shoes done while he instructed an even smaller apprentice..

A **back packer hostel** we passed called the Frankenstein, a name possibly well earned. **Our hotels** were luxurious however. In Cusco it had been Pizarro's palace.

A **shanty town** plus political slogan on the hill and another Barrios

From Cusco we visited **Sacsayhuaman**, an Inca fortress of large stone blocks fitting tightly together with three defensive rings that gave the Spanish considerable trouble to capture despite their superior weapons and horses.

✿ ✿

We also visited a **local pub** which served home made sour maize beer, **chicha**, and it had the usual sign outside, **a red plastic bag on a stick**. With my tummy I did not try the beer but most of our party did! The pub game involves throwing brass discs into the mouth of a brass frog

Ollytayambo is an ancient town and fortress little changed. over the years

This is a nearby outcrop, half way up you can see some **rock tombs**. More tombs

This the **old town gate**. ✿ A trader. The Citadel or fortress

A cubic metre of stone weighs about a ton. These blocks may weigh 10tons and have been moved upwards 100ft, and along about a mile and then fitted together so a knife won't fit between. How were they lowered into place? Quite a task, and some blocks were moved up to 20miles

This was not part of our official tour but looking down about 100ft we could just distinguish **a cock fight** and the surrounding village

Pisac is another ancient town with a flourishing market and a town bakery

Next morning we caught a train from **Ollytayambo station** to Agua Calientes. There is no road access to Agua Calientes and Machu Picchu, diesel rail cars provide transport there.

Agua Calientes, warm waters due to the springs, is the town a couple of miles from Machu Picchu. And many buses, brought there initially by train, wind tortuously up the hill to Machu Picchu. This is a **Satellite picture**

This is part of the “**Inca Trail**” that people trek along. The whole Inca road system ran about **25,000 miles** using simple rope suspension bridges the length of western South America. The messengers both to and from the Inca capital ran about 1 mile each remembering the message and then passed it on to the next messenger. A fast system with specially trained runners who lived at the changeover points. Numerical reports of taxes, fines etc levied by local governors were represented by **knotted strings of different colours**.

A restored **change-over stop** for messengers who may have lived in the hut

Our hotel, straddling the railway line, had a rain forest garden with humming bird feeders and 180 varieties of orchids collected from the surrounding rain forest by the owner over several years.

The **dining room** across the railway track had vampire bats roosting in the roof.

Next day on our guided **tour of the ruins** some thatched roofs had been restored on building such as the **old guard house**

The Incas had not discovered the arch form and **trapezoidal widows** and doors were found to be more stable in an earthquake than oblongs.

After a good nights sleep, no vampires, I decided to catch the first bus next morning for an unguided visit early to avoid the crowds, but initially our views were obscured by the **cloud pouring down over the mountains**.

A brief word about the **Animals** in Peru which include **Llamas** pronounced **Yamas**, load carrying, bad tempered animals that can spit at you, **Alpacas** friendly, curious, good to eat, providers of good wool, **Vicunas**, shy providers of very fine wool that provided the record breaking £495 sox. Wild **Guanaco**, llama like. **Vizcachas**, Large Rodents, **Chinchillas**, **Guinea pigs** plus imported cattle who unfortunately suffer from vampire predation. The fact that only the well-off have fridges means a lot of tins of condensed milk are sold.. Oh, and there are **Jaguars** in the jungle

Birds We were not birding but saw many, sea birds and tropical birds such as Parrots, Cardinals, Anas, Pelicans etc but also surprisingly, some European imports London Pigeons, sparrows, coots etc

We returned to **Cusco** and flew back to Lima for a very brief look around including the **Adobe Pyramid** which did not impress me and then the long flight home home

As you may realise I didn't get my questions answered

Thank you