

## PERU 2009



Lima is the capital of Peru and a coastal city with a desert climate. To the east it is bordered by brown mountains.

Mountains void of vegetation that reach high into a sky without color. I would call Lima the city of iron gates and crumbling walls. By and large, it's not pretty.

There are some old architectural buildings that might have had beauty, but today they all seem to be in distress. Masterpieces of literature are left without protection and dissolve more each day. Main streets have façade walls that hide a reality of empty waste land. To top off all this, dust and pollution leave everything choking for breath. Driving into the rural part of the city, unpaved streets, there are more crumbling walls. Walls with glass to protect what little anyone has behind the walls. Crime is a major problem...mostly theft and kidnapping. I felt the majority of people simply didn't care. The rich do have lovely homes-behind walls while the poor noticeably struggle to make a living. The people have a distant look in their eyes. By deed or lack thereof, everyone plays a part of the problem that is keeping Lima from moving forward. Most seem to have accepted the situation. To me, the city is depressing.

We left Lima early and flew to Cusco, a small town located 11,000 feet higher. This little town is in a valley surrounded by mountains, but these mountains are filled with life and color. This is the land of the Inca's. This ancient culture has ruled since the 12th century. In the sacred valley, these proud people still live and worship much as they did long ago. They still wear the colorful garments of the culture. They still worship the Gods of Water, Sun and Earth. With no support from local government, they live communally and support each other with all their daily needs. Currently they live together in harmony. Machu Picchu can be seen in the distant mountains— one of the seven wonders of the world And rightfully so....splendid to see.. Of course we hiked all over it and of course we got altitude sickness due to the exercise at high altitudes. I'm blaming it on my age .

Traveling on, we saw the outskirts of Cusco which had many poorly constructed mud shacks all nestled in the hills around the city. These Peruvians do not have the bonds and security of the Inca sect. Unfortunately there is much poverty and with it, little and noticeable pollution. But again....I noticed a difference of all the people in this area from those in Lima. Here they smile and laugh and sing and dance. They are involved with their surroundings and quick to do their best to make a living. I like Cusco. It is a charming city with a mixture of the old and new.

The Inca people are proud of their culture and remember their history. To this day they dislike the Christians and Spanish dominance that took away their very existence in the 12th century. However, they still gain strength from their history and the treasure we all now share from their once grand empire. A must see!