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South American Safari 2002.pdf

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South American Safari

June 24 – July 11, 2002
WHEN THE ASSOCIATION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST LIBRARIANS (ASDAL) decided to hold their 22nd annual conference in Argentina in June of 2002, they asked me to organize a tour of some South American countries following the conference. Since the touring librarians numbered less than twenty, we opened the tour to other participants. These “extras” would visit interesting places in central Argentina while librarians were attending the five-day conference at Universidad Adventista del Plata, 200 miles inland from Buenos Aires. The total group numbered 36. Ngaire took charge of the non-librarians while I attended the conference.

Time pressure prevented me from composing a diary-style report of the 17-day trip, so I’m much indebted to Darlene Puymon of Berrien Springs, Michigan, who participated on the trip with her husband, Roy, in the full tour and prepared an excellent and detailed write-up of each day’s events. The text that follows this introduction is to a large extent an adaptation of Darlene’s story, and I use it with her kind permission.

Travel to developing parts of the world can be a wonderful and illuminating cultural experience. It does, however, sometimes come with unanticipated conditions that disrupt plans or create discomfort. This is even more so if you are leading a group of people on a tour. We’ve learned to prepare for unexpected and sometimes uncomfortable circumstances. In the case of this South American Safari, the unexpected began with economic and political problems at our first stop, Argentina.

Keith Clouten
April 2019
Argentina in Crisis

We began the intensive planning for the tour during the summer of 2001 and circulated advertising. By December, though, riots in Buenos Aires brought a U.S. State Department advisory against travel to Argentina. Fortunately, the travel advisory was lifted in January.

The years 2000 through 2002 were not good times for the people of Argentina. The country had been hit by a severe financial depression which resulted in bankrupt corporations, high unemployment, bank closures, widespread riots, and the fall of the national government. At least half the country’s population was experiencing poverty.

The freeze on bank deposits enraged Argentinians, so frequent riots were taking place in the large Plaza de Mayo in central Buenos Aires. Argentina’s peso dropped quickly from parity with the United States dollar to a value of around 25 cents. All this raised doubts and added complexity to our tour planning. Fortunately, we were able to work with Top Dest, a long-established and respected in-bound operator for groups coming to Argentina.

Arrival

Our group arrived at Buenos Aires international airport with Delta Airlines on Tuesday, June 24. The capital of Argentina is located on Rio de la Plata, a huge river estuary more than 30 miles wide, with Uruguay on the opposite, northern side. With a population of 14 million, Buenos Aires is South America’s third largest city. At the international airport, we met our enthusiastic guide, Ignacio, and a comfortable charter bus. We enjoyed a brief city tour en route to our hotel. We did not miss the sight of prized pedigree dogs “baby sat” during the day by hired walkers in the park. They earn a living by watching up to ten at a time without tangling their leashes. The dogs are also allowed to run free since they are well trained.

Hotel Nogaro is located in city center, less than ten minutes’ walk from the large and beautiful Plaza de Mayo with its pink palace. During a little free time in the afternoon, several explored the famous Florida pedestrian mall. I took advantage of the deflated peso by acquiring a nicely designed winter jacket for just $25. Tonight’s “Welcome Dinner” was the opportunity for everyone—librarians and tourists—to meet before each group went separate ways on Wednesday morning.
The conference opened on Wednesday morning with a 30-minute session in a meeting room at our hotel. This permitted welcome speeches by guests representing the government of Argentina and the National Library. The bus ride to Libertador San Martin began with morning stops at a unique bookshop and the National Library, then a buffet-style lunch at the Adventist-run Granix Restaurant on Florida Street. Then a long five-hour ride to the very rural location of Argentina’s Adventist university in the western part of Entre Rios province. Librarians were accommodated there in several small hotels.

Thursday, Friday, and Sunday were taken up with conference presentations and business sessions. Ngaire’s group arrived there on Friday evening and joined everyone for the morning Sabbath services and an afternoon tour to places associated with the beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism in South America. A banquet on Sunday evening brought conclusion to an excellent and well-attended library conference. Early departure on Monday brought the librarians to Buenos Aires domestic airport for a noon flight with Aero Argentinas to Iguazu Falls at the Brazil border.

Touring the Pampas with Ngaire

On Wednesday this group experienced a sampling of life on the great fertile plains that roll westward to the foothills of the Andes. This was Argentina’s “wild west frontier”, reminiscent of colonial days in America. En route, the bus travelled a short section of the world’s longest highway—the Pan American Highway extends from southern Argentina all the way north to Fairbanks, Alaska.

At Santa Susana Estancia near the town of Los Cardales, the visitors watched gauchos (cowboys) perform some amazing tricks on horseback. They explored the historic ranch grounds, were served lunch, and watched a folkloric show that included demonstrations of the Tango. Upon return to Buenos Aires the bus driver was barricaded from the hotel’s entrance because of demonstrations near the Presidential Palace in Plaza de Mayo, so everyone was dropped around the corner. They learned next morning that a bridge on the Pan American Highway which they travelled that morning was blocked by protesters in the afternoon. Two men were killed, tear gas dispersed the crowds, thirty were arrested, and several injured.

Thursday’s journey took the group into the large province of Entre Ríos—literally, “between the rivers”. The Parana and Uruguay Rivers flow into the wide Rio de la Plata estuary. A tributary of the Parana plunges over the famous Iguazu Falls which we will see.
Above Left: Parana River at Diamante, southwest of Crespo Campo.

Right: Puiggari Hotel where Ngaire’s group stayed at Libertador San Martin.
The mighty Parana River is crossed by a long bridge. Until it was constructed in 1970, the land between the rivers was an isolated and under-developed part of Argentina. Evidence of slow development was seen early in the afternoon when the bus arrived at Colon on the Uruguay River—a quaint, colonial-style village with dusty, unpaved streets, and most shops closed for a long siesta from 1:30 to 4:30. However, after checking into Nueva Hotel Plaza, folks explored the village and the riverfront. Some took taxi rides over the river to Paysandu, Uruguay—just for the experience—before dinner at a Colon restaurant.

Friday’s sightseeing began with a stop at nearby El Palmar National Park, where one of the few remaining stands of the tall Yatay Palms is preserved. A few miles southward, at the town of Concepcion del Uruguay, the group toured the grounds of the lavish Palacio San Jose, built as the residence of one of the early presidents of Argentina, General Justo Jose Urquiza. The town has a university founded in his honor.

A long afternoon drive brought the group to the village of Libertador San Martin, where the Adventist university is located. Keith met the bus at the Puiggari Hotel, where rooms were reserved for Ngaire’s group. Keith acquired an apple and pastry for each person to supplement the dry toast provided for breakfast.

Sabbath at Libertador San Martin

In 1900 the Colegio Adventista del Plata was opened on 40 acres of donated land at what was then known as Puiggari in Entre Rios. The school has since developed into the Universidad Adventista del Plata that we see today. Few towns can boast of a beginning like this place had. It was not a railroad, a house, or a plaza, but a college; the school was the village’s source of water, postal service, and electricity. Presently 2,500 meals are served daily at the cafeteria. There is a small Granix food factory making cereals and vegetable proteins, but the larger one has moved to Buenos Aires. The campus includes a two-hundred bed hospital, which was the second institution established here in 1908.
Everyone attended the student-led English speaking Sabbath school. Julian Melgosa, one of our group, led the class discussion. Following lunch, Luis Shulz, university president, led a tour of the campus. 2,400 students comprise the four schools: Business, Theology, Health Sciences, and Education. Most students are from Latin America, but forty countries are represented. The first medical degrees were conferred in 1994. There are plans to include a physical therapy degree very soon. Bill Habenicht from Andrews University was there in person to assist with those plans and was on tour with our group this day.

Humberto Trayer, a retired teacher from the School of Theology, was the guide for an afternoon excursion to Diamante, Crespo, and Parana. In the 1880s several German-speaking families fled Russia and migrated to Argentina. They settled on farm land near Diamante, a town on the eastern bank of the Parana River. After several crop failures, some of them left for the United States where they were converted to Seventh-day Adventism. This spurred them to return to Argentina in 1890 to share the gospel with other German-speaking immigrants. Today we stopped near the place where they spent their first Sabbath and made their first convert, Reinhold Hetze. The first Seventh-day Adventist church in South America was organized at nearby Crespo Campo in 1894. The original church structure is gone, but we were able to visit the current Crespo Campo church, the former church which is now a museum, and the graves of the pioneers—names like Westphal and Hetze. We experienced sundown vespers in two languages—German and English—in the Crespo church.

We finished the day at the square in the city of Parana on the river for which it is named. Picturesque lighting on the fountains, the town hall, and cathedral was attractive. Finally, a late buffet meal at the Petra Restaurant near the square.
Northwards to Iguazu

The group separated again on Sunday morning. Ngaire’s tourists began their journey in the dark. Keith was in front of the university cafeteria to load two huge boxes of lunches. The bus headed east and then north.

First stop of the day was Yapeyu, a small town in the province of Corrientes, facing the Uruguay River and southern Brazil on the opposite shore. Yapeyu is known throughout Argentina as the birthplace of General Jose Francisco de San Martin who is also known throughout Spanish South America as El Libertador of Argentina, Chile, and Peru. We already celebrated him in the name of Libertador San Martin, home of the Adventist university. Passing through a Spanish archway, the group visited a temple-like structure filled with a red rock formation protecting San Martin’s 1778 birthplace. He is, of course, celebrated as a hero for gaining Argentina’s independence from Spain in 1816.

Continuing north from here, the group encountered little population until Posadas, a town on the Parana River, which is here the border with Paraguay. The province here is Misiones, which got its name from nearly thirty Jesuit missions that were established in this region to civilize and convert the local Guarani Indians. Slave traders eventually attacked and destroyed the missions. After check-in and dinner at Hotel Posadas, several shopped in a modern supermarket for future lunch items.

On Monday we stopped at the San Ignacio Mission ruins that date from 1608. The local guide had some Guarani Indian blood, but he explained that his ancestors would not have had the beard he grew. By 1773 the population of this particular mission had increased to 4,500 plus twenty monks. Polygamy was practiced by the Indians but discouraged by the Jesuits. Girls fifteen and guys seventeen were obligated to be married. Girls approached the guys they loved, but the fellows had the freedom to decline. At marriage they were given two acres of land, and no taxes were required for two years. They worked four days for themselves, two for the community, and gave the other to the Lord.

The group’s 2:45 p.m. arrival at the Cataratas Hotel at Puerto Iguazu was precisely synchronized with the librarians’ arrival from the nearby airport. Back together at last, our group would remain a constant number of thirty-six for the remainder of the tour. With time on everyone’s hands, we all crossed into Brazil to visit a bird park. Besides a South American display, there were 900 tropical birds representing 150 species from all around the world.
Iguazu and Itaipu

It’s Tuesday morning. We first head into Brazil to see the Itaipu Dam, one of the “Seven Modern Wonders of the World.” Built across the headwaters of the Parana River, it also serves as a road bridge linking Brazil with Paraguay. In 2002 it still claims to be the world’s largest hydroelectric power plant. Our bus drives across the dam to the Paraguay side, just so we could claim to have been in three different countries within one hour.

Iguazu means “big water”. The Iguazu River drops over a plateau, creating 273 separate waterfalls before it joins the Parana some distance below the Itaipu Dam. Although all of the falls are officially within Argentina, the best views to take in the wideness and vastness are from Brazil. On the Brazil side, we transfer to a National Park bus to view the falls. During this day we are literally in them, over them, under them, and beside them. Those with rain gear have the closest view of the falls.

We learn to beware of the aggressive coatimundi, members of the raccoon family. Four of them attacked Roy Puymon’s food pack and ripped it apart. Unfortunately, the pack was threaded onto his belt, so he had no way to defend his pack as the four tore it apart to enjoy his power-bar lunch.

Back on the Argentina side this afternoon, we board a small train that takes us to its scenic spots. We thank our God for creating the majestic beauty we have been privileged to see today and the spectacular weather that enhanced our visit to one of the world’s great tourist sights.
On to Bolivia

Our “best laid plans for mice and men” went down the tube today. My itinerary showed an early start from Iguazu for a flight to Sao Paulo, connecting to another flight that would land us at La Paz, Bolivia, at midday. I knew that the high elevation of La Paz at 12,000 feet would require careful adjustment—even after taking a Diamox pill—so we planned a leisure afternoon and evening to rest, sleep, sip coca tea, and take life at a slow pace. The reality turned out very differently.

The wake-up call at our Iguazu hotel came at 2:40 a.m., with breakfast served at 3:20. Even the Iguazu airport on the Brazil side seemed unready for a tired group. Varig Airlines took us on the short flight to Sao Paulo. The 10:30 a.m. flight from there to La Paz departed on time, but circled back to the airport with air pressure problems. During the next eight hours at Sao Paulo airport we had a buffet meal, compliments of the airline, before boarding an aircraft of a Bolivian carrier. That flight involved a part-way stop at Santa Cruz, where everyone had to leave the plane and line up for Bolivian immigration before re-boarding. We landed at the world’s highest commercial airport, El Alto, at 13,300 feet elevation at 12.15 a.m. local time. Our weary group had been awake for 24 hours.

El Alto airport was preparing to close for the night. After some chaos at the baggage carousel, we met Benicia, our local guide, and boarded a bus for the descent into the canyon and the sleeping city of La Paz. By two o’clock we had our room assignments and bed at the Rosario Hotel. Most of our group had followed the advice to take a Diamox pill before the flight to La Paz, so only four experienced altitude sickness, with headaches, nausea, and extreme lethargy. Some skipped breakfast but sipped some coca tea.

La Paz and Copacabana, Bolivia

Morning sunshine greets us when we emerge from our hotel into the bustling city center. We are fascinated by the cholitas—indigenous women colorfully attired with wide skirts and rectangular cloths slung across the back and neck. Their distinctive ensemble, both colorful and utilitarian, has almost become Bolivia’s defining image. Functionally, the “chola” might carry a child, tools, market purchases, or anything else. They also wear the felt bowler-style hat. We are asked not to take their pictures. Some indigenous people of Bolivia and Peru believe that photographs capture their soul, requiring sacrifices to be made.

Thursday morning is the only time that we have in La Paz. In this “upside-down” city, the wealthy live on the canyon floor, while the poor cling to the elevated mountain slopes. We pick up something for lunch at the interesting Plaza Murillo, the city’s central square where public hangings have taken place in the past. A bus tour of La Paz ends at the “Valley of the Moon”, named for the weird pinnacles and other eroded formations.
Our destination for tonight is Copacabana at the southern end of Lake Titicaca. Again, however, we are faced with a difficulty. A tropical storm in the past two days forces our bus to use an alternative route for the otherwise direct afternoon drive. We are now forced to leave Bolivia, journey a short distance in Peru, and back into Bolivia for our night’s accommodation. Only those who experienced this can comprehend the time and hassles required for thirty-six weary passengers to exit and return to the bus multiple times for paper work and border stamps. Our Bolivian coach cannot enter Peru, so we must trade busses. Just picture a unique procession while our bulky luggage is transported from Bolivia into Peru via tricycle taxies!

However, we survive the ordeal and arrive at our Copacabana Hotel, Rosario del Lago, perched on a hillside with a superb view of Lake Titicaca. The hotel is designed so that every guest room overlooks the lake. Before dinner, Ngaire and I venture outside to watch the sun setting across the lake, where a couple of Bolivian fishing boats ride on the choppy water. At least two of our group are too sick with headaches or illness to appear for the meal tonight.

Around Lake Titicaca to Puno, Peru

Our first stop Friday is a visit to Copacabana’s beautiful Cathedral of the Virgin. It took 265 years to construct this Moorish style edifice which was completed in 1870. In 1582 a local sculptor carved a wooden image of their patron saint. It is now under glass in the cathedral. Rumor says its removal will cause the lake waters to flood the city. Miraculous healings have caused Copacabana to become a pilgrimage site.

Our Peruvian guide, Mari, accompanies us on our drive around the western side of Lake Titicaca, with views of some ancient Inca terraces. Our destination is Puno, Peru, a significant city near the northern end of Lake Titicaca. We stop in a busy part of the city to buy something for lunch, then drive to the gated Posada del Inca Hotel down by the lakeshore, where we settle into our rooms. The blessings of two nights in one place!
We reassemble by walking out the back door of our hotel, stepping on a tree timber bridge, strategically placed on the spongy soil, and boarding two tourist boats for the choppy waters of Lake Titicaca. We’re bound for the Uros Floating Islands.

This proves to be a unique experience. Each island consists of layer upon layer of tortora reeds, the dominant plant in the lake’s shallows and a source of food as well as material for roofing, walling, and fishing rafts. It is not unusual for some islands to move during their rainy season. The bottom layer of reeds slowly rots, so fresh reeds are added constantly.

We visit two of the forty islands. The second one has a Seventh-day Adventist presence. We think these fellow believers are as excited to see thirty-six visitors with the same belief system descend on them as we are curious about their way of life. This island’s only non-reed structure is a tin school, donated by a Californian Adventist. The teacher, a graduate from high school in Puno, assembles children groups to sing for us. What enthusiasm and energy they exhibit! It is obvious they live outside as the children’s cheeks seem weathered and dry. Their diet is heavy on meats gathered by hunting or fishing. Reed boats go a distance from the islands to haul “fresher” water, but it must be boiled for drinking. A three-year-old child was buried on the land one day prior to our visit.

Our tour group stuffs some money into the school’s donation box, and we contribute to their survival by purchasing the authentic hand-made items and other mementoes.

The hotel dining room back at Puno has a casual, yet semi-formal setting with clay pottery, bright table cloths, unique center pieces carved and assembled from their vegetables and arranged about their natural grains; the fireplace is glowing, and the waiters are attired in uniforms with vests. Most of us have now recovered from altitude sickness, though at Punto we are still at 12,500 feet.

Visiting the Uros Floating Islands of Lake Titicaca, Peru. Two pictures show the SDA school and some children singing to the group.
Day Visit to Sillustani

Sabbath begins with a short drive northwest to one of Peru’s many important archaeological sites. Enroute to Sillustani we stop briefly near an alpaca flock. The young shepherd is determined to grab one very uncooperative alpaca for our camera buffs. Our guide also draws our attention to an Inca-built agricultural system with water trenches beside platforms. The water also protects crops from early frosts.

Sillustani is the site of several Chullpas—Aymara funerary towers—on a hilltop overlooking the deep blue waters of Umayo Lake. Some tombs were built by Incas and some by the Qulla people, a warlike tribe that dominated before the Incas took control. We inspect two tomb styles at the site: honey comb chullpas with large stone slabs around a central core, and others built with geometric precision as the rocks were fitted together. This area has over one hundred tombs dating from the 1100s to 1450. They were built for chiefs and nobility before their deaths. It typically took five to ten years to erect one, and many were never completed. Some appear to be inverted cones. Entrances faced towards the sun. The larger towers contained the nobility who were buried with their treasures: pets, pottery, gold, silver; sometimes children or servants were sacrificed and buried with them.

As we descend the hill, a young girl poses for pictures with a rare vicuna, the smallest member of the camelid (llama) family.

Our last morning stop is a farm visit. We are taken into an authentic adobe home made from mud and straw brick, with indoor and outdoor kitchens. We are able to sample their cooked potatoes with sauce, and cheese. A thousand varieties of potatoes are grown in Peru. Quinoa is grown and is a staple food in this area.
Back in Puno, the hotel gives us another fine meal and provides a room for our sabbath meeting. Ngaire leads a song service, then several of our group—Roy Puymon, Roger and Peggy Dudley, Margaret Von Hake, Chloe Foutz, and I share personal evidences of God at work in our lives. Puno has six Adventist congregations, mostly meeting in small places. Ron, Sara, and the Habenichts found attendance to be over 200 in one they attended. The youth had a separate service because space was an issue.

Our bus took us to the city square tonight to enjoy hot food from a brick oven.

On the Road to the Sacred Valley

Our guide, Javier, promises coca tea, first aid, and oxygen on the bus today. He will be our “doctor” for today’s 400-kilometre drive from Puno to the Sacred Valley of the Andes. The first part of our journey is along the altiplano where potatoes seem to be about the only agricultural crop. The economy is based on raising horses and donkeys for work, and alpaca, llama, and guinea pigs for meat. Guinea pig is roasted and considered a delicacy for birthdays and ceremonial feasts.

Near Juliaca we spot a sign pointing toward an Adventist hospital and college, but time pressure keeps us moving. Sunday is a busy market day in Juliaca, which claims thousands of tricycle taxies. Our first stop for the day is at Pucara, famous for its ceramics manufacture. We explore a red clay archaeological complex dating from 500 B.C. and its museum of artifacts.

A recent snowfall makes a spectacular climb to the Abra La Raya pass at 14,000 feet. Beyond the pass, terrain changes to production of wheat, barley, maize, and quinoa. From the bus windows, we view mineral hot springs and see a small sulfuric geyser. Here the Vilcanota River is small, but it will grow and have five different names before it reaches the Amazon and the Atlantic. The Incas believed this river was sacred. We will spend tonight in the Sacred Valley.

One stop in the Vilcanota Valley is the Temple of Raqchi ruins, an important Inca religious center. The Incas had many sun temples, but this was the only one for worship of a Supreme God and is the largest, dating from the fourteenth century. Twenty-two massive columns supported the roof and a central wall made from volcanic stone nearby. At a second stop at Huari we inspect a baroque cathedral exhibiting oil paintings dating from the seventeenth century. Towards evening we encounter temporary and rather dangerous conditions on a narrow, muddy road above the river.

Left: Abra La Raya Pass at 14,150 feet.
Right: Remains of the Raqchi Temple, supporting the largest gable roof of the Inca Empire.
At the village of Yucay we pull up at another Posada del Inca Hotel with a spacious courtyard. The hotel occupies a restored hacienda that was once used as a monastery. On arrival, the entire district is without electricity, but the hotel functions with generators. We enjoy a nice dinner buffet, live music, and fine service.

Machu Picchu

Our wakeup call is at 6:00 a.m. We’re thankful that we are not lodging at Cusco, where the train trip to Machu Picchu requires a 4:00 a.m. awakening. After breakfast, Ngaire divides the group for the upcoming mountaintop walk: energetic walkers in Suzanna’s bus, those with a slower pace with Carmen. A short drive brings us to Ollantaytambo station for the first part of our journey. While waiting for the train, we observe porters carrying heavy supplies for hikers on the famous Inca Trail. The hike takes four days from Cusco, only two from here.

The train provides another breakfast. Some save their sandwiches for local children. We have fabulous views of mountain peaks, terraces, the raging Urubamba River, and a variety of vegetation before the train terminates at the small Machu Picchu Pueblo. From here it is eight kilometers upward on a winding, dirt road with ten hair-pin bends.

Machu Picchu is believed to have been built in the mid fifteenth century, forty or fifty years before the Spanish conquest of the Andean region. The Spanish may never have known of its existence. But what exactly was Machu Picchu? A royal retreat? A sanctuary? Or a pilgrimage site? The site is saddled between the narrow ridge of Machu Picchu and the peak of Huayna Picchu at 8,000 feet. It likely had a permanent population of three hundred Inca elite, priests, and dignitaries, but guests would swell to a thousand or more at sacred ceremonies. The Sun Temple was apparently used for astronomical observations.

After a guided walking tour of the amazing site, we enjoy a buffet meal at the nearby Machu Picchu lodge. On the descent we are entertained by an indigenous Indian dressed in orange burlap who races headlong down the mountain while our bus has to do the switch backs. At each hair-pin curve, he appears with a whoop and holler! Finally, he is in our bus collecting rewards for having brightened our day.

The bottom picture shows part of the Temple of the Sun at Machu Picchu. At the summer solstice, the sun shines through a temple window and aligns with several distant features.
Destination Cusco

There’s a light mist as we head for breakfast and our departure towards Cusco, the “Navel of the World.” Our guide, Susanna, speaks five languages. She wants to share with us the contrasts in religion and culture of the Sacred Valley region, but also the blending and compromise. “In my heart, I am Incan” she tells us. The majority of the people are nominally Roman Catholic, but the native traditions are very strong.

We are not surprised that ninety per cent of Peru’s economy is based on tourism. We contribute to that today, because Tuesday is one of the three market days. We are dropped off at the busy Pisac Market for one-and-a-half hours. Some of us visit the colonial bakery, sampling empanadas.

Before the final steep descent to Cusco, we stop at the ruins of Sacsayhuaman, dating from the fifteenth century. These ruins display the ultimate in Incan engineering. The largest block weighs more than three-hundred tons, but the mortar-less stonework is perfectly fitted and matched in brilliance with its design. Three massive walls zigzag together for half a kilometer. Sadly, many of the stones were taken to Cusco to build the cathedral and other edifices. The nearby summit provides a spectacular view of Cusco.

Cusco is built in the shape of a puma and Sacsayhuaman forms its head. The puma was a sacred animal, chosen for its strength. According to legend, the original Incan who was the son of the Sun, plunged a rod into the ground here. It was called “qosq’o,” meaning navel of the earth.

We have lunch at a restaurant in the central Plaza de Armas. Just one block away we find yet another Posada del Inca Hotel, where we check into our rooms, then re-assemble for a tour of the famous cathedral and other local places of interest. Tonight, four of us eat pizza from a colonial oven while six Peruvian musicians perform.
Lima and Home

It is raining as we board our morning flight to Lima, which welcomes us with its typical gray blanket of dry fog. Ernesto is our guide and translator. Everywhere around the city we see many unfinished buildings and few roofs. Some are incomplete due to lack of funds, but the primary reason is that unfinished buildings are not required to pay taxes. He explains that roofs are unnecessary since it never rains in their capital city. In just fifty years its population has grown from one to eight million. That rapid growth is partly due to migration of the very poor from Peru’s altiplano, seeking a better living in the city. Most lack the education or skills to better themselves, so shanty towns surround the city.

We travel on the Pan American Highway towards Nana where Universidad Peru Union is the country’s Adventist university. We are given a campus tour and an excellent dinner in the cafeteria. Le-Roy Alomia, Information Services Manager and son of the university president, Merling Alomia, is our campus guide. Inside the library we are shown long range development plans for the institution. The university has an enrollment of 2,500 plus 200 at the high school. There were fears when a freeway was proposed to come through the center of the campus. However, some Inca ruins were discovered in the mountain behind the school, so the freeway was abandoned. Artifacts were unearthed and are now displayed in the library.

The school operates the second largest bakery in Peru. Only Bimbo exceeds them in profits and production. Bimbo has tried to push them out, buy them out, and even copy their production, but the Lord had plans for student labor on this campus. The bakery operates three shifts with fifty-two employed on each shift. Products made here include 150,000 fruit breads for Independence Day, crackers, bread crumbs, pizza crusts, donuts, cookies, and breads of many varieties. The bread slicer intrigues us as employees demonstrate the cutting and packaging of sixty loaves per minute. We are each given a take-out bottle of apple nectar and a package of Kiwicha cookies.
Ernesto enjoyed touching base with the Adventist campus, but he also wants us to experience his city. Lima was the seat of the Spanish Inquisition. Our focus is the central Plaza de Armas, with much to see: the Presidential Palace, the architecturally interesting Spanish balconies, and the cathedral which contains a museum of religious art and carved choir stalls.

The Church of San Francisco is a short walk from the plaza. Dating from the seventeenth century, it withstood the 1687 earthquake. It contains a remarkable library of historic publications. At first, we are not permitted to take pictures, but the librarians in our group become an asset. We tour the monastery catacombs where thousands have been buried.

We drive past several important embassies on our way to Dove Park for a view of the Pacific Ocean at dusk. The huge sculpture of the male and female lovers entwined in a passionate embrace gives authenticity to the park’s name.

Finally, we are at the El Pardo Hotel at Miraflores for our group’s farewell dinner. We are entertained by a Peruvian folkloric group during the meal. We award Roger and Peggy Dudley a pictorial book on Machu Picchu since this is their fourth trip with Boomerang Tours. I conduct a thirteen-point quiz with questions pertaining to the tour. Roy Puymon is the winner, receiving a Peruvian plate of bold design and intense color. Chloe Foutz then makes a speech on behalf of the “Boomerang Survivors”, with her touch of humor and a gift to us for planning and leading the tour.

There is not much more to say. The interminable rush and paperwork at international airport departures brings every tour to a sudden conclusion. That experience will soon fade, leaving the relationships, the pictures and the memories that are forever.