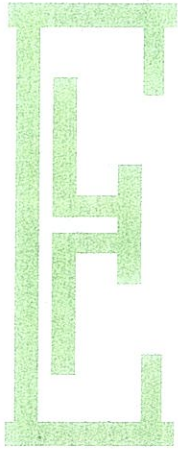




Previous page, from left: Monastery Santa Catalina in Arequipa; La Ermita Chapel in Lima. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Second Home Peru in Lima; Artist Victor Delfin; A tub at Second Home; A Cuzco woman; San Camilo Market in Arequipa; Churros; A street in Arequipa; The Church of San Francisco in Lima; Second Home.



arly morning mist shrouds the jagged Andean peaks that loom over a framework of imposing stone walls and terraces set into a grassy plateau. Few people are in sight, yet it's possible to imagine the bustling world that once existed in this otherworldly, long-abandoned setting. And when the sun burns through, ushering in blue sky, Machu Picchu is even more dazzling.

For those planning their first visit to Peru, the famous Inca ruins immediately come to mind. But there are other places worth visiting in this fascinating country: the burgeoning, complex metropolis of Lima; the "White City" of Arequipa with its white volcanic stone buildings; stylish Cuzco, once the Inca empire's capital; and the Sacred Valley's small villages and archaeological sites.

Inca ruins, Spanish churches and modern-day Peruvian hot spots—we made a point to visit them all on a recent trip to visit our son who was studying abroad. The goal? A well-rounded feel for the country today and a dramatic chunk of its history—starting with the Inca empire's heyday in the 1430s, moving through Spanish colonial rule in the 1530s and onto the birth of an independent nation in the 1820s.

En route, we sampled Peru's diverse cuisine, among the finest in South America and, some argue, the world—dishes such as *causa* (a sculpted mound of yellow mashed potatoes with seafood), *lomo saltado* (beef stir-fry) and, yes, *cuy* (guinea pig). Washed down, of course, with plenty of Pisco sours, the Lima-born citrusy cocktail, and *chicha morada*, a nonalcoholic beverage made with purple corn.

Splurging at *novoandina* (Peruvian nouvelle) restaurants—such Astrid & Gastón in Lima, among several restaurants run by renowned Peruvian chef Gastón Acurio—we discovered dishes fusing Peruvian, Asian, African and European influences. Think ceviche, suckling pork, seafood soup and cuy, which at Astrid & Gastón looks (thankfully) nothing like guinea pig. Served in seared pieces with an Asian sauce and purple corn crepes, it tastes like chicken. Sort of.

Prefer simpler fare? Try the churros (fried dough) served with thick hot chocolate at café Manolo in Lima. In Cuzco, visit the hipster sandwich shop Juanito's, the very English pub The Cross Keys and the old-fashioned bakery Café Ayllu for a pork sandwich and "mother-in-law's tongue"—a surprisingly sweet pastry, given the name.

For a home-style traditional restaurant, visit Sol de Mayo in Arequipa's quiet Yanahuara residential district. We spent a sunny afternoon sitting in the courtyard, listening to live folk music while eating regional specialties such as *rocoto relleno* (spicy meat and cheese-stuffed red peppers), *chicharrón de chancho* (crispy fried pork) and *chupe de camarones* (shrimp bisque).

And don't miss the unique Peruvian crafts sold at galleries, boutiques and many open-air markets: alpaca woolens, Andean textiles, Amazonian prints, carved gourds, red and black Huayruros seed bracelets and ceramic figurines. Plus, of course, a woven Peruvian bag in which to lug it all home.

## LIMA

A sprawling, rapidly growing city of about 8 million people, Lima can be daunting for visitors. But my husband and I had it easy during our visit thanks to our son, Noah, and the welcoming Peruvian family he lived with in the upscale Miraflores district.

In central Lima's busy main plaza, don't miss the Monasterio de San Francisco, a yellow Spanish Baroque monastery and church dating back

to the 1600s, with a library full of ancient texts, a Moorish-style cupola and, most memorably, creepy catacombs housing boxes of human bones.

At the majestic cathedral, visit the remains, buried in a chapel, of Francisco Pizarro, who led Spain's conquest of the Incas and established Lima as the colonial capital. Therein lies a ghoulish tale: After Pizarro's assassination in 1541, his





