

travel



'FANTA-SEA TABLE'

The Royal Hawaiian takes diners on trip to see where the seafood originated >> G3

SIGNS OF HAWAIIAN LIFE >> G6
LAS VEGAS ADVISOR >> G6

The passion of Peru

Lima's talented chefs, the Sacred Valley's spirituality and Machu Picchu's magic instill a deep sense of Peruvian bliss

By Julie Kessler
Special to the Star-Advertiser

It was my good fortune that a week before my arrival in Peru, the 2015 list of 50 Best Restaurants in South America was released. Nine of those establishments, chosen by an "academy" of more than 250 ex-

perts on the Latin American restaurant scene, are in Lima. My greater fortune was that I snagged a reservation at one of them. It was a harbinger of excellent Peruvian things to come during an October week.

Peru is the oldest state in the Americas, with a central government founded in 1533, and is the

third-largest South American nation, stretching from the Amazon to the Pacific. With 30 million residents — 45 percent indigenous (Inca and other Andean residents), 37 percent mestizo (mixed), 15 percent European and 3 percent Asian (the largest Asian population in South America) — it's a me-

ga-melange. Peru also boasts nearly 5,000 types of potatoes in rainbow colors, and 6,000 Chifa (Chinese) restaurants, adding variety second to none.

It's true the Incas' lost city of Machu Picchu is a marvel, but Peru also possesses the greatest

Please see PERU, G1



The otherworldly Machu Picchu offers one breathtaking view after another.

JULIE KESSLER / SPECIAL TO THE STAR ADVERTISER

IF YOU GO . . .

Peru

- >> **Getting there:** The best route is Honolulu to Lima, Lima to Cusco. Flights start at \$1,460 round trip with combined service on United, American, LAN or Star Peru.
- >> **Telephones:** The country code is 51, city code for Lima is 1, city code for Cusco is 84.
- >> **Getting around:** Taxis in Lima are plentiful and inexpensive, but there are no fare meters, so fares must be negotiated. If you are not a Spanish speaker, hotel taxis are best.
- >> **Organized tours:** For the Lima half-day tour, airport transfers and all travel in Cusco, Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu, I used Abercrombie & Kent (800-554-7016), abercrombiekent.com. A&K provides tailor-made, small-group or family trips with local, English-speaking guides, cars and drivers, with all tickets, accommodations and meals in one package.
- >> **Don't forget:** Elevation at Cusco is 11,000 feet, at Urubamba it's 9,400 feet and at Machu Picchu, just under 8,000 feet. Those not used to such elevations might suffer from altitude sickness regardless of age or physical shape. Go slow and follow your guide's advice to reduce alcohol consumption, eat light in the evenings and allow ample time for digestion before going to bed. We found it helpful to drink coca tea, available everywhere.
- >> **Weather:** Machu Picchu has two seasons: rainy and less rainy, thus a light raincoat or travel umbrella is essential, as are thin, long-sleeved shirts and flat, comfortable walking shoes with good tread. To battle mosquito bites, take along Benadryl and an antihistamine or cortisone cream.

WHERE TO STAY

- >> **Lima:** Westin San Isidro, Calle Las Begonias 450, Lima; 1-201-5000, starwood.com. Modern, with all amenities, in the heart of San Isidro. Incredible breakfast buffet, with both continental and local food, a detox station and a gluten-free corner.
- >> **Cusco:** Belmond Hotel Monasterio, a former monastery and national monument built in 1592, Calle Palacio 136, Plazoleta Nazarenas, Cusco; 84-60 4000, belmond.com.
- >> **Sacred Valley:** Sol y Luna Lodge & Spa, Fundo Huincho Lote A-5, Urubamba, Cusco; 84-20-1620, hotelsolyluna.com.
- >> **Aguas Calientes:** Inkaterra Machu Picchu, Linea Ferrea KM 110, Aguas Calientes; 84-211-032, inkaterra.com.

WHERE TO EAT

- >> **Huaca Pucllana,** General Borgoño cdra 8, Miraflores, Lima; 1-445-4042, resthuacapucllana.com.
- >> **Malabar,** Av. Camino Real 101, San Isidro, Lima; 1-445-5300, malabar.com.pe.
- >> **In Cusco:** Limo Restaurant, Portal de Carnes 236, Cusco; 84-240668, cuscorestaurants.com/reservas-en-limo
- >> **In Sacred Valley:** Wayra Restaurant at Sol y Luna Lodge & Spa, Fundo Huincho Lote A-5, Urubamba, Cusco; 84-20-1620, hotelsolyluna.com.

TO LEARN MORE

- >> visitperu.com



PHOTOS BY JULIE KESSLER / SPECIAL TO THE STAR-ADVERTISER

PERU

Continued from G1

number of historic sites in South America, many of them present more than 4,000 years before the Inca.

Lima

Arriving at noon, my husband and I checked into the beautifully modern Westin Hotel in Lima's San Isidro neighborhood. Hopping into a cab for a 10-minute ride to the Miraflores district, we started our afternoon walk at Parque Kennedy, Lima's unofficial main square — named after JFK in honor of the Alliance for Progress. With the Virgen Milagrosa Church and the Municipal Palace at one end, the area is sprinkled with food vendors, handicrafts and cats — hundreds of them, sterilized and cared for by various local organizations.

Continuing up Larco Avenue — packed with shops, cafes and restaurants — we reached Larcomar, Lima's cliff-side open-air shopping center with majestic Pacific views.

It was high time for happy hour and Peruvian Pisco Sour, made from grape brandy that tastes like light tequila, tart citrus and egg whites. While enjoying these and people-watching at Restaurant Haiti, my husband vastly improved his nonexistent Spanish by learning the all-important local toast: Arriba, abajo, al centro, al dentro (up, down, center, inside).

A 15-minute stroll brought our first memorable dinner at Huaca Pucllana, an archaeological adobe ceremonial center built 15 centuries ago. Excavations there continue to reveal artifacts. Dining amid beautifully illuminated ruins is an otherworldly sensation. The roasted guinea pig — hard to order since I once owned one as a pet — was deliciously easy to eat. The ceviche — exploding citrus, onions and cilantro, sprinkled with roasted corn nuts and braised scallops — was marvelous.

During a half-day tour the



Dancers in colorful costumes, top, brightened a street in Cusco, Peru. Above, a cathedral in the Plaza de Armas in Cusco, Peru, reflects Baroque and Renaissance themes. Above right, a scallop and cilantro risotto is served at Wayra restaurant in Sol y Luna lodge in Urubamba.

Plaza de Armas is Cusco's pulse, and the interior of its cathedral is ornate, spectacular and contains more art than several large museums combined.

following morning, we meandered colonial Lima. The center, Plaza Mayor, is dominated by the Government Palace and was built on the original palace site of Lima's founder, Francisco Pizarro. Lima's main cathedral across the square, built in Renaissance fashion in 1534, houses Pizarro's remains.

Lima's crown jewel museum is Museo Larco, a massive private collection of pre-Columbian Peruvian art, pottery and textiles. Most impressive were an erotic-art wing and several rooms containing floor-to-ceiling storage of pre-Inca pottery behind Plexiglas.

Often overlooked by travelers is Lima's bohemian Barranco district, a delightful area of art galleries, restaurants and lovingly restored colonial buildings and colorful bungalows. Excellent Peruvian fare at Isolina Taberna Peruana, followed by the Mate museum, which houses some of Mario Testino's photographs, including a wing with captivating photos of Princess Diana taken two months before her death, completed a perfect day.

Finally, our dinner at Malabar, one of the nine Peruvian restaurants on the Top 50 list. Though the dining room is sparse, it's easy to understand how chef-owner Pedro Miguel Schiaffino's culinary artistic magic landed Malabar at fifth of nine Peruvian restaurants on the list. Several tasty morsels were made from yucca roots, in-

stance- and Baroque-style cathedral is ornate, spectacular and contains more art than several large museums combined. Another ornate church, Santo Domingo, was built on the foundation of Qorikancha, the Incas' main religious site, and has impressive stone joints and curved walls.

Following an excellent lunch of grilled trout and micro-greens at Lino, washed down with Inca Cola — resembling antifreeze but made from lemon verbana, chamomile and coca leaves — we

headed to the Inca site of Sacsayhuaman. Quechua for "satisfied falcon" though conveniently pronounced "sexy woman."

Here massive carved limestones comprise a walled complex erected in the 1500s by indigenous laborers.

A half-hour later we arrived at Awana Kancha and were able to get up close and personal with llamas, alpacas, vicuñas and guanacos, and the products woven from their wool. Members of the camelid family, they are essentially pack animals with intense separation anxiety. Feeding them alfalfa provided by our guide, I witnessed my first llama drama: an arrowlike spitting contest. Fortunately, they spit only at each other — a major blessing, since, it turns out, camelid spit is actually their bile.

Sacred Valley

Starting in Pisac, a small hamlet with an excellent highland handicraft market,



cluding a flatbread served with Brazil nut cheese that made us swoon. But the dinner's apex was roasted organic goat with carob bean sauce and heirloom pumpkins — so outstanding that in the days following, we seriously discussed purchasing a small mountain to secure our own Bovidae family.

Cusco

A 75-minute flight brought us to Cusco, the starting point in a journey to the Inca's Lost City and the capital of Inca culture, from modern Chile to Ecuador, from 1200 until the arrival of Pizarro in 1533. Cusco is the longest continuously inhabited city in Latin America, and one of the most lovely.

The main square, Plaza de Armas, is Cusco's pulse, and the interior of its Renais-

Burma, Bali
14 Days (13 Nights)
\$3,550

Vietnam, Angkor Wat & Thailand
14 Days (13 Nights)
from **\$3,240**

All tours inclusive of airfares, hotel, meals, guided tour & escort from Honolulu

Affordable Vietnam FREE SEMINAR

You're cordially invited to our Vietnam-Cambodia & Thailand Presentation on Sunday, 3/6/16 at 2:00 pm. FREE PARKING RSVP: 1188 Bishop St. #2008 922-5522 for brochures & information



we made our way to the Sacred Valley's heart, Urubamba. Sol y Luna, a lodge set alone on 10 acres of Eden-like gardens, with 43 beautifully appointed casitas, horse stables, an excellent spa, a world-class restaurant and a wine cave, is a place like no other. At its Wayra restaurant, dinner of goat cheese, beet and onion salad, followed by ceviche in tiger milk, scallop risotto for me and pork belly for my husband, we meandered back to our spacious casita in utter Andean ecstasy.

Machu Picchu

In the morning we headed to Ollantaytambo station to catch the glass-ceiling Vista-dome train to Aguas Calien-

Colorful handicrafts are sold in the bustling marketplace in the village Pisac, near Machu Picchu.

Throughout Machu Picchu a reverential silence is nearly palpable.

tes, Machu Picchu's gateway. From there it's a 30-minute bus ride to the entrance on a narrow, zigzag road. It's best not to look down.

Hiram Bingham III, a Hawaii-born Yale University history professor, inadvertently discovered Machu Picchu in 1911 while searching for the Inca rulers' refuge at Vilcabamba. Bingham returned several times to Peru, and though he knew Machu Picchu was a monumental discovery, archaeologists even today are not clear why the Incas built this extraordinary city, which became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.

While the first view of Machu Picchu is downright

breathtaking, so is every one that follows — so much so that a reverential silence is nearly palpable, from the Royal Sector, which includes the Temple of the Sun and Serpents Window, to the Sacred Plaza containing the Principal Temple and the Sacristy. It's a lesson not only on the massive scale of Inca construction — accomplished without mortar in the face of unimaginable geographical hardship — but of an entire people's epic resilience, especially considering the presence of psychotic mosquitoes and flies that I heard "can make pumas cry." (These hearty insects tore right through the 25 percent Deet I was sporting.)

ing while I walked Aguas Calientes' small alleyways and scoured the local markets. We then enjoyed a two-hour eco-walk with Inkaterra's naturalist, seeing hummingbirds, guans, mot-mots and hundreds of orchid species.

That evening we boarded the legendary Hiram Bingham train for Ollantaytambo. This train is like no other: no seats, just two gorgeous dining cars with booths and tuxedoed staff, resembling a five-star hotel with a large bar car, live Peruvian music and flowing Pisco Sours. Half expecting Bingham himself to walk in, we enjoyed the music, a marvelous meal and one of the most memorable evenings of the trip.

After hiking the Ollantaytambo ruins in the morning, my husband tried his hand at Sapo, an Inca bar game, played with a coin on a table with holes. Fortunately, the stakes were low: one Cusqueña beer.

We had our final Sacred Valley lunch at the hillside Hacienda Huayoccarí, then drove with our guide back to Cusco.

A final stroll through the town and we stumbled upon a colorful parade of local dancers. An ideal ending.

As we were leaving, I was already thinking of returning, remembering the old saying, "There is no first time without a second." Peru's Nobel Laureate Mario Vargas Llosa once said, "Expect nothing and you will never be disappointed." While that may be true in the grand scheme of things, while visiting Peru your expectations will no doubt happily be exceeded. Beyond measure.

Julie L. Kessler is a travel writer and legal columnist based in Los Angeles and the author of the award-winning book "Fifty-Fifty: The Clarity of Hindsight."

California NOODLE HOUSE

Bringing the Kitchens of Asia to Downtown Las Vegas

Special Hawaiian Hotel Packages
Great Kama'āina Rates

Includes:

- Hotel accommodations
- 3 meals per person per day
- Free shuttle to Sam's Town and the Strip
- Bellman gratuities



Starting at only

\$41.25

per person per night*

NO RESORT FEES!

Call the Cal at 800-634-6255 to book your stay.

*Based on a 5-day/4-night midweek package double occupancy. Price subject to change without notice. Price inclusive of tax.

Reference Booking Code: ZHAD16

Aloha
SPOKEN HERE™

Vacations Hawaii

Your Direct Connection to Las Vegas!
BoydVacationsHawaii.com
Honolulu 808-591-4777
Neighbor Islands 800-548-8851