

*Planes that fly, planes that explode and planes that simply fall over in -*

# South America

*Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, including the Galapagos Islands and Easter Island + briefly in Tahiti and Santiago, Chile*

**6<sup>th</sup> June 1996 to 20<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

Glen Morgan, Dave Siems, and Mayette and Steve Anyon-Smith



## **Outline of Trip**

This was a holiday where the itinerary was determined by a committee. We all had a turn at picking a “must see” destination and the others had to agree or stay home. And so it was that Manu National Park (me), Galapagos Islands (Dave), Easter Island (Morgs) and Shopping with a capital “S” (Mayette) found their way onto the menu.

There was some concern from Morgs that the trip would be hijacked by birdwatchers. A reasonable fear I guess. In deference to his ambivalence in this area, and for the want of ready access to a bird field guide, I kept no list of birds seen. Whilst this often felt liberating and it allowed me to absorb the scenery to a greater degree, it is not a good idea. Dave had a copy of the Birds of Colombia but for reasons best known to himself he refused to carry it in the field. Instead he relied on a hand-held tape recorder to note the details of birds seen, or, at times, the details of birds that haven’t been invented yet. In the evening there would be a

consultation with “The Book”. This was often hilarious. I now call the practise of post-event bird identification “Siemsing” in Dave’s honour. *Memo to self – always bring YOUR OWN field guide.*

We had booked much of the trip from Sydney through a now extinct Sydney company, Andean Adventures. Our land content in Bolivia and Peru was pre-paid to Setours of Lima, Peru – an excellent company. They sub-contracted to a splendid variety of small local tour operators and arranged all guides, transport and accommodation. The Manu NP booking was made with Expeditions Manu, owned by Barry Walker, an Englishman and birdwatching expert living in Cusco, Peru. Arrangements in Galapagos were handled by a company called Ecoventura. The only unstructured and unpaid for bits were a week or so in and around Quito, and four days on Easter Island.

## **Sites visited**

Tahiti - Papeete

Chile – Santiago and Easter Island

Bolivia - La Paz, Tiahuanaco, Lake Titicaca, Islands of the Sun and Moon, Copacabana

Peru – Puno, Taquile and Uros Islands, Cusco, Machu Picchu, Manu NP, Lima

Ecuador – Quito, Galapagos Islands, Cotopaxi NP, Otavalo, Mindo Road area (Bellavista)







## People

With most countries it is possible to gain a good general impression of the local people. I couldn't do this with the people of the countries we visited in South America. It had nothing to do with relative wealth, it had little to do with ethnicity and nothing to do with the boy / girl thing. The fact is that the people we met covered the complete range from brilliant to

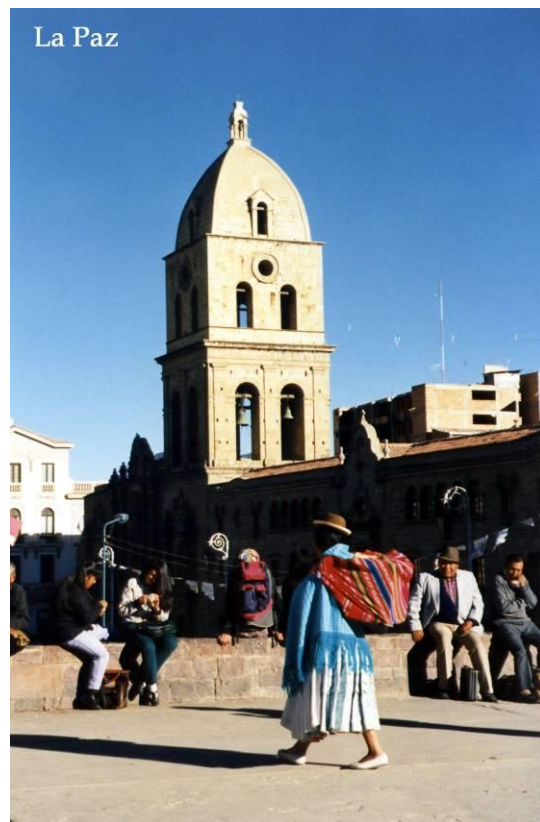
scumbag with a decent population of both these extremes and of every level in between. Much depended, it would seem, on whether they derived part of their income from tourism.

While it is foolish to generalise when it comes to something as broadly unreliable as impressions of whole populations, to me there appeared to be few genuinely warm and friendly folk, particularly those with a large infusion of Spanish blood. Whenever we were in mainland towns and cities, we kept a firm hold on our possessions. I dare say that if we had spent more time in smaller villages rather than the five star tourist sites, then we may have formed a different overall view. Having made these comments I should say that our net donation to the criminal element was: one used pair of underpants.

Personally I find the people in Asia and Africa more naturally warm and happier with their lot in life.



Morgs and Mayette



La Paz

## **Accommodation**

We stayed in three star plus hotels when in towns or cities, we camped in Manu NP, slept on board the MV Letty in Galapagos, and enjoyed a family-run B&B on Easter Island.

A note on South American hotels - the size and opulence of the foyers is inversely proportional to what can be expected in the rooms attached. Maybe they should put the beds in the foyer? Also, many of the hotels are named Hotel Colon. This does not mean that you are about to be shat out on the street after a meal. Apparently "Colon" means "Columbus" or something in Spanish.



## **Roads / transport**

We moved about in all sorts of conveyances. The most efficient method given our itinerary was to travel by air – but this also proved the most dangerous. Much is said about the standards of maintenance of aircraft in the former Soviet Union or China. Luxury, I say. We fell out of the sky only once. On another occasion one of the plane's wheels fell off, literally; happily this happened before take-off. Most but not all of the rest of the time the planes and their antics were just exciting, rather than life threatening.

Of interest were our train journeys across the Andes from Puno (on the northern shore of Lake Titicaca) to Cusco; and the remarkable train that connects Cusco and Machu Picchu. More on these in the diary section.

We spent some days on canoes in the Peruvian Amazon, during which time the real value of beer was established. The Galapagos found us living regally on a two year old luxury dive boat. A mix of other transport types, including bus travel - measured as an extreme sport - saw us roaming about the countryside accumulating enough horror story material to bore our friends with for years to come.



## **Food**

I ate my first really good steak when I was 39 years old, in Ecuador. It seems I had been delusional all those years at home in Oz. Put simply, the food we had was great. In the home of the potato there were many more exotic foods to tempt us. It was all very inexpensive.

The stomach assimilation factor was about five on a scale of one to ten. This meant that the likelihood of stomach rejection was about average on the world scale of things.

## Beer and wine

I have an obsession with not being dehydrated whilst abroad, hence my fascination with rare and unusual brews. The beer (“cerveza”) was exceptionally good, widely available and quite varied in terms of style and taste. The first Spanish we learnt was “dos cerveza, por favor”.

However, some balance in your alcohol intake is always advisable and in South America they had just about sorted how to make a good red wine or three. Chile contributed many fine examples at very reasonable prices.



## Wildlife

Detailed lists and sightings were not kept. A partial list that includes most sightings is appended at the end of this report. Suffice to say that mammals were generally difficult to see in most locations – with Galapagos Islands excepted! Birds were often easily seen, except in rainforest, where there was likely to be all or nothing.



# Diary

In the days preceding our departure much nervousness came my way. I was so excited! My pulse was racing and my brain hurt. I thought holidays were meant to be good for you?

**Day 1,2,1 – Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 1996** (although part of it was the 7<sup>th</sup> before it became the 6<sup>th</sup> again)

If you thought that “economy” class was the cheapest airfare available, think again. A chance meeting with the Lan Chile boss-man at a Sydney Christmas party ultimately achieved fares that were described on our itinerary as “thrift”. This set in motion a chain of events that saw the four of us enjoy a highly subsidized holiday.

We flew in an Australia-Asia 747-SP to Papeete via Auckland. The plane was full of holes according to Fletch, my Qantas insider. Qantas couldn't sell it because nobody wanted to pay anything much for it. Never mind, it was not full of the usual crèche of screaming babies, pissed football teams or the other more objectionable forms of plane wildlife, so we had a happy flight.

We lowered Tahiti by about three inches, such was the precision of our midnight landing. We didn't care all that much that the plane was now probably broken because we were transferring to a Lan Chile 767 in 24 hours time. A condition of our absurdly cheap airfares was that we did not qualify for the usual free transit accommodation at the Papeete Hyatt. We had thought that we might lurk at the airport and take turns wandering the streets during the daylight bit. We thought wrong. Our flight was the last for the night and they turfed us out of the terminal where the usual assortment of curious characters that loiter about airports were waiting for us.

Fortunately for us, “there was a little confusion at the airport” this night. It seemed that four people that had been expected to check into the Hyatt had not arrived. With the assistance of a delightful young lady named Linda, we assumed their identities in a fashion that had Mayette concerned that we would be imprisoned. And so it was that we stayed for free at the Hyatt.

At the resort hotel check-in we explained our lack of vouchers with the “there was a little confusion at the airport” defense. It helped that we were dealing with the night staff and not anybody with much clue as to what we were about. In any event the French-run hotel was on the back foot tourism-wise as the French Government had recently finished blowing up a couple of perfectly good nearby islands to prove some scientific point or other.

## Tahiti from our cheap accommodation



All our meals and drinks were provided free of charge. We thought that being nice might not ultimately serve us, so we tried to make out that it was their fault that our papers were not in order.

A trip into “town” revealed a picturesque city, beautiful people and sky-high prices for everything. How anyone could afford to live or holiday in Tahiti is highly questionable, except if they don’t have to pay. The Polynesians smiled a lot, and have body shapes that ranged from enormous down to stunning.

The afternoon saw us enjoy “happy hour” and dinner (for free), although we did get kicked out of the better restaurant by the maitre de. We slothed about in the evening before dropping our keys at the desk and in one fluid motion trucked past whilst waving regally and jumping onto our bus for the airport. I guess it helped that we were checked in under a name that did not exist.

All of the arrogant variety of local French person worked at the airport. It was the only thing I didn’t like about our stay on Tahiti.

### **Day 2 – Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

Our Lan Chile 767 flight was populated with an attractive and efficient cabin crew who did their best with all the aisle-clogging South Americans on board. We refuelled at Easter Island and arrived at Santiago without drama. Leaving the airport we were set upon by a mass of local folk intent on selling or renting us something.

We found ourselves spending the night at the Hotel Los Arcos for \$US35 per double. It was a grand old building and felt safe and homey. The Tahitian Police Force failed to locate us there.



### Day 3 – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 1996

The first “real” day of our holiday. Our booked taxi failed to arrive so we booked another and spent some anxious moments worrying that we might never leave Santiago. Naturally the second taxi extorted more money from us than the first had agreed.

The airport at Santiago was exceptionally efficient and we were soon on a Lan Chile 737-200 for La Paz via Iquique and Arica. Both the latter towns are on the coastal desert and looked like proper dumps. The flight from Arica was amazing as we passed snow-capped volcanoes, desert, random bits of the Andes and Lake Titicaca.

La Paz Airport is the highest commercial airport in the world at an altitude of over 4000 metres and the air is thin enough so that the planes need twice the runway length to stop. From Arica the plane climbed, levelled out and landed (well, almost). The airport is at El Alto, the poorer part of the city up on the altiplano.

We were met at the airport by Lizett, the first of our many guides, whose only task was to shuttle us past the eucalyptus forests to our hotel. She asked me the name of the Bolivian capital. She tells me that I was the first person ever to give her the correct answer - Sucre. Shortly after leaving the airport we got to THE VIEW OF THE CITY. This is one of the most spectacular views of a city anywhere. La Paz sits in a bloody big hole in the ground. It is quite incongruous with its surroundings. It looks quite ridiculous. The lower down the valley you travel the higher the real estate values are, because the air is thicker.



Our digs, the Hotel Gloria, was fine with a most amazing restaurant perched on its roof under a glass ceiling. The panoramic view at night saw dots of light appear in all directions. It was difficult to determine where the stars finished and where the goldfish-bowl like city lights started. Maybe the combination of altitude and coca-leaf tea was starting to play tricks on us!

#### **Day 4 – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

When in La Paz you take the \$12 tour of the city and the Valley de la Luna, of which the former is interesting and the latter less so.

The local women looked really sad, they very rarely smiled – maybe they were designed that way. I would reckon the national championship for sitting in the one spot for 12 hours and not moving would be hotly contested in La Paz. They were splendidly dressed for stillness in colourful and generous clothes and odd-looking bowler hats. The examples found in the market area were entirely incapable of moving, as they were boxed in behind their fruit or other goods in the morning and unless sales were sufficient they would still be in the same spot until the next day! Maybe.

The river that flowed downstream of the city was something to see. I once looked into an open sewer in Kathmandu out of curiosity, to see how horrible a sewer could be. Now I know where it exits - La Paz. And to think that this river flowed into the Amazon. There were plenty of caracaras and other birds sitting in it. Never order caracara in the unlikely event you see it on a menu somewhere.

#### **Day 5 – Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

Tiahuanaco ruins were really interesting despite being very ruined indeed. The bits that were too big for the conquering Spanish to bugger up were defaced by being chiselled with childish religious icons like crucifixes. The Spanish, like most of their European neighbours were really good at ruining things, especially when their silly religious leaders found some obscure superstitious reason for doing so. They didn't mind taking all the heathen gold though, and they apparently took heaps from Tiahuanaco.

Nice fat tasty looking wild guinea pigs were seen in the ruins.





Of note, and on our little day tour, were two unusual American folk. Their names were Rosanne and Dan. Dan was overweight, dull, and chewed constantly on a large bag of coca leaves. He suffered from the belief that if he did so long enough maybe Rosanne would dematerialise. His partner was awful in every respect (including a few you wouldn't have thought possible), and there is nothing else to say about the matter. Morgs postulated, I believe correctly, that Dan was being handsomely paid for his embarrassment.

A wander around town late in the day led to Morgs not buying a large alpaca rug, a decision he regrets to this very day (*ten years later*). He seemed entranced by the city. Dave and I went for a poke about the sewer and environs and spied many birds and some interesting plants around the hillsides – bromeliads, cacti and orchids.

Some cleansing ales were much enjoyed.

### **Day 6 – Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

Goodbye La Paz, as we were picked up at 0545 by Reynaldo of Transtur Lake Titicaca Cruises for a relaxing day aboard a catamaran on the world's highest navigable lake. Many water birds were poking about the edge of it, including the flightless grebe.

Our first stop was Isla de la Sol. Beautiful birds were hopping about and some of the friendly variety of llama and alpaca. From this small island there were distant views of the snow-capped Andes to the south. Breakfast and lunch were enjoyed aboard our craft, which carried almost nobody except us.

We landed at Copacabana and after squizzing inside the notable (apparently) local cathedral, we were whisked away to the Peruvian border where Delphina met us and took us to Puno, Peru, in a minibus. "Delphina" translates as "dolphin" in English and she made a great joke about telling us she was the only dolphin on Lake Titicaca. She was very informative, had a great sense of humour and was happy for us to stop to look at wildlife including my first views of flamingos, along with many ducks and other waterfowl.



Puno was not too exciting. We changed some money, marvelled at shops full of second hand and eerily familiar Australian poker machines, and tucked into the local version of pizza for dinner.

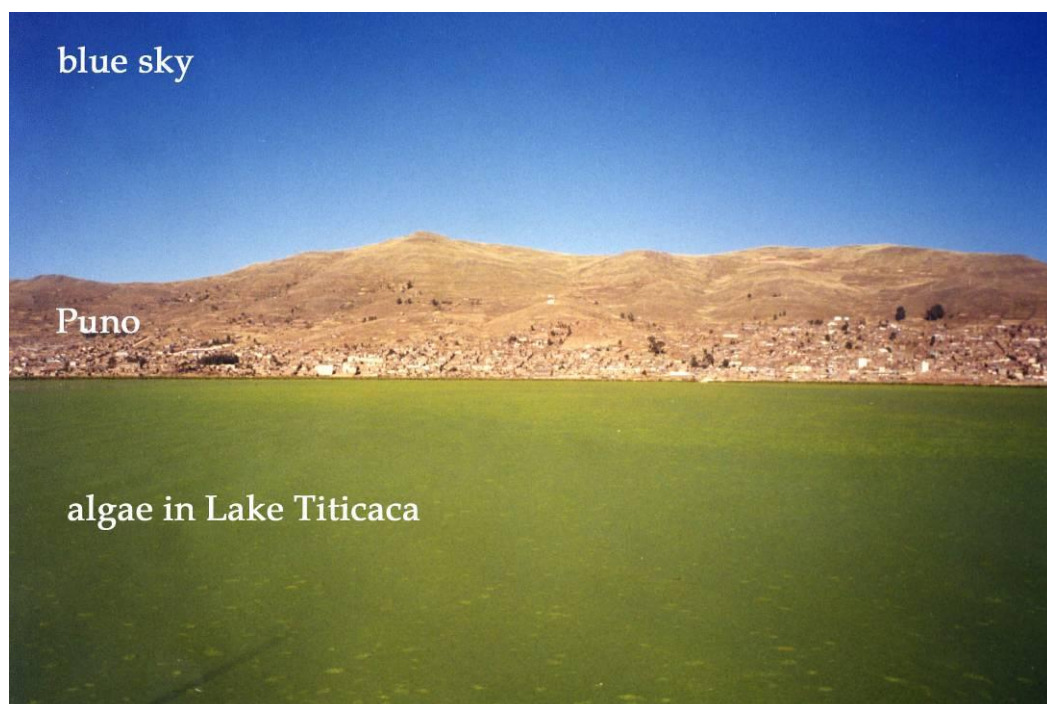
### **Day 7 – Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

50 feet from Uros Island, a Lake Tit island of the floating reed variety, my much-loved camera died. Two things to note here – firstly, the island doesn't really float but is loosely attached to the bottom of the lake, and secondly, I had the shits big time, not on any account of being misled about the buoyancy of the local islands, but because I couldn't expose this obvious untruth to the world by taking pictures of them.

The people of Uros Island had seen tourists before and had a fine array of wall hangings and other assorted things for sale. We bought. They smiled.

Of less interest and much further into the lake was Taquile Island. Why we went there is a mystery. There was little of interest except the view from the top of it and the toilet facilities nearby. The experience of the latter cancelled out any benefit gained from the former.

In the interests of maintaining group harmony Morgs lent me his aged but fully functioning camera for the rest of the holiday.



Uros Island, Lake Tit

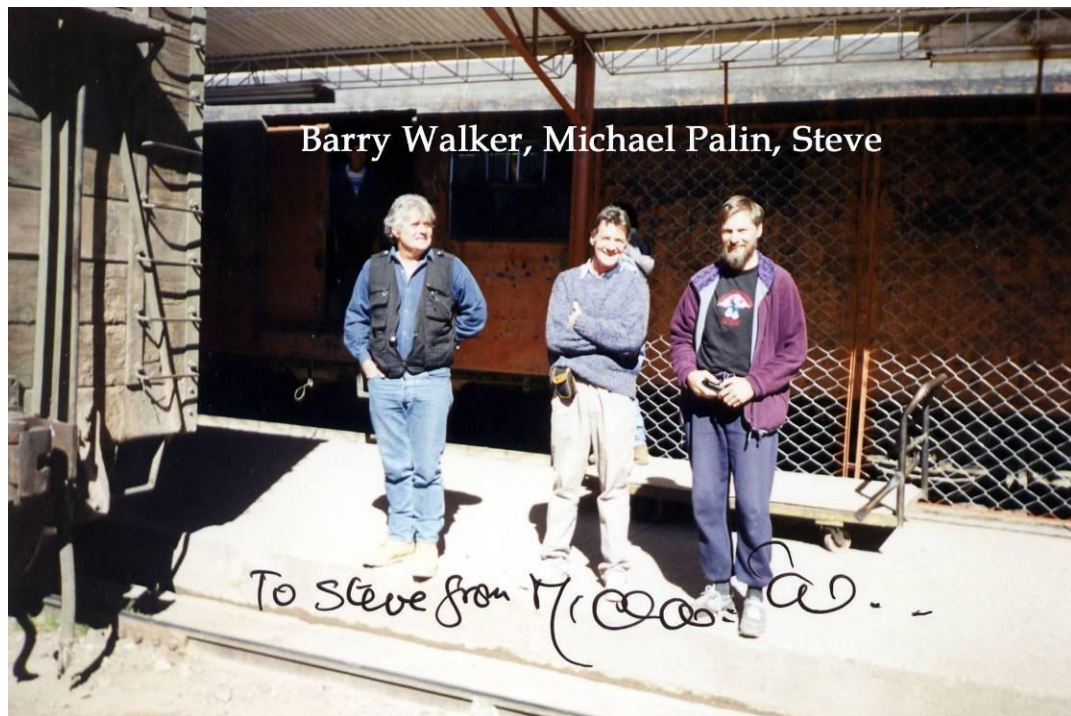


Our dinner was delicious and hearty. Funny how your mouth never really knows the true value of food. That comes later, in my case not much later.

#### **Day 8 – Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

A much anticipated day, as we were to cross the Andes, not by frog, but by train. The Puno to Cusco train journey typically takes 12 hours and it always arrives late, except for this day.....

Our reasons for travelling on this particular train were twofold – to get to Cusco somehow, and to experience something of what Michael Palin did when he travelled this train on one of his “Great Train Journey’s of The World” documentaries. I made the point that I expected Mr Palin to walk into our carriage moments before he did.



Being something of a Python fanatic I was hesitant to approach His Highness and make the mistake of being dismissed as a nuisance, which I can be. Such was not the case, my mate “Pales” (as his very best friends call him) was friendly and chatty. He was in the company of Barry Walker, the owner of the company that was taking us into Manu National Park later in our holiday. And so started a chain of events that not only led to the train being early for the first time in its history, but also ending in us having a much less expensive holiday than would otherwise have been the case.

Michael Palin was filming his “Full Circle” documentary. This led to the train folk lifting their game for the cameras.

Our next guide, Abellardo, took us to our hotel in Cusco. He near shit himself when the train came in early - he thought the world was coming to an end.

### Day 9 – Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June 1996

Every traveller to Peru goes to Machu Picchu, and for good reason. Our new guide, Rica, took us to the train station at 0530 for a spectacular and comfortable journey, first up a series of switchbacks and then down a long valley following the Riobamba River. From there a minibus took us to our luxury accommodation at the five star Ruinas Hotel, adjacent to the ruins. Only six people in the last thirty years have been rich enough to afford to eat at the hotel.





Our new guide, Darwin, toured us through the ruins in fine style. Words cannot adequately describe the site, the setting, or the experience. Suffice to say that even though it looked exactly like the postcards, the wow factor is off the scale. It was breathtaking. Unexpectedly, Bart and Homer Simpson were sharing this experience with us and we were none too happy about it. We had no guns, but never mind, a few cruel but well considered words from Dave and I did the trick.



To add a little extra value to our day we were thrilled when Darwin pointed to some mountain viscachas, relatives of the chinchilla, fluffy bunny things that lived among the ruins and were lazily sunning themselves for all to see. Also in evidence were various different hummingbirds, quite numerous around the Sun Gate, an awesome spot that overlooks the ruins and the first place where those walking the Inca Trail see what they have paid for.

Shower; blissful 11 hours of sleep.



**Day 10 – Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

Morgs, Mayette and I walked up Hyuna Picchu. This is the hill that always appears in the background for the main event on the postcards. Many orchids and other exotic plants were in flower. The phenomenon where insects gather at the top of whatever is locally the highest point was well established, with all manner of fluttering, buzzing and crashing. The view is, of course, stunning, although it does paint a less flattering picture looking across the ruins with the road from the railway to the hotel appearing as a massive zigzag scar.



The afternoon saw us negotiate the 16 switchbacks down to the river where torrent ducks, tanagers and other dazzling birds entertained us. Our cerveza guzzling was interrupted at times as raining tanager shit and bits of avocado fruit would fall from above.



The train back to Cuzco was just as good as we remembered it and allowed great views of the city at night. After being transferred to our hotel we wandered about the city trying to find the Crosskeys Hotel. Upon our arrival we chewed the fat with Senor Michael Palin but were interrupted by a panicky Manu Expeditions manager who explained that we should have checked in earlier etc. Beer and pizza while we waited for our guide who failed to arrive.

*(Insiders secret: whilst our friend Mr Palin was supposed to travel everywhere by public transport during the filming of his doco, he asked us whether we thought he could land a helicopter at Machu Picchu as he was sick of trains. He said he would send his crew by train to get some travel shots.)*

### **Day 11 – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

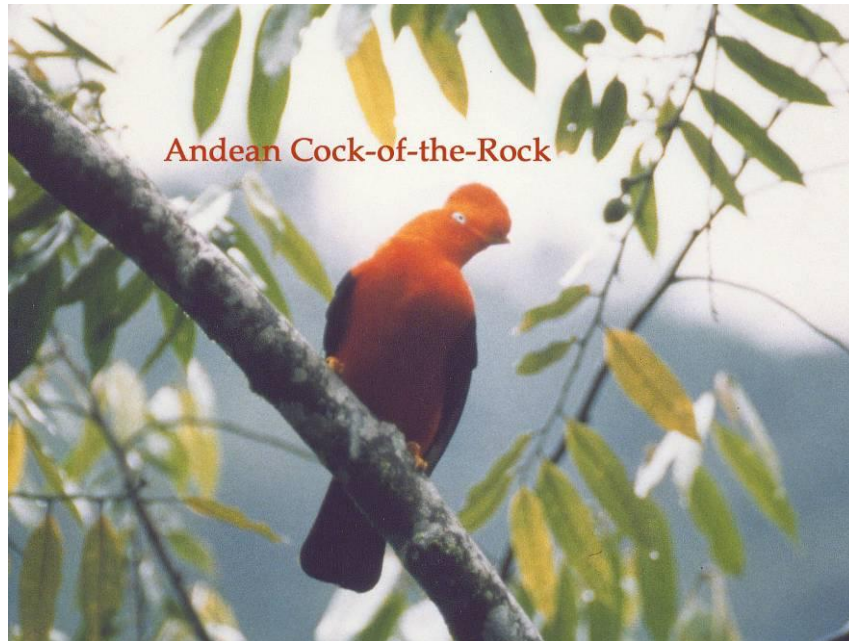
There were 10 of us on the 8 day “Manu Experience” operated by Barry Walker’s company Expeditions Manu. Michael Palin poached Barry Walker as a guide so we were treated with Leo, who was leading his first (and last, as it transpired) tour. He spoke less English than I speak Spanish. Other tourists included a travel writer, a Kristina - a pleasant young girl from Adelaide, the well-adjusted Kevin and Donna from Pommiland, and a silly yank dentist with his sillier teenage daughter Miranda, who thought she was on her way to Wallyworld and did not believe in the existence of insects or sunlight.

A 0330 start saw us leave our hotel in a truck/bus that fully lacked any suspension for a 12 hour journey to a facility called Amazonia Lodge, an extinct tea hacienda, and very comfortable. The trip took in some grand scenery as we wound our way down through



grassland and cloud forest to the start of the lowland rainforest. Andean cock-of-the-rock was common at times. This bird is right up there with the world's best. A trip highlight.

Amazonia Lodge was festooned with birds, including a tree full of nesting oropendulas. A welcoming pisco sour was shortly followed by a pisco sour. Yum.



## **Day 12 – Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

After a little time exploring around the lodge we piled into our floating home for the next several days and motored down the Rio Madre de Dios. All day we went downriver until the junction with the Rio Manu was reached. It was pleasant and mild on the boat but a long day nevertheless. We saw no mammals for two reasons. Firstly there probably weren't any, having all been eaten by people, and secondly, even if there were any they would have made themselves scarce from our noisy outboard.

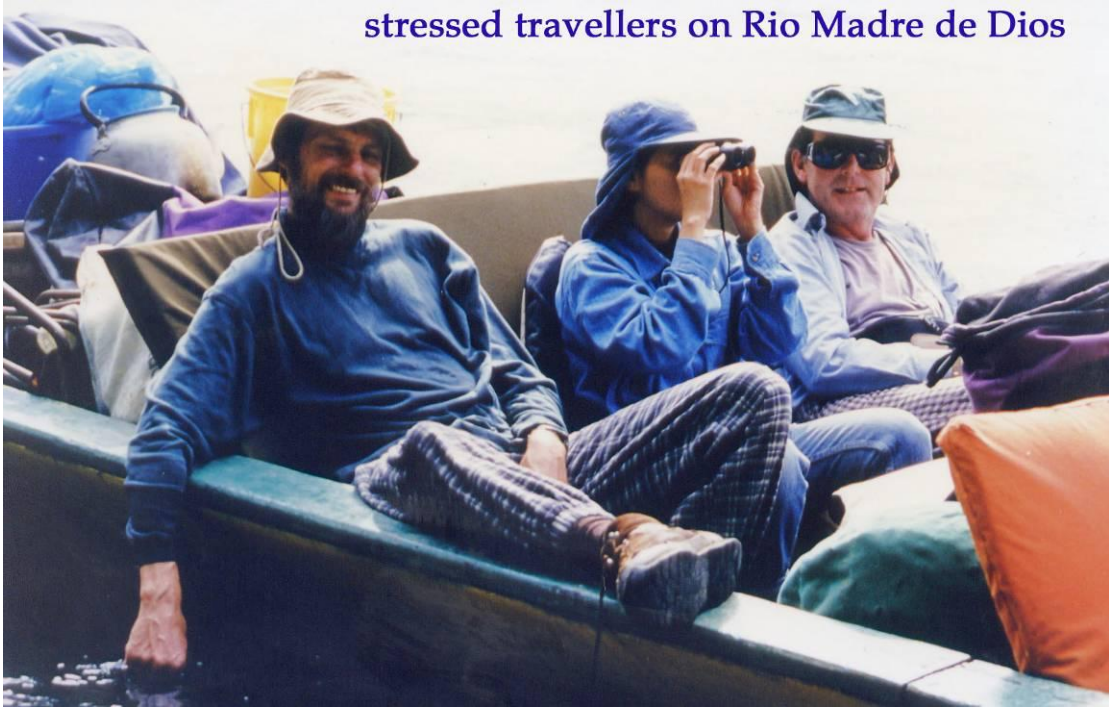
Our food, guide and staff were starting to generate a list of complaints.

We made camp just before sunset on a sandbank on the Manu River. There was just time to erect our tents before the biting insects arrived. Tepid beer and Jack did the rest.

Miranda's skin was looking a bit pink with a few interesting red spots.

*(Travel note regarding warm beer: When our staff were seen loading longnecks of beer into the boat we marvelled that any would get consumed. After all, who drinks warm beer? When there was no cold beer we found warm beer was pretty good stuff compared to no beer.)*

### stressed travellers on Rio Madre de Dios



#### **Day 13 – Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

All day was spent motoring up the winding Manu River. Still no mammals but many caimans and turtles. Roseate spoonbills, scarlet ibis, horned screamers, black skimmers, king vultures, wood storks, sand-coloured nighthawks and various macaws were just a few of the bigger or more colourful birds.

We set up camp in the dark. The warm beer was starting to taste good.

Miranda was now coloured red with crimson dots all over her.

#### **Day 14 – Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

A much anticipated day as we were chafing at the bit to get into some forest and leave the outboard-generated ringing in our ears behind. First stop was Cocha Salvador, an ox-bow lake a short distance away. Here we were to not see giant river otters. Happily we did make a start on our mammals by seeing Amazonian red squirrel and dusky titi, black spider, red howler and brown capuchin monkeys.

The shaded parts of the forest were hot and uncomfortable. The unshaded parts were unable to be endured for more than one second or so.

Our guide was determined to be next to useless and none of our number were the least bit happy with the outfit that was running the show.

A Brazilian tapir was seen blundering round the camp during the evening.

Miranda was by now prettily crimson-coloured with a range of asymmetric spots and patterned rashes.



Miranda, Wayne, Tony, Kristina, Morgs, Donna, Kevin, Mayette, Dave

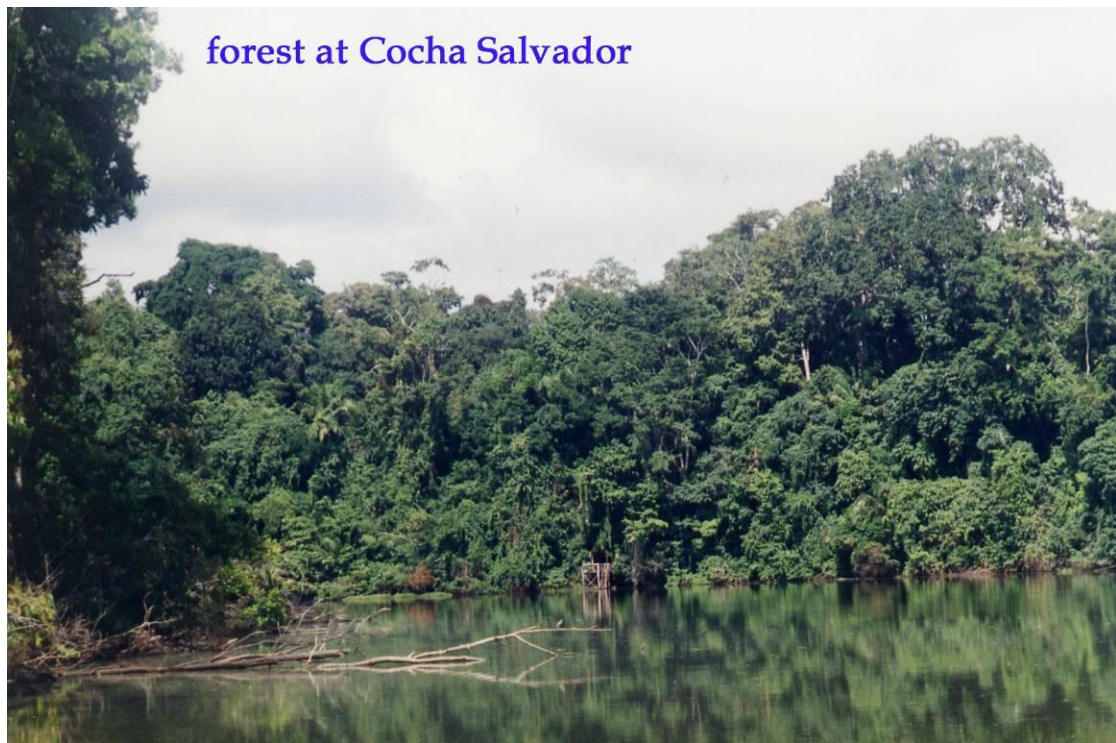
#### **Day 15 – Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

A pre-breakfast duck and weave through the forest revealed no wildlife. There was a theory getting around that the giant river otters were no more.

Some in our group were despondent and gave up looking for anything at all. After eating breakfast I suggested we go back on the same walk we had undertaken a couple of hours earlier. Mayette and Dave were the only takers. On the way we saw squirrel monkeys and white-fronted capuchins and at the lake were four giant river otters!! A bonus group of collared peccaries was flushed on our return and proved that you should never give up looking.

The rest of the day was taken up by travelling back down the Manu River to a crock-of-shit campsite. Two capybaras crossed the river but that was about all. We had a beer and a group whinge about the Manu experience. We didn't realise just how much worse it was going to get.





forest at Cocha Salvador



black skimmers on Rio Manu

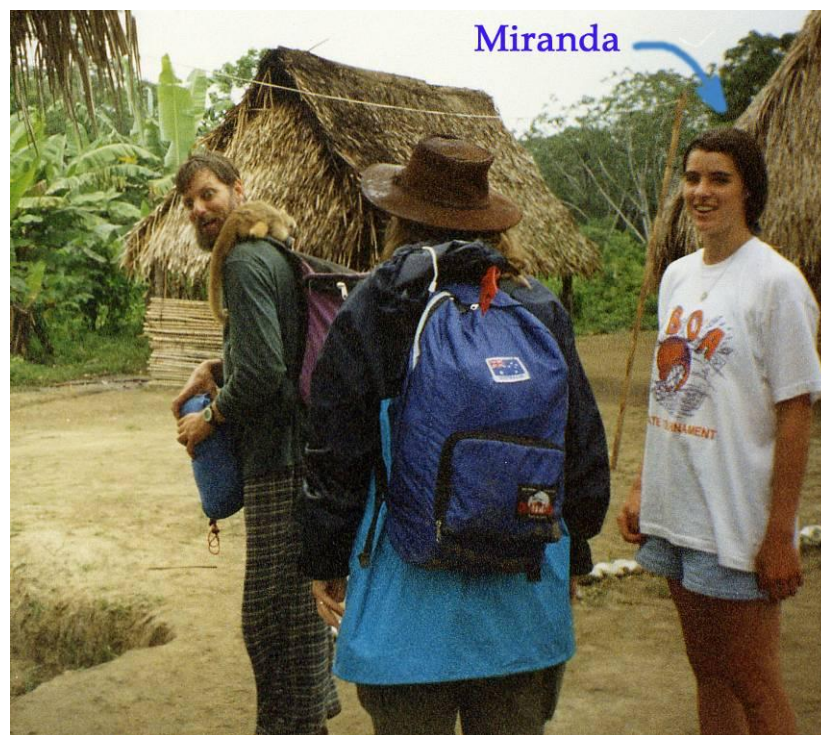
Miranda, what was left of her, continued to amaze with the addition of a designer range of pustules on her legs and arms.

#### **Day 16 – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 1996**

The day started, or rather didn't, as we waited for five hours at Boca Manu airstrip so that a "6-day program" person, a Mr Goldfarb, from another group, could be taken away. Our guide told us he had to stay to make sure they got away safely. "Safely" could mean anything

regarding flights from Boca Manu as we later discovered. The army staff at the camp at the airstrip delighted in harassing us by conducting spontaneous passport inspections and other needless activities. They were quite interested in the remains of Miranda who continued to parade her “flesh” to the elements and the teenage boys with big guns. Morgs could endure no more and had a few sharp words with her amazingly stupid father.

The average age of the army grunts was about 15 ½, and their average level of intelligence was about to be measured directly through observation. They had a “pet” capuchin monkey (pictured below). I had taken an album of photos from home and the boys were interested in looking at them. So was the monkey. As the monkey got bored looking at one photo it would turn the page. It continued to do this until it had seen all the photos. At no stage did any of the uniformed local kids interfere. I would have prized a photo of this event, except every one of the boys had a very large gun and anything that was not in the best interests of our survival was not to be entertained. In retrospect they could have had Miranda and her old man as hostages if necessary.



Plank Goldfarb decided at the very moment the plane arrived to get rid of him, that he would stay on for the rest of the program. Dave was restrained from killing him. I didn't wish to do this – I had more creative ideas that involved ants and sunlight.

Whilst the morning's non-activities were being enjoyed the river level dropped sufficiently to maroon our boat on a superb patch of Amazonian mud. The Boca Manu Slipway Company came into being as we delighted in whiling away the hours in the sun, mud and slop trying to launch our canoe. I love paying lots of money to do this sort of stuff.

A cold weather front passed through, yes they had them here too, and rain fell on us as we finally got going down the Rio Madre de Dios in the direction of the so-called Parrot Inn. This fine jungle facility continued the joke. It hadn't quite been built yet. We couldn't locate a shower and we stayed in an electricity-challenged dormitory.

The beer ran out today.

Miranda alive, barely.

### **Day 17 – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1996**

Macaw lick day. This was not a day where we licked macaws, although that does sound rather interesting. The macaws do the “eat clay” thing on the riverbank. Hundreds of blue-headed parrots arrived and some hours later a dozen or so red and blue macaws turned up.

After lunch we walked to the ox-bow lake Cocha Blanco, which surprised us by being the best bit of habitat we had seen - a beautiful lake with many birds, two giant otters and a gang of dusky titi monkeys. Here we snatched our first really good views of Culvier’s toucan. The impressive forest also gave up currasows, guans, hoatzins (Morg’s favourite), a nunbird, roseate spoonbills, squirrel monkeys and brown capuchins.

We procured some lovely warm beer to add to our popcorn and slept rather well.

Miranda’s father was seen searching for a priest.

### **Day 18 – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1996**

After another shot at the macaw lick, this time before dawn, we poked about the forest looking at animal tracks but not at the animals that made them. Bulk amounts of birds made up for the paucity of mammals with mixed foraging flocks that had numbers that boggled the mind. Needless to say we could identify only a small proportion of what flew through the forest.

Late afternoon saw Kevin, Donna and I walking with a couple of the locals for miles into the forest on the opposite bank of the river. We got lost, and Kevin lost control of his digestive system although one may not have been as a consequence of the other. With failing light Donna started to panic and I started to contemplate a night in the forest. I have no fear of being eaten whole, of having appendages violently removed or being yelled at by enraged howler monkeys. Mosquitoes are something else again.

As the light failed, crepuscular birds started to appear with trumpeters being serenaded by howling howlers and army ants heading for their barracks. We had little time to contemplate Brazil nuts and the trees that were responsible for them as we blundered through the forest.

When we saw the surprise on the faces of our guides upon reaching the river we knew we had been a little lucky.

Beer was followed by the last of Kevin’s pisco. He and I spent the better part of the rest of the night gasbagging with Carol (biologist and part-owner of the Parrot Inn) and getting loud and drunk, according to unreliable earwitness reports offered the next day.

Miranda babbling incoherently.



## Day 19 – Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1996

We returned upriver to the much-loved Boca Manu airstrip. When the plane arrived more or less on schedule we figured that the day was going okay. The Beech Super King-Air had all the seats that were originally fitted for nine passengers ripped out and replaced by benches so that 16 could fit. Was this safe? As we taxied up the dirt and rocks one of the wheels fell off the plane. The young pilot couldn't turn the engine off because the plane's battery was flat. So the plane sat strategically in the middle of the "runway" until it ran out of fuel. We waited for further announcements from the airline staff.



Uh-oh, the wheel fell off!

Just when you needed an oil company helicopter complete with a spare battery, one arrived. Good to see that the oil companies can do this sort of stuff. So our poor little plane left for Cusco. We were not on it. We were sitting in the departure hall a.k.a. the shed at the edge of the forest. A tayra (a big weasel) crossed the runway unconcerned. We wondered about the local accommodation options and what Miranda's funeral would be like.

Five hours later our favourite toy plane re-appeared with truck bearings in its wheels. We stacked ourselves in. The retraction of the undercarriage while we were loosely attached to the ground gave the plane sufficient lift to clear the trees. We were a tad overloaded on our way through the clouds. The air-conditioning could not be used because we needed all the power we could get to keep the plane in the air.

*Travel note: never get in a plane that does not proudly display a company name on its side somewhere.*

We dined with Kevin, Donna and Kristina. Or at least some of us did. Four of us left the hotel for dinner and one of us, me, sneaked back and fell forlornly onto the bed. Our hotel was interesting in that it provided me with my first opportunity ever to be thankful that my stomach had temporarily gone on strike. Proving that crows and ravens can count better than

thieving hotel staff, some low-life unlocked the door and started prowling about the room in the dark. He got quite a shock when I elbowed him in the stomach. Actually I poked my head out from the sheets and he ran away. My Spanish language skills and lack of any real evidence of a crime saw me go soft on any action.

### **Day 20 – Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

We slothed about Cusco, the runner-up highlight being spotting the Peruvian President, Alberto Fujimori in the Plaza de Armas. Mayette waved and yelled and he waved back.

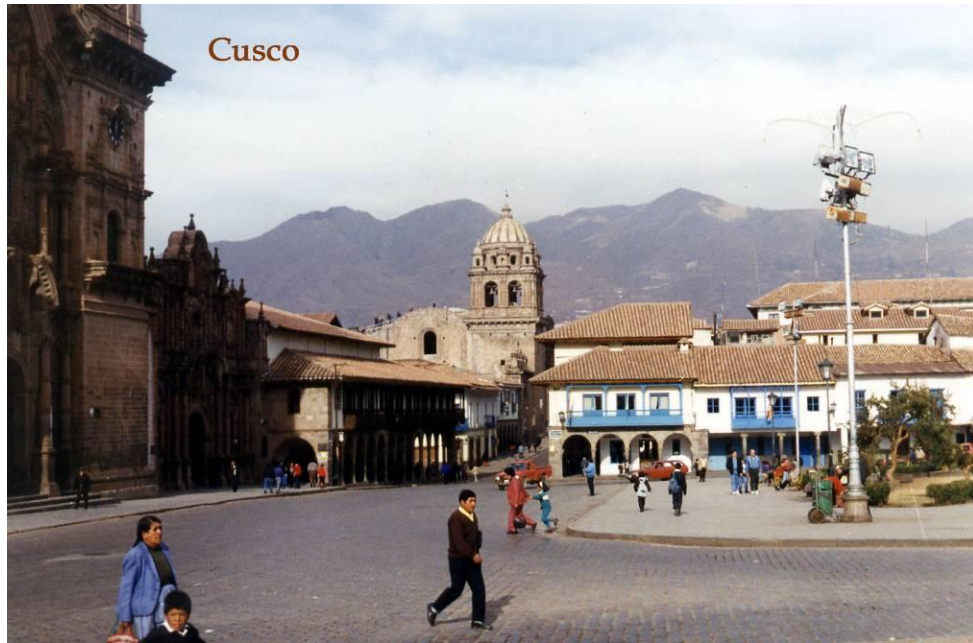


The winning highlight was the seven-person delegation to the offices of Expediciones Manu to negotiate a settlement to our log of claims. Leo, our guide, was there and not looking all that happy with the world. You can look like that when you are about to get the sack. Despite that we all felt very sorry for him. It wasn't his fault that he could speak very little English and that he had no experience as a guide. He was still a good guy.

I was elected as our delegate and before I could get through my opening remarks prior to putting a proposition of a part-repayment, Charo, the manager, gobsmacked us by saying we would get a full refund. This amounted to \$A1800 each. This was the first time the company had received such rotten reviews. So, suitably flush with new money, we headed for lunch as the pitiful sounds of Leo being tortured echoed around the town square.

At 1400 "Pith-head", a guide so named because of his attempt to repopularise pith helmets, led us on an interesting tour of the city and its Inca ruins.





We later toddled off to the AeroPeru office to get our tickets for Lima, had a beer in the Crosskeys Pub, and dinner in a fine restaurant. Big day!

### **Day 21 – Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

While waiting in the departure lounge at the airport we bumped into our pilot from the ill-fated Boca Manu – Cusco “service”. He explained a few things about local aircraft maintenance (ie none), and some of the more thrilling things that had happened to him whilst flying, like engines exploding and bits falling off, or both at the same time. We didn’t expect that any of these things were to happen to us.....



Our flight to Lima in an old 727 was fun, especially the rush for the plane - there were no seat allocations. Cripples learnt how to walk, old ladies learnt how to run, and fat women learnt how to flatten others in their haste to get on the plane. There must have been one less seat than passengers or something.

We were met at Lima Airport by one of the Setours heavies (in more ways than one) - Lourdes. Strangely the check-in queues for our flight to Quito, Ecuador started not just to shorten, but disappear entirely. A scream heralded a sliding and crashing wedding-costumed bride followed by some idiot with a gun or a piece of important paper. I really can't remember what he was wielding, all I knew was that we had unwittingly become extras in a popular Peruvian TV soap opera.



While Lourdes was trying to sort out our bookings for the Galapagos the soap opera kept following us. It was all happening in Lima. It was just that it happened for rather longer than we had hoped but this came later.



The Avianca Airlines 727 for the flight to Quito had a nice paint job (with name down the side) and three engines. By the end of the day it had neither. Each time the pilot revved the engines on the taxiway a loud clunking sound would emanate. I tried to imagine this sound was unrelated to passenger safety and so did the captain, for we soon took off. Half way to Quito we heard a mid-sized explosion that was coincident with important parts of number two engine leaving the aircraft. They did this by passing through the tail on which the engine was mounted.

The captain made the simple announcement, in English only, that there were problems with #2 engine and that we would be returning to Lima. The amount of whisky in the drinks increased measurably. We landed to loud applause from fellow passengers amongst myriad emergency vehicles on a runway that had been cordoned off for our benefit. It transpired that 727's can't climb on two engines. We sat for several hours while the airline staff confirmed that our plane was ratshit.

The front desk at the Lima Sheraton could identify all its new and unwanted Avianca customers by their dress. We enjoyed their free restaurant fare resplendent in dirty t-shirts, joggers and track pants that hadn't been washed for three weeks. The ever-helpful Setours staff faxed the Galapagos guys to tell them we would try to get there the next day.

A soon-to-be-broken plane



reception for broken plane (and us)



### Day 22 – Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June 1996

Another aged 727 had been located and we flew to Quito. Once there, a charming and helpful Ecoventura guide assisted our check-in for the SAN Airlines 727 flight to Galapagos Islands via Guayaquil. I changed \$100 for 309,500 sucres. There are quite a few millionaires in Ecuador.





The Letty was gorgeous, much unlike many of the tourists on board. Aside from a fine American couple and us, there were the Griswalds. The Griswalds were, as every lover of fine American humour knows, on their way to Wallyworld. There were 14 of them, the patriarch of which was a retired oil worker from Texas who offered the extended family a trip to “anywhere in the world” every year. The ungrateful mob chose Galapagos this year as some sort of mystery “get square” and our insight of American family life and its education system or utter lack thereof was to begin.

the MV Letty



One of Dave’s many talents was to choose apt names for people we met. So it was with the Griswalds. We had a name for each of them and only one teenager (Betty-Boo Griswald) was smart enough to know what we were doing – putting utter shit on her family. She loved it. In fact on the day they departed she wrote in the visitor book that her time in Galapagos would have been unbearable except for the Aussie humour that went right over her family’s heads. The rest of them thought that we were lavishing attention on them, which only made it worse.

Sadly Mayette was seasick and continued to be so until the day before we left the boat.





### **Day 23 – Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

I write verbatim from my handwritten diary:

“It’s just after lunch but so far this day goes down as one of the best days in my life. We went to Genovesa Island and after a drab start to the day went ashore and saw such fabulous birds at arms length that it makes your head spin - red-footed and masked boobies, magnificent and great frigatebirds, Darwin’s finches, Galapagos doves, night herons, wandering tattlers, storm petrels, lava and swallow-tailed gulls.”

After snorkelling in the cool water we explored the far side of the island for views of thousands of boobies and storm petrels. We watched as a short-eared owl caught and ate a stormy without moving more than a metre from the petrel’s burrow.

Cleansing ales on the fly-deck rounded out a miracle day.

### **Day 24 – Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

We travelled through the night to start our day looking at Galapagos hawks, Galapagos sea lions, marine iguanas and sally-lightfoot crabs. The volcanic island scenery was sensational and the snorkelling exciting with shoals of fish, turtles, sea lions and the occasional shark. Everyone was ecstatic, except.....

..... the Griswalds. Nothing but complaints. You see, amongst other nonsensical whingeing the Griswalds had special dietary requirements. None of the silver service seafood, local steak or other superbly prepared fare for them. Oh no, they were special. They had sent their chaff needs to the tour company in advance. I am not making this up – they said they didn’t eat meat and they didn’t eat vegetables. Ecoventura were used to dealing with white fools but they were in deep quandary with this lot. What did these people eat? Rocks, sea water, each



other? So they sent the Griswalds a fax asking what they would deem food. The answer? Hot dogs, hamburgers and pizza. So that's what they ate while we shook our heads in horror.



The afternoon saw us cruise to Bartolome Island, where we climbed a small hill to get the postcard view of the island with which every documentary watcher is so familiar (see page 4).

I would have been happy if my whole year ended at this point but no, I was forced to go snorkelling with more sea lions and Galapagos penguins. It was simply the most incredible wildlife experience I have ever had. The trillions of fish hardly rated a mention. The sea lions on the other hand were almost beyond belief as we played tag and fooled about trying to get their photos with an underwater disposable camera. They would deliberately avoid the camera by hiding behind me and then grab my flippers and spin me around before finally posing to have their picture taken. How long had this been going on? Why wasn't I told? I must say that they were hard to cuddle. It's like cuddling a giant jelly.

Morgs and I stayed up till midnight drinking beer, wine, bourbon and scotch and praying that the day would never end.



Galapagos sea lions



swallow-tailed gull



masked booby



red-footed booby



frigatebird chick





frigatebird trying to steal Dave's hat



Galapagos fur seal

walking trail hazards



vermillion flycatcher



kicker rock







**Day 25 – Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June 1996**

The morning was spent at Puerto Ayora visiting the Charles Darwin Centre and the giant tortoises therein including Lonesome George, the last of the Pinta Island subspecies.



We cruised to Santa Fe Island where we snorkelled at two different sites. The first saw prolific tropical fish including white-tipped sharks, with the second being sea lion heaven,



this time with some big bulls and many females with pups. Land iguanas were next on the menu, before an afternoon and evening dominated by barely responsible alcohol consumption.

### **Day 26 – Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 1996**

A note of warning: If at all possible do not join a tour that has half the party leaving at half-time, even if they are the Griswalds. We signed on for a seven-day package whilst the Wallyworlders were leaving this day. This meant that we had to be back at the main port to dispossess ourselves of these embarrassments to humanity. Much of the day was wasted achieving this, as their plane was delayed. This seemed all too familiar. Our afternoon excursion was cancelled.

Eventually we were joined by a charming Ecuadorean family, so now the crew numbered 14 and the passengers just six.



### **Day 27 – Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1996**

We woke at Hood Island. The usual throng of sea lions greeted us as we ducked and weaved through thousands of blue-footed boobies and waved albatrosses. The albies were simply stunning and they and the boobies were engaged in their full courtship display. To reach the sea all the albies trudged converging paths to a single point on the cliff edge and launched themselves off.



The island was pure magic as the birds, lava lizards and the large land iguanas all showed their fearlessness and the landscape revealed amazing beauty.

A short cruise later and we were swimming with countless fish of all sizes, with eagle rays, sharks and, you guessed it, sea lions.

We relaxed on the beach (and went snorkelling again!) and marvelled at the mockingbirds that followed us everywhere and wouldn't get far enough away to be photographed.

My records show that we had six or seven beers followed by a cheeky Chilean red wine or three.





blue-footed booby

### **Day 28 – Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1996**

Floreana Island was the starting place for our last full day in the islands. We found a small muddy lake hosting some white-cheeked pintails and two flamingos. This preceded a visit to the “Devil’s Crown”, one of the world’s best dive sites, and an experience that Morgs and I will never forget. The crown is the very tip of an old volcano which is split into two like a broken circle with two opposing gaps. Superlatives are useless here. Suffice to say that we wouldn’t lift our heads out of the water so that the boat couldn’t collect us.



sunset over Devil’s Crown

Our first bottlenose dolphins were seen on the passage to Santa Cruz Island, along with enormous flocks of feeding seabirds. On the island we travelled to the highlands to visit a farm where we soon spotted four wild tortoises. After harassing them and a few birds we



enjoyed a polite cup of tea at a hacienda before returning to our craft for dinner and a scotch on the sundeck under a starry sky. Bugger.

#### **Day 29 – Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

The morning was wasted but the Galapagos experience was the best week of my life thus far. I made the most of every opportunity on board a great boat with a very happy and skilled crew who lavished their attention on us, as we weren't the Griswalds. There were significant advantages to be in a small group on the shore excursions and the latitude shown us by the guides was clearly not afforded to other groups.



Our flight back to Quito was unexpectedly uneventful. We caught a taxi from the airport to the 4-star Embassy Hotel before adjourning to the Rincon del Gaucho steakhouse. This restaurant served the best steak I have ever eaten (*and I am still talking about it almost ten years later*). Why is it that in a facility that contains nobody that can speak English, you can order a rare to medium steak and get served precisely that? You can't in Australia.

#### **Day 30 – Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

Our bus trip north to the market town of Otavalo was interesting. We had the oldest bus outside of India, and it achieved warp factor 4 without too much effort. We arrived just before we departed.

The people at Otavalo are mostly pure Amazonian Indian with all of them looking roughly the same, both men and women. The women, it must be said, were very pretty with round happy faces and colourful costumes.

There wasn't much else to do except wander about waiting for the next day's markets.



### Day 31 – Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July 1996

Almost everyone knows that the part of the holiday that males dread most is the Dedicated Shopping Day. Astonishingly the Otavalo markets are sensational. How is it that I wanted to buy every item on sale? Or, why is it that when I shop locally I want to buy nothing whatsoever? Never mind, after we all bought everything we could carry I suggested we take breath and go and buy a whole lot more or else we would forever regret not doing so. And guess what? We bought a whole lot more and *should* have bought a whole lot more after that. We had llama / alpaca clothes, t-shirts, beanies, hats, bags, alpaca rugs, vests, CDs, nic-nacs and more. The Indian folk who were selling were very quiet and gentle and couldn't be upset by our haggling or walking off. The women have the most beautiful faces – I may have mentioned this already ....

The bus back to Quito was again fast but only occasionally dangerous, unless you happened to be a pedestrian. We may have squashed a few of the slower ones.



We were able to have a few beers in the evening unlike others in town. Apparently alcohol was not available to the locals because of upcoming national elections, and the powers that be didn't want pissed idiots going loco and running around shooting each other.

The Mexican meal we ate after the beers was regretted.

### **Day 32 – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

Our Quito city tour was pretty funny. The guide spoke no English so he brought his daughter to interpret for him. This team was very informative as we toured the UNESCO World Heritage old part of the city, before walking about the town park. Here we bought more clothes from the same people that we met in Otavalo, although we may have been mistaken about their identity, as they all looked the same.

This was the part of the trip where some of its older participants started to get tired and cranky. Various unkind general comments were being thrown about regarding the inhabitants of the continent, how they did things, how they didn't do things etc. Only some of it was valid from where I was sitting, which was in the awful restaurant at the Embassy Hotel.

### **Day 33 – Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

An old heap-of-shit Land Rover picked us up and took us to an accommodation facility named Bellavista, situated in some remnant cloud forest reasonably close to Quito. A Dutchman who had no idea how to drive bounced us along some bumpy roads resulting in Morgs growing a new arsehole. At least that's what I thought he said. I was too busy looking at birds along the way and there were plenty to look at too.

The accommodation and the views from Bellavista were very good indeed. The ex school teacher who runs the place won't be named here. We were told he wasn't allowed to teach



any more because there are limits to the education parents expect for their cute little boys. Aside from any matters of a criminal nature, the proprietor had an odd understanding of the value of domestic cats and dogs to the local ecosystem and had rather too many of each. I guess South America attracts these kinds of people.



#### **Day 34 – Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

Many birds were seen – toucan barbet, plate-billed mountain-toucan, antpittas, fruit-eaters and a plethora of other exotic fare. The cloud forest was gorgeous with many flowering orchids - mainly *oncidiums* and *odontoglossums*.

I had a chat to the proprietor about the dogs that barked all night.

#### **Day 35 – Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

Kevin and Donna from the Manu Experience arrived proving that when travelling the world is indeed small.

Mottled owl was the bird highlight and a new bird for the lodge. I think we added four new “lodge birds” during our short stay.

In the afternoon a massive cloudburst sent us heading in the direction of a deck of cards. Plus beer.

#### **Day 36 – Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

After another walk in a forest that you would never get tired of, we packed into our luxury Land Rover to brave the afternoon rain on the road back to Quito.

We contacted Setours to reconfirm our flights to Lima, Santiago and Easter Island before shouting ourselves a well-earned carnivate at the Rincon del Gaucho (my all-time favourite restaurant).

### **Day 37 – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

A day to remember. We used a local company to take Dave, Mayette and I to Cotapaxi, a national park and the name of world's highest volcano. Morgs, for reasons that were never adequately explained to me, had decided that this day would be declared a washing day. Maybe it had to do with his newly acquired additional arsehole.



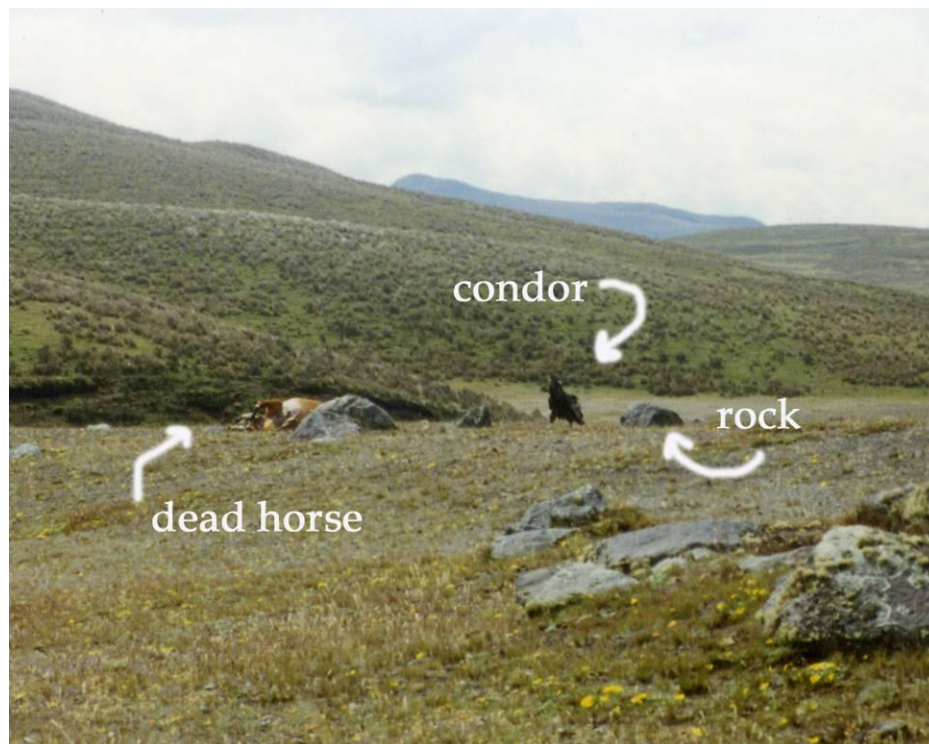
Our guide for the day was Javier, a serious mountain climber who before the day was out would be left in tears. Get a grip Javier! The park is magnificent with a big pointy bit in the middle, or so we were led to believe as it was raining and foggy much of the time. We drove to an altitude of 4600m where Mayette experienced snow for the first time. We were scheduled to walk uphill but that seemed like a silly idea as it was very cold and there was a good chance of us being very cold and very wet at the same time which is never a good look.

We had advised Javier that we were going to see Andean condors this day. He laughed, explaining that they hadn't been seen on this mountain since 1978 or something. He went on to say that the only reason that he was with us was that he had caught a cold while looking for these amazing birds while on a different mountain, and except for his cold would have still been there with his big shiny camera. He was put on tourist duty instead.

I asked Javier if we could go and snuggle up to a dead horse we had seen earlier and wait for condors.

When I spotted the first condor it was unmistakable. Javier wasn't interested because he didn't believe me. Dave was trying to climb out of the window long before the car stopped.

Then a second, third and fourth condor were seen. We stopped and crept up to the first of them which landed near the expired horse. Dave and I were ecstatic. Javier cried. He was happy and pissed off at the same time.



Dinner was at Mary Y Tierra Restaurant. We shovelled through about 600kgs of meat and seafood. Good too. Nice food in Ecuador.

### **Day 38 – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

We suffered a few problems during check-in for our flight to Lima. Old 727s don't fly too well on two engines and they don't have much cargo room. The cruddy airline had a 20lbs baggage allowance and we exceeded this by a little – according to the scales - by 80lbs. I put on my dance-of-the-seven-jumping-Jews performance, which was a tad difficult to perform by one's self. We were the nuisances that held up the check-in queue. There were a few language issues as you might imagine. I demanded a re-trial or at least some new scales. Whilst the very patient young lass at the counter was considering her options a sneaky baggage handler had removed all our bags bar one. She gave up with a dismissive wave in our direction.

Our plane was 150 minutes late. This gave us time to watch the people file off the Air Paraguay flight that had “lost an engine” when trying to leave the airport. Shouldn't be too hard – big round shiny thing. Many of the folk from this old plane were crying and were none too keen to get back on another plane maintained by the same carrier.

We spotted a Russian-built Cubana Air aircraft. As many are aware, there are few luxury goods to be had in Cuba. We were told that all the Cubana cabin crew always carry goods home on these flights. And so we saw the captain carrying a stainless steel kitchen sink onto the plane!





We arrived in Lima late in the afternoon. Alberto, our guide for the truncated Lima City Tour explained why the houses had no guttering – it hadn't rained since 1970. Alberto was a great guy, full of info and had a real sense of humour. The city square is architecturally grand and cried out for another visit.

We must have set a short stay record in our hotel - just four hours before our 2200 transport to the airport for a 0115 departure to Santiago.

### **Day 39 – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

Gina from Setours checked in our bags to Isla de Pascua (Easter Island). The Lan Chile 767 was an hour late, but this was only the start. Another exciting day in the air for us. We flew to Concepcion where we sat sans air-con for six hours. We then tried to land at Santiago twice. There was a greater amount of gaseous soup in the air than normal. The first attempt found us a few feet off the ground before the captain aborted because he couldn't find the runway. The second time the fog was the same as the first but he slammed the plane down anyway. A few overhead locker covers popped open. The plane had apparently survived without being seriously broken so there was loud applause. All the planes parked about the airport had visible bottoms only – the tops were in fog.

Happily our service to Easter Island left on time. On arrival every man and his dog from town were waving business cards, brochures and small children at us. A locally born and bred chap – Martin – who spoke English, won the contract to have us stay at his home. The rooms were large, the water hot and the food delicious. Just one thing – the early European visitors noted the locals' talent for stealing things – even in full view of the previous owners. This had not changed. Don't store your beer in Martin's fridge or ask him to do any washing etc. Local "taxes" apply.



I waited and waited.....

#### Day 40 – Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July 1996

The day was spent walking to the Orongo Crater and back. Interesting place, and stunning views. Saw red-tailed tropicbirds and a few of the rest of the miserable bird selection found on Easter Island (all four of them).

Lost my watch. Bugger. Drank a six-pack of Cristal Cerveza. Okay again.





hateful Easter Island scenery



#### **Day 41 – Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

A car was hired for the day (\$US60) and we set out to “circumnavigate” the island on its road. The big head thingys and the quarry from which they were removed were the highlights. What the old Easter Islanders got up to and why could not be achieved without them being:

- aliens,
- on drugs,
- bored, and
- not too smart.

There were disembodied heads that were half-finished, half-started, almost complete, in the way, upside-down, big, smallish, broken, buggered up and lost.

We noted that the island was quite a bit bigger than a map of the island.

It was Morgs’ birthday, and Martin and his wife had been given a large sum of money to organise a party. The most expensive cake ever to grace the island was produced. This was added to the pisco, beer, wine and scotch.

The pilfering continued.....

#### **Day 42 – Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

We staggered about the nearby town and the melon-heads close to it. Our bodies were getting tired. We saw some large rocks. Some of them showed signs of being put on top of one another. Our interest was failing.

The afternoon was spent in a very sedentary fashion drinking and agreeing that if you lived on Easter Island you wouldn’t like it.



**Day 43 – Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

Another car hire day that saw us do the same things all over again – nothing else to do.

Boarded the flight to Tahiti in high spirits.



#### **Day 44 – Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

This day was stolen from us by a line on the map.

#### **Day 45 – Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1996**

On arrival at Papeete, we found that we had ceased to exist, at least according to the airport computer. This was very disconcerting as firstly, we thought the Hyatt people would find us and want money, and secondly, we wanted to go home. We found a Qantas person who sorted it.

Arrived home in our 747SP via Auckland without further plane drama.

A sensational holiday that stands the test of time as my very best, all things considered

.....

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Australia

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13<sup>th</sup> May 2005

TAHITI June 1996

Common Mynah  
White Tern  
Peaceful Dove  
Red-vented Bulbul  
Red-browed Firetail  
Grey-backed White-eye  
Reef Egret  
Large Egret  
Feral Pigeon  
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin

CHILE June 1996

Feral Pigeon  
Andean Plover  
Red-throated Caracara

EASTER ISLAND July 1996

Red-tailed Tropicbird  
Masked Booby  
House Sparrow  
Yellow-headed Caracara  
Common Diuca-Finch



Rufous-crowned Sparrow  
 House Wren  
 Red-throated Caracara  
 Great Thrush  
 Eared dove  
 Plain-breasted Dove  
 Andean Flicker  
 European Swallow  
 Streaked Saltators  
 American Kestrel  
 White-faced Ibis  
 White-tailed Hawk  
 Greater Yellowlegs  
 Black-chested Buzzard Eagle  
 Blue & Grey Tanager  
 Coot  
 Brown-backed Chat Flycatcher  
 Yellow-bellied Siskin  
 Andean Lapwing  
 Andean Gull  
~~Franklin's Gull~~  
 Peruvian Sierra-Finch

Mammals  
 Guinea Pig

Michael Palin  
 Roseanne & Dan

ECUADOR July 1996

Andean Condor  
 Red-throated Caracara  
 Hook-billed Kite  
 Red-backed Hawk  
 American Kestrel  
 Andean Lapwing  
 Band-tailed Pigeon  
 Ruddy Pigeon  
 Plumbeous Pigeon  
 Red-billed Parrot  
 Mottled Owl  
 Tawny-bellied Hermit  
 Reddish Hermit  
 Green Violetear  
 Sparkling Violetear  
 Speckled Hummingbird  
 Buff-tailed Coronet  
 Gorgeted Sunangel  
 Masked Trogon  
 Toucan Barbet  
 Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan  
 Crimson-crested Woodpecker  
 Spot-crowned Treecreeper  
 Azara's Spinetail  
 Pearled Treecreeper runner  
 Streaked Tuftcheek  
 Green & Black Fruiteater  
 White-tailed Tyrannulet  
 White-banded Tyrannulet  
 Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant  
 Greater Pewee  
 Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant  
 Blue & White Swallow  
 Brown-bellied Swallow  
 Turquoise Jay  
 White-capped Dipper  
 Rufous Wren  
 Grey-breasted Wood-wren  
 Andean Solitaire  
 Great Thrush  
 Glossy-black Thrush  
 Mountain Cacique  
 Slate-throated Redstart  
 Spectacled Redstart  
 Black-crested Warbler  
 Russet-crowned Warbler  
 Capped Conebill  
 Bluish Flower-piercer  
 White-sided Flower-piercer  
 Orange-bellied Euphonia  
 Orange-crowned Euphonia  
 Saffron-crowned Tanager  
 Golden Tanager  
 Flame-faced Tanager  
 Golden-naped Tanager  
 Beryl-spangled Tanager  
 Blue & Black Tanager  
 Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager  
 Hooded Mountain-Tanager  
 Grass-green Tanager  
 Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager

Blue-capped Tanager  
 Dusky-bellied Bush-Tanager  
 Plush-capped Finch  
 Yellow Grosbeak  
 Rufous-collared Sparrow  
 Plain-capped Ground-Tyrant

Southern Amazon Red Squirrel

Roadside Hawk  
 White-throated Quail Dove  
 Paraque  
 White-collared Swift  
 Chestnut- " "  
 Collared Inca  
 Greenish - Masked Woodp.  
 Striped Treehunter  
 Chestnut-crowned Antpitta  
 Brown-rumped Tapaculo  
 Cinnamon Flycatcher  
 Bay Wren  
 Brown-capped Vireo  
 Saffron-crowned Tanager  
 Rufous-chested "

White-faced Ibis  
 Striated Heron  
 Chilean Flamingo  
 Andean Flicker  
 Puna Teal  
 Andean Goose  
 Yellow-billed Pintail  
 Pale-vented Pigeon  
 Moorhen  
 Snowy Egret  
 Black-crowned Night-Heron  
 Yellow-bellied Siskin  
 Ruddy Duck  
 Short-winged Grebe  
 White-tufted Grebe  
 Pied Stilt  
 Black-faced Ibis  
 Black-winged Ground Dove  
 Andean Parakeet  
 Olivaceous Cormorant  
 Muscovy Duck  
 Dipper  
 Torrent Duck  
 Blue and White Swallow  
 White-lined Tanager  
 Wing-barred Mannikin  
 Saffron-crowned Tanager  
 Slate-throated Redstart  
 Spectled Redstart  
 Giant Cowbird  
 Crested Oripenduler  
 Yellow-tufted Woodpecker  
 White-winged Swallow  
 Large-billed Tern  
 Neotropic Cormorant  
 Dusky-headed Parakeet  
 Blue Egret  
 Greater Yellow-headed Vulture  
 Red-faced Caracara  
 Capped Heron  
 Black Hawk  
 Roadside Hawk  
 White-banded Swallow  
 Turkey Vulture  
 Sand-coloured Nighthawk  
 South American River Tern  
 Osprey  
 Large Egret  
 White-necked Heron  
 Yellow-rumped Cacque  
 Anhinga (Darter)  
 Tropical Kingbird  
 Covous Toucan (Culviers)  
 White-bellied Swallow  
 Vermilian Flycatcher  
 Red-capped Cardinal  
 Pied Lapwing  
 American Plover  
 Black Skimmer  
 Chestnut-fronted Macaw  
 Yellow-bellied Macaw  
 Hoatzin Trumpeters.  
 Curassaws  
 Nunbirds

Grey-breasted Martin  
 Sunbittern  
 Swallow-winged Puffbird  
 Swallow-tailed Kites  
 Crimson-crested Woodpecker  
 Collared Plover  
 Orinaco Goose  
 Wood Stork  
 Laughing falcon  
 Horned Screamer  
 House Wren  
 White-ringed Flycatcher  
 Pink Spoonbill  
 Pale-vented Pigeon  
 Rufous-breasted Heron  
 Green Ibis  
 Wattled Jacana  
 Green Kingfisher  
 Faciated Antshrike  
 Jabaru Stork  
 Long-winged Antwren  
 Fork-tailed Palm Swift  
 Grey Hawk  
 Dusky Parrot  
 Violaceous Jay  
 Common Guans  
 Blue-headed Macaw  
 Blue-headed Parrot  
 Scarlet Macaw  
 Blue-crowned Trogon  
 Black-tailed Tytros  
 Straight-billed Treecreeper  
 Large Antbird  
 Razorbill  
 Yellow-spotted Parrot  
 Band-tailed Sierra-Finch  
 Speckled Teal  
 Bright-rumped Yellow-Finch  
 Andean Coot  
 Common Gallinule  
 Bare-faced Ground-Dove  
 Peruvian Elaenia  
 Mountain Wren  
 Golden-fronted Whitestart  
 Tropical Pewee  
 Superciliaried hemispingus  
 Flame-faced Tanager

A. Fujimori  
 M. Palin  
 Simpsons

#### Mammals

Chinchilla  
 Southern Amazon Red Squirrel  
 Dusky Titi Monkey  
 Black Spider Monkey  
 Red Howler Monkey  
 Brown Cappuchia Monkey  
 White-Franked " "  
 Squirrel Monkey  
 Giant River Otter  
 Tapir Capybara  
 Tayra Collared Peccary