

Namaste!

Welcome to the December 2004 edition of Namaste News!

A months of firsts on expedition, some good, some not so: first Andean Summit, first Christmas on expedition, first break-in, first time stuck, first time near-miss, first accident, all set amidst an amazing array of landscapes and cultures through Ecuador, Peru and into Bolivia. From the Amazon jungle to awe-inspiring Andes mountain passes,

from ancient civilisations to the highest navigable lake in the world, the journey from northern Ecuador to northern Bolivia has been both incredible and tough...

Packed full of features again this month as well as the regular updates, feel free to send me an email with your suggestions and ideas for future issues.

Cheers, Chris

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Global Expedition Highlights

2/12/04 Day 242
Mitad del Mundo Mile 24102



31/12/04 Day 271
Copacabana Mile 27420



27/12/04 Day 267
Jilca Mile 27370



26/12/04 Day 266
Puno Mile 27330



Expedition Trivia...

# of Days (overall):	31 (271)
Miles in month (overall):	3365 (27420)
Avg miles/day (overall):	109 (101)
Longest day (overall):	448 (527)
# countries (overall):	3 (15)
# of police stops (overall):	14 (54)

3/12/04 Day 243
Otavalo Mile 24210



6/12/04 Day 246
Alousi Mile 24670



9/12/04 Day 249
Buena Vista Mile 25557



11/12/04 Day 251
Huacachina Mile 26020



24/12/04 Day 264
Arequipa Mile 27130



22/12/04 Day 262
Chachani Mile 27095



21/12/04 Day 261
Canon de Colca Mile 27005



15/12/04 Day 255
Ollantaytambo Mile 26607



18/12/04 Day 258
Cusco Mile 26719



Top Tips this month...

Top Tip:	Copacabana, Bolivia
Favourite City:	Cusco, Peru
Adventure Spot:	Huaraz, Peru
Place to Stay:	Huacachina, Peru
Night Spot:	Quito, Ecuador
Wilderness:	The Oriente, Ecuador

Features...

On page 5, discover the diversity of Peru, including features on the flora & fauna of the Andes, the incredible Inca Empire including the amazing Macchu Picchu...

On page 6, find out about world's highest navigable lake at 3,820m, Lago Titicaca, that is part in Peru, part in Bolivia...

Global Expedition Update

On return from the Galapagos Islands, Odessa & I immediately headed north out of Quito. After missing it in the dark that night, we found the equator at La Mitad del Mundo the next day. This is the place where, in 1736, Charles-Marie de La Condamine's expedition made the measurements that showed this was indeed the equator. These measurements gave rise to

the metric system and proved that the earth bulges at the equator.

Later that day, a long winding track led us up to 13,000 feet and a great campsite on

the shores of Laguna de Morando, but not before a little off-road excursion into the mountains.

In the morning we dropped into the small town of Otavalo, rightly famous for its Saturday crafts market, and a spot of Christmas shopping. The market dates back to pre-Inca times when jungle products were brought up from the eastern lowlands and traded for highland goods.

We returned to Quito, enjoying a number of local street festivals before Odessa had to return to Canada. I think we had learned a lot from each other on this, Odessa's 3rd, trip on expedition.

Rather than stick around as it was still early morning, I decided to cross a high Andean pass in order to drop down to the Oriente, the term used by Ecuadorians for all of the Amazon Basin lowlands east of the Andes. This rainforest region is home to 50% of Ecuador's mammals, 5% of the earth's plant species and staggeringly prolific bird life.

Through forested hills and wetland marshes, across big rivers and jungle tracks, I spent several days in this region before heading back into the Andes at Banos, an idyllically placed small town on the slopes of Volcan Tungurahua. Following a series of eruptions in 1998-9, the

volcano had left its mark, not least wiping out one of the roads around it. By the time I got there, though, I was advised by the locals that the road I wanted to take was now

passable...

Heading up the side of the volcano on tracks barely wide enough for the Landie, I was becoming increasingly nervous that the route would not be passable, most notably due to the extremely scary temporary bridges that had

been installed following the collapse of the proper bridges. Barely wide enough for the Landie, these bridges spanned 100 feet deep ravines and consisted of no more than two or more logs and wooden horizontal slats. Aside from worrying that the bridge would not be able to handle the weight of the car, the difficult bit was actually getting onto and off the bridges due to

the severity of the corners of the dirt track. And on one bridge, I almost lost it...

Slowly driving onto the bridge, my rear offside wheel did not make it due to the sharpness of the corner (and there was no way to manoeuvre to get it straight). So there I was, perched on this 6 feet wide temporary wooden bridge, 100 feet above the ravine below, with one wheel hanging off the side, the vehicle resting fortunately on the suspension rod. It did occur to me that this could be the end of the expedition (and possibly me), then and there, if the bridge collapsed. After a quick, careful inspection, I decided I could drive it. With the differential locked to give me maximum traction through the 3 wheels on the bridge, I managed to get the 4th wheel on the bridge, but careful not to drop my front right wheel off the other side as I did so. Once all four wheels had engaged I accelerated to the other side and breathed a huge sigh of relief.

I did make it to the other end of the road, but not before several more dodgy bridge crossings, one of which I had to spend 10 minutes psyching myself up for as it was even more scary than the one I had dropped a wheel on. I was chuffed to get some footage of that bridge, but as you'll read later, this is one of the tapes that was stolen - gutted!

On thankfully easy and paved roads, I continued onto Cuenca, possibly Ecuador's most charming colonial city, with its narrow cobblestone streets and whitewashed red-tiled buildings, handsome plazas, and domed churches, all set above the grassy banks of the Rio Tomebamba.

And then onto the border Ecuador/Peru border at Haqilles for my second run-in with Ecuadorian customs. Arriving at 4pm and the correct office (one of about 5) closing at 4:30pm, I was forced to spend a night at the border with my vehicle impounded at another of the customs' offices. It took me 8 hours the following day to simply get

out of the country. Without any doubt, Ecuador customs are in their own league when it comes to bureaucratic nonsense. When I had finally received my exit stamp, I drove the 20m to the other side of the bridge to meet the Peruvian customs official. He was laughing as I hopped out of the car to greet him and I asked why. He asked me if I had enjoyed the bullshit on the

Ecuador side as he frequently meets people frustrated with the Ecuador officials; and 10 minutes and \$20 later, I crossed into Peru. What a relief!

Given the lost day at the border, I settled in for the long drive south along the Peruvian north coast. Through a number of interesting towns, notably Trujillo, I finally reached Casma, where I decided to head inland into the Andes. Over a 4,220m pass, I dropped down to Huaraz, Peru's adventure capital. Huaraz lies in the Rio Santa valley at 3091m, flanked to the west by the Cordillera Negra and to the east by the Cordillera Blanca. This is also home to Huascarán, Peru's highest peak at 6768m and the highest peak in the tropics anywhere in the world.

After stopping to give a lift to a local policeman to the coast, I continued south to Lima to meet Paul, my great friend from England, who was arriving late in the evening of 10 December for 10 days or so. Given that Lima is home to a third of Peru's 27 million inhabitants, and has a reputation as a polluted, frenetic and dangerous city hemmed in by impoverished shantytowns, I had some reservations, so I decided to arrive early in order to find my way to the airport.

There is nothing like stepping off a plane into a huge, unknown city and having to get your head in tune to help navigate there and then, so well done Paul. Aided by some dead-reckoning from the GPS, we found our way to our chosen spot of Miraflores & Barranco, the more upmarket part of town.



The next morning, with a mild hangover, we drove down the coast to Huacachina, a small village set within a real oasis

complete with lagoon, palm trees and huge sand dunes. With friendly staff, good food, its own pool, bar, open fire and rooms (with balcony and hot shower) for a mere \$3, I would recommend the Hostal Rocha to anyone visiting.

With sand-boarding, dune-buggy, and partying on offer, Huacachina is a cool place. We then continued south to Nazca, giving a lift to two other travellers, Ali and Jonathan. We made straight for the airport in order to book our plane flight to see the Nazca lines.

As the Panamericana rises through coastal mountains and stretches across the arid flats to Nazca, this sun-bleached expanse was largely ignored by the outside world until 1939, when American scientist Paul Kosok flew across the

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Coming Up...to find out how to join, click below

January 2005

Exploring the highlights of Bolivia including Lake Titicaca, La Paz, Sucre & Potosí, the Cordillera Real, the 'world's most dangerous road', the Valley of the Moon and Salar de Uyuni, the Amazon Jungle & southwestern circuit, then south through northern Chile to Santiago...

February 2005

Climbing South America's highest mountain at 6940m, Aconcagua, then heading south through Chile/Argentina to Patagonia through delightful pacific coast villages and some of the most beautiful national parks in the world, including the Lake District and Parque Nacional Torres del Paine...

Global Expedition Update cont...

desert and noticed a series of extensive lines and figures etched below, which he initially took to be an elaborate irrigation system. In fact, what he had stumbled upon was one of ancient Peru's most impressive and enigmatic achievements: the world famous Nazca Lines.

Created by the simple process of removing the dark sun-baked stones from the surface of the desert and piling them up on either side of the Lines, thus exposing the lighter, gypsum-laden soil below, the Lines

remain one of the world's great archeological mysteries. Consisting of over 800 straight lines, 300 geometric figures and, concentrated in a relatively small area, some 70 spectacular animal and plant drawings. Almost imperceptible at ground level, these figures and lines become clear from the air.

After saying goodbye to Ali & Jonathan, Paul & I headed inland on the mountain road to Cusco, through desert, over high mountain passes, even hitting the snow line several times. On route, we found a great campsite, hopping over boulders in the middle of the desert mountains.

The road to Cusco from Nazca initially takes you through the Reserva Nacional Pampas Galeras, one of the best places in Peru to see vicunas, one of the four members of the South American Camelid family [see p5 for more]. Beyond that, it was a wonderful drive across the Andes.

Rather than go through Cusco, we continued north to the Sacred Valley at Urubamba then west to the end of the road at Ollantaytambo, our base for a trip to the lost Inca city of Macchu Picchu.

We had originally considered trekking the Inca trail, but finally decided that we did not have enough time, so we opted for the train and bus alternative to get to the site. I was pleasantly surprised on arrival at Macchu Picchu that the volume of tourists



had done nothing to reduce the impact of this spectacular and awe-inspiring place. Set amidst a fantastic backdrop of high Andean peaks, and deep gorges, the layout, terracing and remarkable stone-masonry of Macchu Picchu all combine to make this the best-known and most spectacular archeological site on the continent.

In a bid to make up for our lack of trekking to the site, we did complete two short treks, firstly to visit the Inca draw-bridge and secondly, the steep climb up to Huayna Picchu, which provides a fabulous aerial view of the site [see p5 for more on Macchu Picchu].

On return to Ollantaytambo, we stayed another night before heading east to explore the rest of the beautiful Vilcanota/Urubambaba valley.

Popularly called the Sacred Valley, it enjoys a pleasant, sheltered climate and fertile land that the Incas took full advantage of, scattering towns and agricultural centres throughout its length.

We enjoyed the drive along the valley floor, climbing up the hilside at its eastern end to visit the hilltop Inca citadel at Pisac. Famous for its agricultural terracing, which sweep around the south and east flanks of the mountain, it has magnificent views up and down the valley.

We camped that night high up on the hillside, with fabulous views of the surrounding Andean peaks. We were joined by 4 local kids, who helped us gather wood for the fire. In return, we made them baked potatoes (in the fire) with a tuna mayonnaise topping, which seemed to go down ok.

After packing camp we drove up the road towards Cusco, stopping at a point that looked like a good start for a trek up and along the ridge we had seen from our camp the night before. After several hours we reached the main ridge leading to the summit. Suffering a bit from a lack of acclimatisation to the altitude, Paul decided to stop there, whilst I continued to the summit, my first Andean Summit at a mere 4263m!!

On return to the car, we were greeted by that heart-sinking feeling as we realised that the driver window had been smashed and some of our kit inside had been stolen. Most stuff, of course, was insured so merely an inconvenience, but I did lose 2 hours of great footage - mostly of Ecuador. Paul had also lost his car keys which were in his wash bag - a safe place you might think - which would mean some hassle when he returned to pick it up at London's Heathrow Airport.

It was a relief to finally arrive in Cusco that night after the friendly, but time-consuming police process in Pisac.

In town, though, some form of crime-scene issue prevented us from reaching our desired hotel. So we found an alternative instead, Hotel Ruinas, which turned out to be excellent and good value, not least as the receptionist offered to sew up some of my ripped clothes! As it was our last night together before Paul was to head back to the UK, we showered and headed into town to explore the nightlife...! And fun it was too, and I would recommend the Blue Bar..

After Paul had left for the airport, it was good to reflect on our friendship which has endured for more than 20 years. Time and distance seem very irrelevant when you get to catch up, and it was good to share some of the expedition with such a great friend.

I decided to stay and explore Cusco for a couple

of days, get the smashed window replaced and other domestic chores such as laundry. Cusco is a beautiful city, and the undisputed archeological capital of the Americas as well as the continent's oldest continuously inhabited city. Massive Inca-built walls line the city's central streets and form the foundations of both colonial and modern buildings, and the cobbled streets are often stepped, narrow and thronged with Quechua-speaking descendants of the Incas.

With everything sorted, I headed south from Cusco over the mountains on difficult and extremely bumpy tracks. The vibration of this continuous off-road driving for several days took its toll. Firstly, one of my spare wheel carriers broke and fell off, which required a 4km drive back along the track to find it, which thankfully I did. And secondly, I managed to get the Landie stuck for the first time, in deep mud. With some help from a couple of locals to dig out the wheels, and then a tow from a passing bus, I got the vehicle free and back on the road and reached my intended destination, Canon del Colca.

At 3191m deep, Canon del Colca is the world's second deepest canyon (the first being Cotohausi approximately 150km away and only 163m deeper). In perspective, it is roughly twice as deep as the Grand Canyon in the U.S.

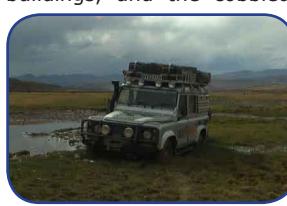
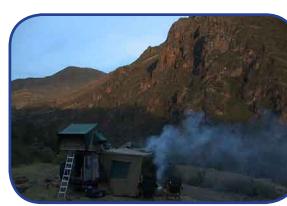
The road follows the south bank of the canyon through several villages that still use the Inca and pre-Inca terracing that surrounds them. The local people are known for their painstakingly decorated traditional clothing, especially the women's clothes. Their dresses and jackets are intricately embroidered, and their hats are distinctive, each region and village having a slightly different style.

At the western end of the canyon is Cruz del Condor. This viewpoint, locally known as Chaglla, was an excellent spot for viewing condors. A large family nests nearby and can be seen gliding effortlessly on thermal air currents rising from the canyon. It's a mesmerising scene, and one closely associated with the Peruvian Andes, heightened by the spectacular 1200m drop to the river below and the sight of Mismi reaching 3200m above the the canyon on the other side of the ravine.

The route to Arequipa from the Canyon is spectacular, climbing steeply then crossing bleak altiplano and over the highest point of 4820m, from where the snowcaps of Ampato (6388m) can be seen. Dropping into the valley below, I got my first views of Chachani (6075m) and El Misti (5822m), which stand like sentinels at the northern edge of Arequipa.

I decided to climb Chachani, and I had read that it is possible to drive by 4WD to 4900m,

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Global Expedition Update cont...

which seemed attractive. So I checked with a policeman at the junction, who pointed me in the right direction. Eight miles later along a sand track, I spotted the narrow, sandy track leading up onto the northern slopes of Chachani. After 30 minutes of exciting driving I found a campsite at 4900m, with incredible views of El Misti. Being able to look down on the clouds with peaks poking through, intensified by the late afternoon orange sunlight, is one of my favourite vistas.

After an interesting night, where I had pitched my mountain tent rather than risk the vehicle roof tent in the cold & strong mountain winds, I set off at 5:30am, reaching the summit and returning to my camp by 1:30pm. On the way down I stopped to chat to two friendly Americans and their Peruvian guides, who were going to climb it the next day. I think the guides were a little surprised to see me climbing solo, but impressed with my time nonetheless. I felt good, and as it was the start of my training for Aconcagua in February, I was pleased.

With aching legs and lungs in need of oxygen, I descended rapidly in the Landie and enjoyed the spiralling descent into Arequipa, not least as I had decided that this was to be my spot to rest for a few days and enjoy Christmas.

Arequipa is nestled in a fertile valley under the perfect cone-shaped volcano of El Misti. Rising majestically behind the cathedral, El Misti can be viewed from the plaza and is flanked to the left by the more ragged Chachani. It was all the more impressive knowing that I had stood up there looking down only that morning.

Arequipa is also known as 'the white city' due to the colour of the stonework (a light-coloured volcanic rock called *sillar* that dazzles in the sun) used in producing many fine colonial buildings,

notably within the distinctive centrepiece, the Plaza de Armas. The colonnaded *balcónes* overlooking the plaza were a great place to relax, have coffee, eat

and enjoy the jubilant Christmas celebrations, in particular the party on Christmas Eve (known as Navidad).

On Boxing Day, I managed to speak to my family, which was great. It was also good timing as Paul (aka Santa Claus Courier) had just delivered my Christmas presents to them for me.

After re-welding the broken spare wheel carrier in Arequipa, I headed northeast on a brand new highway to Puno, on the western edge of Lake Titicaca. I opted to stay in a lovely hotel on the edge of the lake itself, with the famous *Yavari* steamship moored at the end of the lawn.

As I had arrived the previous night in the dark, it was wonderful to see my first views of Lake Titicaca. I had heard so much about this place from friends that I was looking forward to

exploring the region.

Aside from the statistics of the lake itself [see p6 for more], the 3800m altitude means that the air is unusually clear, and the luminescent quality of the sunlight suffuses the highland altiplano and sparkles on the deep waters of the lake. Combining this with the opportunity to explore the unique intermingling of ancient and

colonial cultures makes this a magical place to visit.

I was planning on a relaxing day, visiting the unique Islas Flotantes (floating reed islands) of the Uros people, a small tribe who began their unusual floating existence centuries ago in an effort to isolate themselves from the aggressive Collas and Incas, but this was not to be so. On the road through town to the port, from where I was to catch a boat to the islands, I was to get a real shock...

To anyone familiar with driving in South American towns, you'll know that you have to have eyes everywhere in order to avoid the heaving mass of market stalls, bikes, mototaxis, buses, pedestrians, animals, all of which pay little attention to road signs, markings or indeed other road users. Suffice to say, as I was driving, thankfully slowly, a small boy ran across the road in front of me. Though I immediately slammed on the brakes, 3300kg does not stop instantly, and to my horror, I could only watch as I hit him. This was a real shock as, in almost 20 years of driving, I've never hit another vehicle, let alone a small boy.

I instantly jumped from the car, medical kit in hand, and reached down to see how he was. ABC, that's key for any first aider... Airway ok, yes. Breathing, yes, Circulation, bleeding from a head injury where he had struck the road after impact with the Landie, ok. After careful

inspection, I was relieved that there were no broken bones - it is one of nature's gifts in young children that bones are more maleable and forgiving. By this time, the

boy's parents had run over and I explained that I had some medical knowledge and needed to check for any signs of neck trauma before moving him. I also asked for them to call for an ambulance. After looking at me blankly, I remembered that I was in Peru, not home in England now. So I helped the boy's father lift him into the back of the Landie and we raced to the local hospital.

I worked with the local doctor to clean Gilbert's (now I knew his name) facial wounds, stitch his lip, and request an x-ray to check for any skull damage, which thankfully there wasn't. I soon realised that in Peru, the system is a little different. You have to visit the pharmacy and buy any necessary drugs before being treated (and of course pay for the treatment up front). It made me feel grateful for the system we have back in the UK. This was why Gilbert's father

wanted to take him home, rather than pay hospital fees to keep him in. After discussion with the doctor, I suggested it would be wise to keep him in for care and observation for 7 days, which I arranged with the hospital - I paid for all fees and medications for that time, so his family did not have to worry. To me, this fee wasn't significant, but to them, it would have been 3 month's wages, so I was glad I could help.

Once he was comfortably settled in a bed along with my toy tiger in the neurology department, I went outside for a smoke. It was then that the emotion hit me, the guilt - could I have done anything to avoid it? It wasn't until Gilbert's father came over, took me by the shoulders, hugged me, and told me he was right there and there was nothing I could have done, that the guilt dissipated.

Realising that there was no more I could do, I thanked the doctor and nurses, and made sure Gilbert's family had everything they needed, including how to get hold of me in case there would be anything else required to help Gilbert recover fully. I also vowed to return at some point to check in on Gilbert on his home island of Isla Taquiles on Lake Titicaca.

In a somewhat sombre, but relieved mood (in that Gilbert's condition was not serious), I drove a few miles around the lake and found a hilltop campsite overlooking the lake with the Cordillera Real mountains as a backdrop. It was a good place to reflect and allow the emotion to wash through. With the onset of a ferocious storm that night, it was good to be forced to think about something else, i.e. making sure the tent would withstand the battering, which it did in fine style.

The next day, I reached the Peru/Bolivia border at Yunguyo and was pleased with the simplicity, efficiency and friendliness of the process, taking no more than 20 minutes, a far cry from the Ecuador border nightmare.

Therafter, I enjoyed the short drive to my New Year location, the chilled Bolivian resort of Copacabana.

Whilst there, I met some interesting folk, firstly Martin, who was conducting research on a nasty jungle disease that affects many Bolivians; then Eugene & Emma who were recovering from having to abandon their beach camp in the swirling storm; and finally Tony & Sue, fellow Land Rover overlanders. We shared stories, checked out each others' vehicles and swapped emails. I was amazed to learn that this lovely couple had been doing overland trips all over the world for the last 13 years...

I look forward to the New Year and Heidi's arrival in La Paz on 2 January, from where we'll explore Bolivia and northern Chile...

by Chris Charlton

The Andes...

The Andes Mountains, located in South America, running 4,500 miles north to south along the western coast of the continent, are the longest and one of the highest mountain ranges in the world. They are separated into three natural regions with a wide variety of climates: the southern, central, and northern regions. In the northern region, it is hotter because it is closest to the equator. There are rain forests in this region, due to the more humid, rainy climate. In the southern region, the mountains are nearer to the Antarctic and it is much colder. It is not very populated in the southern area.

In the central region of this biome, the weather is more mild because it is not near either the equator or the cold Antarctic. Many of the plants which grow in

the Andes Mountains are small in size to conserve energy. Their leaves can be stiff and strong to protect them from frost and cold weather if they are high in the mountains.



The Andes Mountains supply many birds with homes like the Flamingo, Andean Flicker, the Condor, and the Hillstar Hummingbird.



Andean condors, representing the iconic image of the Andes, roost on the face of a cliff, and use the thermal updraft of warm morning air to lift off. They spend most of the day soaring on the updrafts created by the mountains and valleys. They cover a large area while foraging and can spot a carcass from several miles off. Condors can soar to altitudes of 18,000 feet, and to keep their heads warm at that height they tuck them into a downy, white neck ruff.



Of the mammals, llamas are part of the camel family. They have unique blood that adapts well to the poor oxygen in the high altitudes where they live. Llamas have more red blood cells per unit volume of blood than any other mammal. Also, llamas are able to travel long distances without water. The grass is difficult for most animals



to digest, but the llamas are able to adapt to these harsh conditions. They have 3 stomach compartments and they chew their cud. Cud is a mouthful of swallowed food that is regurgitated from the first stomach.

Because of these special features the llama makes an excellent packing animal for the people that live in the remote areas of the Andes Mountains.

The vicuña is also a member of the camel family. It is the smallest of the six species of camel, and is thought to be the wild ancestor of the alpaca. Although they look fragile, the vicuña is specially adapted to its high-altitude habitat. It has an incredibly thick, soft coat that traps layers of warm air close to its body and protects it from freezing.

Some think the alpaca may be a cross between a llama and vicuña. The Inca nobles demonstrated their wealth by the number of alpaca's they owned, as well as showing off the beautiful fur garments. The trade in the fur of the alpaca, 2,000 years after the great pyramids, created a thriving Peruvian economy.

Tawantinsuyu: The Inca Empire...

The Empire of the Incas was the largest state-level society in the New World prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Their domain spanned over 4,000 km, including all of the highlands and coast of Peru, most of the highlands of Ecuador, northern Chile, part of western Bolivia, and part of northwestern Argentina.

In Quechua, the language of the Incas, the empire was known as Tawantinsuyu, which, loosely translated, means "land of the four quarters." As the name implies, the realm was divided into four parts, coming together at the capital of Cuzco: Chincha Suyu to the northwest, Condesuyu to the southwest, Antisuyu to the northeast, and Collasuyu to the southeast. Within the four quarters, the Incas controlled a vast territory that encompassed extremely rugged terrain and disparate climates, inhabited by perhaps over six million people,

who had formerly composed hundreds of independent societies, representing dozens of different ethnic groups and perhaps as many different languages.

The traditional list of Inca rulers includes 11 emperors from Manco Capac to Huyna Capac. Manco Capac was the legendary founder of Cuzco, who began the Inca dynasty. However, the Inca domain remained small, and for perhaps several centuries was no more significant in size or power than neighboring societies in the Peruvian highlands. It was not until the ninth Inca, Pachacuti, that the Inca state began expanding and became a true imperial state. The Inca Empire at its height was actually quite short-lived, lasting only about 100 years, from ca.1438AD, when the Inca ruler Pachacuti and his army began conquering the neighbors of the Inca heartland of Cuzco.

Macchu Picchu...

Probably the best known archeological site in South America, Macchu Picchu (which means "manly peak") is a city located high in the Andes Mountains in modern Peru which was most likely a royal estate and religious retreat, though there remains much debate about its precise purpose. Lying 43 miles northeast of the Inca capital, Cusco, it was built between 1460 and 1470 AD by Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui, an Incan ruler.

At an altitude of 8,000 feet, Macchu Picchu is high above the Urubamba River canyon cloud forest, and comprises approximately 200 buildings, most being residences, although there are temples, storage structures and other public buildings. It has polygonal masonry, characteristic of the late Inca period. About 1,200 people lived in and around Macchu Picchu, most of them women, children, and priests.

The buildings are thought to have been planned and built under the supervision of professional Inca architects. Most of the structures are built of granite blocks cut with bronze or stone tools, and smoothed with sand. The blocks fit together perfectly without mortar, although none of the blocks are the same size and have many faces; some have as many as 30 corners. The joints are so tight that even the thinnest of knife blades can't be forced between the stones. Another unique thing about Machu Picchu is the integration of the architecture into the landscape. Existing stone formations were used in the construction of structures, sculptures are carved into the rock, water flows through cisterns and stone channels, and temples hang on steep precipices.

The houses had steep thatched roofs and trapezoidal

The Incas used two main methods to subjugate the people of these lands. The first was military conquest, facilitated by their huge well-equipped army. The second was diplomacy, in which the Incas offered the elites of the region the choice of submitting peacefully and gaining favor, backed by the threat of armed conquest. They also used various strategies of integrating the native political and religious systems into those of the empire.

The Incas are perhaps best known for their engineering works, stonework and architecture. They constructed an extensive system of well-built and constantly maintained roads, covering at least 23,000 km. The road network facilitated communications and the movement of people (especially the armies) and goods. To cross the many steep ravines found in the Andes, they built impressive suspension bridges. On the mountainsides in many regions, they built elaborate terraces to increase food production.

The Incas had no formal writing system, but relied instead on quipus, which were record-keeping devices based on a complicated system of knots. They had no wheeled vehicles, and transported all goods manually or with the use of llamas. The impressive engineering and architectural works were not produced using elaborate technology or secret techniques, but through the deployment of huge amounts of labour. Ultimately, the Inca achievement was the product of the highly developed organizational skills of the Inca elite, which enabled them to direct the people and resources of Tawantinsuyu.



doors; windows were unusual. Some of the houses were two stories tall; the second story was probably reached by ladder, which likely was made of rope since there weren't many trees at Machu Picchu's altitude. The houses, in groups of up to ten gathered around a communal courtyard, or aligned on narrow terraces, were connected by narrow alleys. At the centre were large open squares; livestock enclosures and terraces for growing maize stretched around the edge of the city. To get the highest yield possible, they used advanced terracing and irrigation methods to reduce erosion and increase the area available for cultivation.



Few people outside the Inca's closest retainers were actually aware of Machu Picchu's existence. Before the Spanish conquistadors arrived, the smallpox spread ahead of them. Fifty percent of the population had been killed by the disease by 1527. The government began to fail, part of the empire seceded and it fell into civil war. So by the time Pizarro, the Inca's conquerer, arrived in Cuzco in 1532, Machu Picchu was already forgotten.

Machu Picchu was rediscovered in 1911 by Hiram Bingham, a professor from Yale. Bingham was searching for Vilcabamba, which was the undiscovered last stronghold of the Incan empire. When he stumbled upon Machu Picchu, he thought he had found it, although now most scholars believe that Machu Picchu is not Vilcabamba. Machu Picchu was never completely forgotten, as a few people still lived in the area, where they were "free from undesirable visitors, officials looking for army 'volunteers' or collecting taxes", as they told Bingham.

People

Fellow Adventurers...



Odessa Shuquaya, 30, from Vancouver, Canada, completed a 5-day tour of the Galapagos islands, and explored northern Ecuador...



Paul Dollin, 33, from Bristol, England, joined the expedition in Lima for 10 days for a tour of southern Peru including Huacachina sandboarding, the Nazca Lines, Macchu Picchu, the Sacred Valley, and Cuzco.

"Priceless...", Paul, Peru, 24/12/2004

Along the way...



A big thank you to all those people who we've met along the way in November, including:



The Galapagos Gang (Ecuador), Bar Staff (Quito), Katherin (Lima), Alison, Jonathan, Dan (Huachachina), Marisol, Katherin, Dolores, Samuel, Raymond (Pisac), Mina, Stano (Cusco), Eduardo, Ellen (Canon del Colca), Ty, Aran, Alejandro (Chachani), Jelda, Ricardo, Emma (Arequipa), Gilbert & family, hospital staff (Puno), Mario, Julio (Jilca), Martin, Eugene, Emma, Tony & Sue (Copacabana)...

In the News

In the News

A feature on the Expedition & Vehicle appears in the February 2005 issue of Land Rover Owner International magazine (pp 60-65) available from Jan 7, 2005... see www.namaste.co.uk/news

In-Country News

Dec 5, Miss Peru becomes Miss World 2004

Dec 9, Presidents and high-ranking officials from 12 South American countries gathered in the ancient Inca capital of Cusco to create a political and economic bloc that would give them a stronger voice in dealing with the United States, Europe and Asia. With 361 million inhabitants, The "South American Community of Nations" will allow South Americans to act jointly and united on the international stage.

Dec 28, Lima Mayor proposes legal brothels in Lima...!

Previous Newsletters

Previous issues of Namaste News are also available at www.namaste.co.uk/news or click the links below if online:

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[June 2004](#)

[Aug 2004](#)

[Oct 2004](#)

[May 2004](#)

[July 2004](#)

[Sep 2004](#)

[Nov 2004](#)

Letters & Emails

Thank you for all your letters, emails, text messages, faxes and Christmas messages. Each month, a few excerpts will be printed here...

"Hello Chris. I hope you are having a wonderful time for this Holidays. Where are you spending your Holidays? I wish the New Year brings you everything you are dreaming of and much more. Happy Holidays", Javel, Panama City

"Hi Chris. A Merry Christmas and wishing you another Great Expedition Year Ahead!", Ee Boon, Singapore

"Have a special night on the 31st/1st but, most of all, and I wish You a great new year... When You mentioned the "Tierra del fuego" I couldn't believe it. That is one of the places I have been fantasizing for all my life!", Angela, New York, USA

"Dear Chris. Merry Christmas to you as well! I very much enjoy following your progress (with a hint of envy every now and then....). All the best", Philipp, London, England

"MERRY CHRISTMAS for you too!!!! and happy new year!!! It was good to hear from you but about your lost things I'm very sorry for you.. the film would have been great to see.. why people do things like that.. not nice... well good that you're well and everything is fine and you still having great fun over there... must be wonderful out there in Peru... interesting country I guess... well I'm still here in Lapland... guiding tourists, snowmobiling and snowball wars.. wicked.. here is so much snow and everything is great,... good fun!! Have fun and take care...", Lotta, Lapland, Finland

"Merry Christmas Chris! Have a good one - wherever you are. Look forward to meeting you in 2005. Have fun", Jo, South Africa

"Hi Chris, Thanks for sending me a copy of your newsletter - it looks great! I hope you're enjoying your holidays, wherever this email finds you. Thanks again and take care", Jen, Canada

"...Climbing volcanoes on Christmas... wow! That's so cool! Your Christmas will be a bit more exciting than mine... I'm working a 14-hour night shift tonight (Christmas Eve)...", Anna, Stockholm, Sweden

"Hi Chris! Have just finished reading your latest newsletter and it seems you've been having a pretty amazing time and done some very cool things. Where will you be after April as that's when we're finished over here and I'm starting to plan what I'll do then!...", CMAN, Basra, Iraq

Website Update

Stage 2 Development

The first Namaste Management Guides (Project Management Series; Leadership & Management Series) and Namaste Fun Films (Climbing Denali; A Taste of North America) are now in production; and should become available from March 2005.

Statistics

December 2004

Hits: 26,508

Countries: 32

Downloads: 1,560 Mb

November 2004

Hits: 34,903

Countries: 35

Downloads: 1,468 Mb

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Lago Titicaca...

Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable lake on earth at 12,580 feet (3,820m) altitude. Straddling the border between Peru and Bolivia, the Andean peoples refer to the lake as "The Sacred Lake" and legends say that the first Inca rose from its depths and went out to found the Inca Empire. Actually two lakes joined by the Strait of Tiquina, it sprawls over 3,500 square miles, fed by waters from the melting snows of the Andes from more than 25 rivers.

The meaning of the name Titicaca is uncertain, but it has been variously translated as Rock of the Puma or Crag of Lead. Titicaca lies between Andean ranges in a vast basin that comprises most of the



Altiplano (High Plateau) of the northern Andes. In the snow-covered Cordillera Real on the northeastern (Bolivian) shore of the lake, some of the highest peaks in the Andes rise to heights of more than 21,000 feet (6,400 m).

Lake Titicaca's fish life consists principally of two species of killifish (*Orestias*) and a catfish (*Trichomycterus*). In 1939, and subsequently, trout were introduced into Titicaca.

Forty-one islands, some of them densely populated, rise from Titicaca's waters. The largest, Isla del Sol, lies just off the tip of the Copacabana Peninsula in Bolivia. Ruins on the shore and on the islands attest to the previous existence of one of the oldest civilizations known in the Americas, predating the Christian era. The chief site is at Tiahuanaco, Bolivia, at the southern end of the lake. On Isla del Sol there is now an indigenous community of some 350 families who continue to live within the traditions of the 14th century, according to the principles of Inca life.

The Aymara people living in the Titicaca Basin still practice their ancient methods of agriculture on stepped terraces that predate Inca times. They grow barley, quinoa and the potato, which originated on the Altiplano. The highest cultivated plot in the world was found near Titicaca - a field of barley growing at a height of 15,420 feet (4,700 m) above sea level. At this height the grain never ripens, but the stalks furnish forage for llamas and alpacas, the American relatives of the camel that serve the Indians as beasts of burden and as a source of meat.



The remnants of an ancient people, the Uru, still live on floating mats of dried totora (a reed-like plant) that resemble the crescent-shaped papyrus craft pictured on ancient Egyptian monuments. papyrus that grows in dense brakes in the marshy shallows). From the totora, the Uru and other lake dwellers make their famed balsas - boats fashioned of bundles of dried reeds lashed together that

make regular crossings from Puno, on the Peruvian shore, to the small Bolivian port of Guaqi.