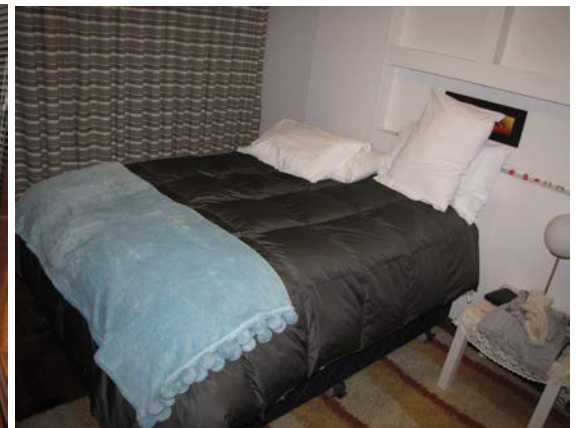


## Apartment in Cusco



In Cusco we are staying in a lovely apartment, large living/dining area (*above right and left*), a nice kitchen (*below center*), 3 bedrooms (*"ours", below right*) and 2 baths (*left above and below*) both with great water pressure, temperature, and HIGH shower heads. If our shower at Aguas Calientes was the "shower from hell", these must be the "showers from heaven". Having 2 bathrooms is nice since we each have our own; that helps with morning traffic management.



It's a nice-looking building in a quiet, clean neighborhood, but from our windows no view that you would ever WANT to view.





And when we arrive, we discover that the apartment comes with “Marta” who is there to greet us. She is a breakfast cook, housekeeper, and general service person. She shows us around the apartment, shows us how to operate the heater, and asks what we’d like for breakfast and at what time. Then she leaves, Doris assuring us that she will be true to her word. We speak no Spanish and Marta speaks no English so we will have to mutually work out how to communicate when Doris is not with us. We think Marta may also be our landlord, but we are never quite clear on this.

There is one gas space heater in the unit and we huddle around it when we’re there during the day. We sleep under three comforters. It’s really cold in the apartment since the building is masonry and has no central heat or heat of any kind. So we pile on the clothes during the day, and the blankets and comforters at night and enjoy. The heater has a decorative basket of Peruvian corn varieties on top; we keep waiting for it to turn into popcorn for us, but apparently the heater is well-insulated and we never do get our popcorn.



Much of Cusco is cramped and crowded by US standards except the main routes to the Plazas and the areas around them. Because the city is so ancient, it was scaled to accommodate only foot traffic. Our apartment is a bit over 1½ miles from the main plaza, about ¼ mile off Avenieda del Sol, a wide street and main route to the plaza. When we walk into el centro it is easy to find our way there and/or back. We never do remember the name of the street where we must turn off Avenieda del Sol, but we don’t need to; there is a huge, gold colored statue of Inca Pachacuti right where we turn, a great landmark.

Monday, September 9 – Cusco main market, a “cattle” co-op, birding and Sacsaywaman

We DO get a good night’s sleep; snuggling under two nice down comforters works. Just like sleeping in Austria, Bavaria or Switzerland. No heat, just comforters above and below . . . it works here in Cusco too.

After we get up, turn on the heater (ALWAYS job 1 in the mornings), shower and dress, Marta shows up. Perfect timing! She fixes us a delicious breakfast with things fresh from the market, the best papaya we’ve ever eaten, wonderful fresh “Pan de Cusco” bread, eggs cooked to order and the ever-present avocados. Then we had some time to really take a look at the apartment. Our first impression from last night holds, it's a great place. But . . . we hope we get used to the cold!



Doris picks us up at 9:00 and we are off. First stop is the Cusco central market to do some grocery shopping. It’s in a huge building (we’re talking football field here) with hundreds and hundreds of stalls of every kind. Anything and everything you could imagine is for sale here.



We purchase a nice assortment of fruits and veggies, stay away from meat. Doris has given us a general warning about buying meat here in Peru. We’re still tempted by the Alpaca, but we will be eating it in restaurants, so we can take a pass at “home”.



Both ends of the pig here, which do YOU prefer?



We buy some odd varieties of potatoes, another kind of strange-looking root vegetable, onions, some packaged “giant corn”, and some dried shrimp. And most certainly the fantastic Peruvian avocados. We get 3 different varieties, one of them the size of a small cantaloupe. Just that one weighs almost a kilo (a kilo is 2.2 pounds). Ann gets some of the ingredients to make soup for us tonight; and to last us for a few evening meals.



Ed purchases some Doris approved cheese. She says you really have to be careful with most of the cheese, as with the meat, but she is familiar with the vendor and the variety we bought is “safe”.



bought is “safe”.

There is a “lunch counter” area where the locals have breakfasts, sweets and fresh juices. By now (about 9:30 am) most are finished with breakfast, so the few here are enjoying fresh-squeezed fruit or veggie juice. Sadly we are too late to try the frog soup. That’s right, FROGS! We see some of today’s “leftovers” swimming in a small bucket. Only a one-day reprieve for them however, they’ll be back on the menu again tomorrow morning.





According to Doris this is one of the most popular stalls in the market early in the morning. She tells us the “frog soup lady” usually sells out within the first 45 minutes to an hour. Then she gets to go home for the rest of the day. She was just closing up her stall when we came by. Ed is disappointed; he really would have liked to try some. Who WOULDN'T want some frog soup?

And there’s even a flower vendor’s area which we pass by as we leave.

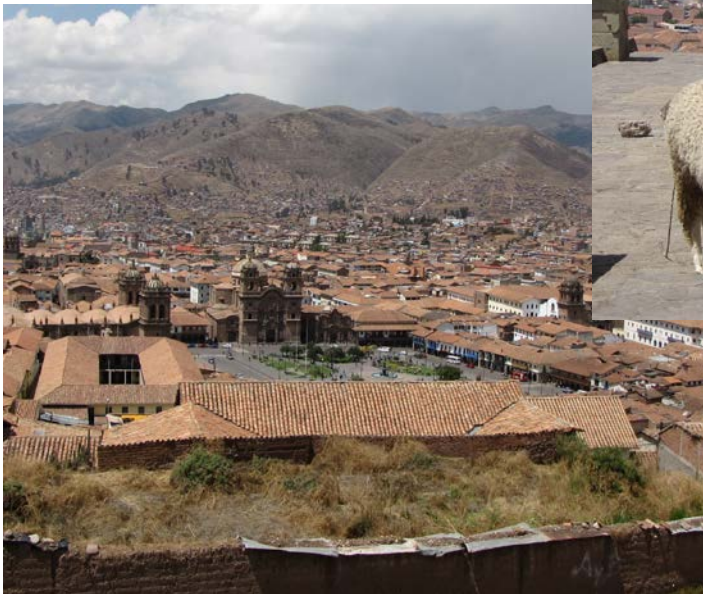


Our next destination is a “cattle” co-op, but on the way we stop in a small Plaza overlooking the city. The view is great and there are no other tourists around. A couple of wandering llamas (?), and some Peruvian women had things laid out for sale, but they are quiet and polite about it. They never ask you to buy, the goods are just there; if you want to look or ask about them, fine, but otherwise they leave you alone.

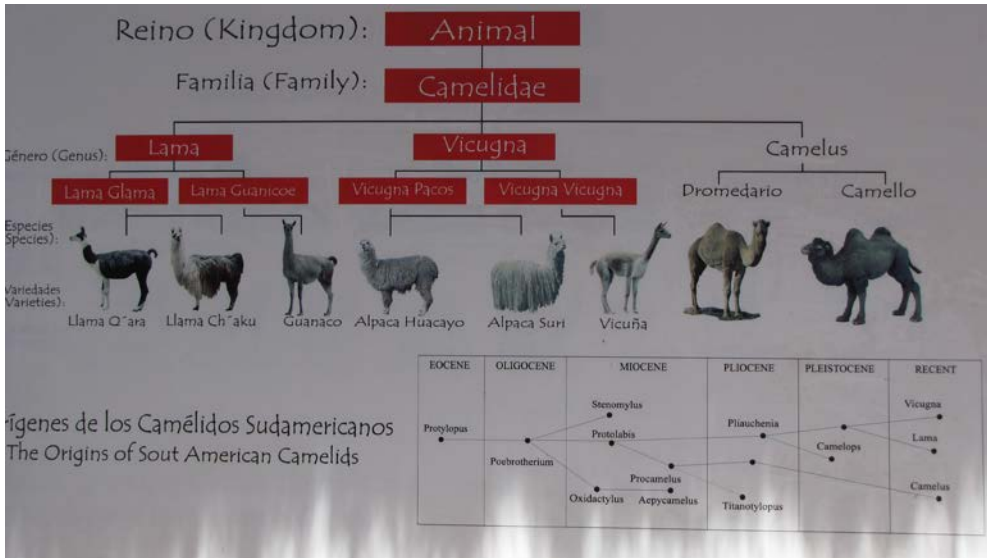
It's a beautiful sunny day; temperature around 70 degrees. We linger in the plaza for a while, just enjoying the view, the day and the clear, fresh air.



Along the way we spot Ann’s favorite bird of the trip, the Southern Lapwing, and even get some good pictures of it. It is about pigeon-sized but with long legs, red eyes and a beautiful greenish iridescence on its back.



Then on to the co-op that works with hundreds of the small villages throughout the area, raising the Peruvian “cattle”: vicuña, alpaca, llama and guanuco. But they are all closely related to camels, not to cattle. The co-op encourages old style dying and weaving and provides an outlet for their beautiful goods.



There is a diagram at the entrance showing the different varieties of Andean “cattle” and the "family tree".

As we walk along a path past corrals where the animals are kept, Ann feeds some of them and is “rewarded” with some snotty snorts and sneezes in return.

of the four species. They aren’t near the path so we see them a short distance away, not “up close and personal” as we later do the alpaca and llama. Vicuña are difficult to fully domesticate, so much of their wool that is sold as apparel items is from



wild or “semi-domesticated” animals. The vicuña wool grows slowly and they can only be sheared every 4-5 years. It is also the finest and softest wool known. These 3 factors make vicuña the rarest and most expensive wool in the world, even more than cashmere.



Then alpaca (*above*) ; there are several kinds at the co-op with different colors and types of wool. These animals have been domesticated for many centuries, and are tame. They mob Ann for the handful of grass she is carrying to feed them. And they ARE related to camels, as Ann discovers when they snort and spit at her as they battle for handfuls of grass. Alpaca wool is also fine and soft, but not quite as fine as vicuña. And they can be sheared every 2-3 years, which makes the economics of keeping them more favorable. They also provide meat here in Peru. We think Alpaca is delicious; we’ve had it a few times already and discover it is on most restaurant menus. Wish there was some way to get it at home!

Llama (*below*) are larger than alpaca; between a donkey and a small horse. Their wool is coarser than either alpaca or vicuña, and is only used for rough garments or things like mats, cord or rope. We might think that their meat is good too, but they are never eaten here. They are large enough to be commonly used as beasts of burden, and have served this purpose for many centuries. They too, are most interested in the grass Ann is carrying with her. At least



they are behind a fence so they can't mob her as the Alpaca did. Ann has quickly learned to dodge the spitting as they jostle for food.

And last the guanaco (*right*), the largest of the four. They are also up away from the path in a pasture. They are horse-sized; but a skinny version of a horse. Guanaco are listed as severely endangered and almost extinct in the wild. They are also difficult to domesticate but are occasionally used as pack animals.



We see women dyeing and spinning yarn and both men and women weaving fabric and garments from it. The colors, all from natural dyes, are amazingly bright and watching the weaving is interesting.



We exit near the shop. You are not “forced” to go through the shop to exit, as you are in many places. But it was there, so . . . and this shop is several “cuts above” a typical gift shop. It is more like a fine boutique clothing store with a few gift items. It is overwhelming for a shopper like Ann, all soooo tempting, but just like sheep’s wool, she is allergic to alpaca and vicuña so our credit cards stay safely in our pockets.

Next we go to an area known as the lagoons of Huayllarcocha. There are many small ponds or lagoons that have been recently created to try and replicate the earlier terrain in the area. Millennia ago Cusco was a great lake, but later totally changed by an earthquake into a large basin in which the natives eventually settled. However, many surrounding wetlands



remained and this is what the re-constructions are for, restoring prior natural habitats. This has been a success to an extent, although some of these small lakes are being filled in for farmland as others are being created. We stop at a little pond near the barnyard of a small farm, and we see a wonderful variety of water birds.

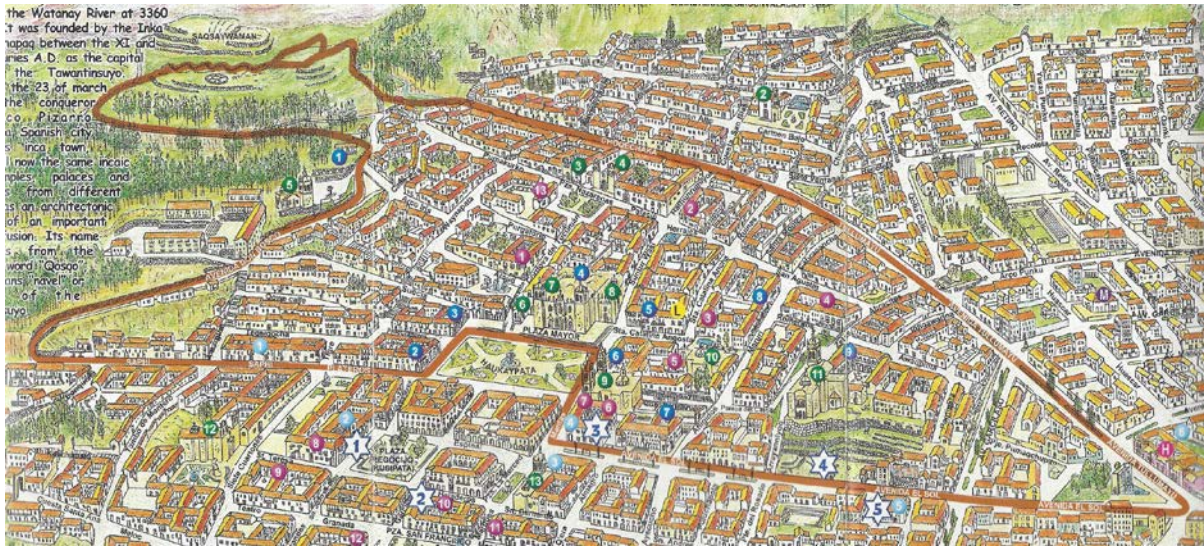


We are able to see clearly and identify: Andean Goose (*left*), Andean Coot, two kinds of Teal, Ruddy Duck, White-tufted Grebe, Common Moorhen and Plumbeous Rail. Also a nice variety of songbirds

in the nearby grass and bushes . . . a real birding bonanza. We are close enough that we can identify with the naked eye and the views through binoculars and scope are fantastic.

After the great birding, we head back toward Cusco for a visit to Sacsaywaman. Carbon-14 dating of this walled complex outside Cusco, has shown that the *Killke* culture began construction here about 1100 CE and some older pottery found here dates human occupation back to the late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The Inca later expanded and occupied the complex in the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE and after. The city of Cusco was re-planned by the Inca and extensive changes were made. The two rivers that run through the city were diverted so that one of them ran along one of the new city walls. The walls seem to have been constructed in the shape of a puma (the symbol of the ruling clan at that time); the Sacsaywaman site being the head, and including a head-dress. The rest of the wall has long been demolished, razed and built over. But there are other indications of this presumed puma shape of the ancient city in the foundations of the old walls that are uncovered from time to time.





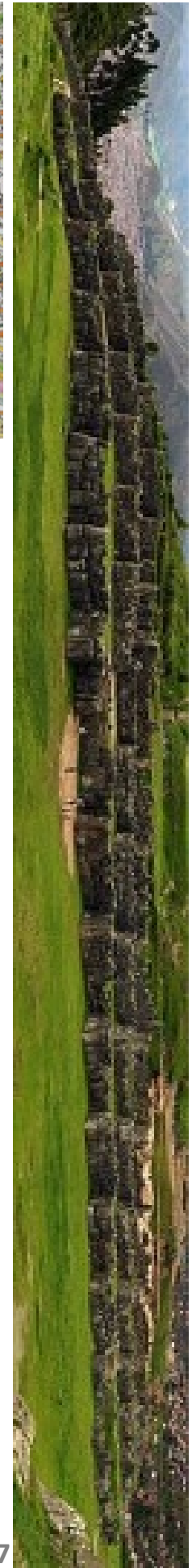
Here is a map (*above*) that shows the Inca's puma-shaped city wall outline over the current street layout. And a panorama (*right*) of the Sacsaywaman site (off the internet) from the beyond the far end of the plaza. And remember, this is only the top of the puma's HEAD.



The current site of Sacsaywaman consists of a huge open plaza, large enough to accommodate thousands of people; the main "fortress" wall (the puma's head) and two other terraces across the plaza from the main wall. The view from the plaza of both the site itself and the modern city of Cusco is impressive! The "puma head" section of wall is about ¼ mile long and even after unknown levels of stones were removed is still almost 20 feet high.



The Spanish are especially reviled in Peru for this destruction, but throughout the world, throughout recorded history, it has long been the practice of any conquering culture to generally try to erase all traces of the losing culture, and to build over important buildings and sites.



There has been so much lost to history because of this practice; art, architecture, science and technology, construction methods, etc., etc. Seems to come straight from man's "Victory Manual".

Cusco was clearly meant as a showcase city for the Inca. The construction is both more massive and of finer workmanship than any other known Inca site. Shortly after the conquest the Spanish began to raze the site for construction material for the new Spanish city they were building over the old Inca Cusco. This has continued intermittently up to the 1940's.

People continued to take stones from here to use in construction. The only stones left now are those too big to be easily taken away.



We finish at Sacsaywaman in early afternoon and Doris and Vergilio drop us off at the main plaza. We're starved and want to find a good lunch place immediately. We have a terrific lunch at Greens restaurant, a good mix of Peruvian dishes and lots of vegetarian of all levels. Ed has quinoa soup and pasta with chorizo and a sauce containing peppers,



onions and capers; Ann has lentil soup and ratatouille with brown rice. We both have a good cup of muña tea. Doris has provided us with a list of restaurants and we will do lunch at the places she recommends and cook our dinners at the apartment. Ed is anxious to try cuy (guinea pig) and Ann will at least try a bite. All the native Peruvians raise cuy right in the kitchen and they are ever so cute, but they don't make pets of them. They end up cooked and served on various "special" days.



Since we will be cooking our dinners at our apartment, we stop at Gato's, the small supermarket, for some sausage to add to the Zataran's mixes, Ann's prepackaged food of choice for trips. Just add a few veggies for Ann, some meat for Ed and you have an easy, but delicious dinner. Then we taxi back to our apartment. It would be a 1½ mile walk from the plaza carrying grocery bags, but the taxi ride is never more than 10-15 minutes and never costs more than the equivalent of \$3-4 US.



We huddle around our heater in the late afternoon and early evening, covered with comforters, reading and/or watching TV. Then it's an early dinner and early to bed.

The soup Ann makes is interesting, and we both work on peeling, chopping and cooking. A tamarind soup base she brought from home (sort of a sour Chinese soup), to which we added the Peruvian onions, garlic, tubers, salted shrimp (a few of these go a long way, they are very salty, and we used too many) and local corn. It's really good!



Ann eats a Peruvian granola bar from Gato's for dessert; quinoa and amaranth with a bit of brazil nut, coconut and raisin held together with a little honey. It doesn't taste sweet and she feels virtuous eating it because it's "healthy". Ed has Snickers bars . . . healthy, BAH !