

Thursday, September 12 – Home of the Archbishop of Cusco, walking, shopping

This morning we find that our heater is out of gas so we don't even have that tiny bit of warmth. It is COLD! Hope they don't punish us for being pampered Americans and do provide us a new tank of propane. Ann finally steels herself for a shower and hair washing and she survives, and it's nice to have clean hair. Of course the showers are nice and warm, but the minute we step out of them we're in the arctic again. Of course Marta starts us off with a hearty breakfast again, so we're ready for whatever adventure awaits us today. We tell her about the empty gas tank, but we're not sure it registers . . . we'll have our fingers crossed today.

Today is a kick back and do what we want day, so of course Ann drags Ed to another religious art venue. We taxi down to the plaza, and look out the windows, enjoying the street life we pass along the way.



This time it's the home of the Archbishop of Cusco. It is along the street we take from the main Plaza up to the San Blas district, so we've walked past it before. Just at the beginning of the street where it comes into the plaza there is a marker showing the location of the old city wall. These are situated all over Cusco marking the location of the wall. If you know where they are you can walk all along the old city boundary, where the walls used to stand.

Of course the Archbishop's home was built on top of the foundations once supporting the palace of Sapa Inca Roca, a God Emperor of the Inca. He was the 6th Sapa Inca, assuming power about 1350 CE. Even though we usually refer to the whole civilization as "Inca", there is only one Inca, the ruler, at any time. Today it remains an administrative building for the Church and a museum. We take a nice audio tour which they provide with the minimal admission cost.



When you consider that the Spaniards took untrained Indians and with the help of no more than five imported teachers taught them to paint with oils, the Cusceño school of art is amazing. It has populated most of Central and South America with its work. The pre-Columbian native cultures' art centered around architecture, weaving and fabrics, and the making of pottery. No cultural background or knowledge of representational painting on a flat surface. The painting skill required for decorating pottery is completely different from paintings a portrait on canvas or board. A common representation in these Cusceño paintings is the portrayal of the Virgin in a tall, wide pyramid of clothing, looking like a mountain. The Indians worshipped the mountains and this was another way for them to blend the Indian and Christian religions, and the supervising Priests and Bishops were apparently none the wiser.



What is displayed is mostly of the Cusceño school of art, characterized by lots of red and a technique of applying gold called brocading. It makes the exquisite garments

depicted look as though they are actually embroidered with gold. In addition to paintings, we see a Litera de Madura (*above left*), a personal litter built for a Spanish noblewoman. And paintings of Saint Geronimo (*above center*) and a last supper with ordinary Peruvians (*above right*).



The biggest feast of the year in Cusco is Corpus Christi because it conveniently falls on the days of the most important Indian religious celebrations. So the three or four days are a combination of religious celebration and socializing, with remote churches carrying their important saints on shoulder-borne litters into Cusco for the big procession into the Cathedral. In most of the paintings depicting this festival, you clearly see the combination of cultures and religions. Painting (*left*) and detail (*below left*).





There is a charming courtyard with the various galleries adjoining it; each entered by carved wooden doors. And a beautiful, ornate chapel for the Bishop's personal use. Wonderful art and icons in the chapel and several stained glass windows, each one different.



We spend the rest of the morning "shopping our way up" the rest of the way to the Plazaletto San Blas at the top of the neighborhood. Ann is doing "preliminary" shopping for gifts which we will buy tomorrow, today we buy nothing just scouting. She has this "shopping" business down to a real science.



Ed has a brief sit-down at a smaller plaza part-way up while Ann shops around. Shops line the streets on the way up to the plazaletto San Blas, and there are a few small "intermediate" plazaletos along the way. Often a single door opens onto a courtyard mall with several shops and we see individual vendors sitting in some of the doorways.



Doris introduced San Blas and the plaza to us on Tuesday. It's an "artsy" section with extremely narrow streets (which does not stop cars from using them) and lots of studios and shops. We're just looking and enjoying, some of the nicer studios and shops are like mini-museums.



We have lunch at Pacha Papa (which means Earth Father) here in the San Blas neighborhood, and we eat heartily. And papa also means potato in Spanish; they are featured here in many different forms.



We sit in a beautiful open-air courtyard.



We share Quinoa soup, corn in a butter sauce and sliced yellow potatoes in two different sauces. Ed has grilled Alpaca medallions (Alpaca meat is so delicious he can't resist any Alpaca dish).



We see another table enjoying (?) a roasted guinea pig. They are kind enough to allow us a photo op. It's likely that we will not have our own piggy as they really have a lot of meat on them and they are VERY expensive. We conclude that they are best consumed by a group. There is a very interesting-looking corn pudding on the dessert menu, but we are both too full to try it.

After lunch we "shop our way down" back to the Plaza Mayor and catch a taxi back to our apartment. A couple of sights on the way back, an Inka Cola truck (*right*), and a man trying to load into his car (*far right*) a . . . ??? . . . WTF . . . ??? . You tell me what that thing is!?



Inka Cola is everywhere, the most popular soft drink in Peru (Chicha Morada a close second); Coke and Pepsi are virtually non-existent. We didn't care much for it. Those of you old enough to remember "Green River" (it was actually yellow, like Inka Cola) from the 40's and 50's will know the taste. We didn't like it as a child, don't like it as adults. Sorry, Inka Cola.

"Home" about three and we spend the afternoon just chilling out (literally, in spite of huddling around our heater, and yes we got our Propane refill but that heater just doesn't generate much heat) and reading. When we are on vacation we spend more time reading than we do at home, in spite of activity-filled days. We are just ripping through book after book. Thank goodness for Kindle otherwise we'd have 20 pounds of books to haul around.

In late afternoon, Ann cooks up a good meal of Zatarans red beans and rice, Peruvian corn and some sort of tuber (similar to potatoes, but not really potatoes) with onion and garlic. And of course, those wonderful avocados.