

PAULA'S TRAVELS 2015



At the end of May and for the following, almost, seven weeks I ventured overseas again, this time to Peru, Ecuador, Chile and New Zealand.

In Peru, I joined a girlfriend (Heather) from England plus 10 others for a two week tour called *Lost Treasures of the Cloud Warriors*. After rendezvousing in Lima we flew north to re-discover the pre-Columbian sites which were lands of the Inca and the pre Inca Moche, Chimu and cloud warriors of Chachapoyas. Our first week was spent in the coastal deserts visiting towns and cultural remains of the Chimu and Moche civilisations, including the largest adobe pyramids in Peru. On our way to the Northern Highlands we stayed in the semi desert location of Chaparri, the first privately owned reserve in the country. Our adobe huts were quite spread out from each other and to get to mine I had to walk across a swing bridge (only a short one, but it was my first ever and was so much fun). The 'dining room' was pretty much open-air and we were joined by a couple of big, black, hairy spiders. AAARRRGGGHHHH! I don't know about you, but I really hate big black hairy creepy-crawlies! Chaparri is also Peru's only dedicated Andean Bear Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre. Think Paddington Bear! (actually, nobody in Peru has ever heard of Paddington Bear). Anyway, we were able to visit these beautiful creatures which had once been at the mercy of exploitative humans. From there, we drove up up up until we were higher than the clouds and spent the second half of the tour in the Andean mountains, continuing with visits to towns, villages and archaeological sites. In the town of Chachapoyas we had the opportunity of being there for the annual Raymillacta Festival, a celebration of ancient traditions and customs involving everyone from miles around, dancing, food, music and striking costumes. Amongst our fellow passengers Heather and I had the reputation for not only talking and laughing but also for dancing and so when people on the street pulled us over to join in we were up for it. In the evening the main plaza was again filled with people playing music and dancing, and again Heather and I allowed ourselves to be pulled into the circles. Traditional dances plus salsa were what the locals were doing so that is what Heather and I did too.



This was the highlight of our tour, as far as we were concerned. At the end of that fortnight everyone went separate ways and I flew north to Quito, the capital of Ecuador. My few days there were to some extent spent recovering from the worst cold ever plus Peruvian gastro. In spite of this, I had a marvellous few days exploring Quito's charming and vibrant historical centre and shopping in artisan markets. The Peru tour was all about death and the afterlife, of which two weeks was plenty, and not a shopping expedition, so finally I could indulge my desire for earrings and other bits and pieces. My first full day there was a Sunday and since I was staying near the main plaza I spent hours being entertained by local musicians, dancers, buskers and street vendors. This UNESCO listed part of Quito felt like it was overflowing with Catholic churches and curiosity had me slipping in with several congregations to be amongst the devout locals and historical Roman Catholic architecture at its most gobsmackingly

opulent. Such wealth did not necessarily filter down to all the masses, as I observed when a small, barefooted child wandered through and held out her little hand to no avail. From Quito I took a local bus to the city of Guayaquil on the coast. I'd hoped that the bus would be somewhat decrepid and full of locals with their chickens and other rustic, domestic things but disappointingly it was air-conditioned, showed movies all the way and was transporting only humanoids. The one concession was that I was the only foreigner (yay!) and that Pepe, an elderly local, insisted on sitting next to me and chatting for the entire eight hour journey. After a couple of nights in Guayaquil I flew with a big bunch of others to the Galapagos island of San Cristobal and spent the next week cruising on the National Geographic boat Endeavour. Each morning we woke up next to a different island and spent the day snorkelling, bush and/or beach walking, exploring the local fauna and flora, kayaking, eating, sipping wine and listening to the on-board naturalists. Ho hum! While anchored off the island of Santa Cruz a group of local musicians and dancers came on board and had us singing and dancing with them.



At the end of that amazing week I left Ecuador and returned south to Chile for three days of exploring the fascinating, and also UNESCO listed, town of Valparaiso before heading home via New Zealand. Guess who I stayed with? Fiona Murdoch of course! (and her husband Alec). During my very on-the-go week with them (Fiona is NEVER doing nothing!) she and I participated in a Chilean dance workshop a couple of hours after I arrived from South America. On the Monday night (or one of the nights) I went along to her Dancefolkus lesson where we danced

- Mr Beveridge's Maggot – Playford,*
- Malhao Malhao – Portuguese*
- Veritat - Circle choreographed Languedoc*
- Lioube - Circle choreographed Serbian Gypsy*
- Devushky Padurensky - Circle choreographed Russian*
- Chililli – Bolivia (I did an impression of a Perth International Dance Group teacher!)*
- Debka Dror – Israel*
- Rustemul – Romania*
- Zorba – Greece*

The following Saturday I participated in her workshop of Regency dances and that evening went back in time to Jane Austin's Regency England. Another highlight!



Then I came home to Perth for a rest!!! But what a fabulous few weeks filled with my favourite question ie *when was the last time you did something for the first time?*

PAULA DAY