

Darramy on tour No 14: Peru, Panamanian Summer Cruise, and Nepal June – September 2010

Nameste,

Sorry this one is a bit late, but finding time to write this travelogue has been tricky, there has been so much going on, many miles travelled by air, three new countries discovered, and a bit of sailing in between. If you want to know more of what Sue and I have been up to these last few months, either download the attachment, or click on this link and look for number 14

http://www.oceancruisingclub.org/component/option,com_mamblog/Itemid,102/task,show/acti on,view/id,2236/Itemid,102/

Ok, here we go: After a short visit back home we returned to Panama for a day before flying on to Peru for some land time travelling, arriving at Lima we jumped on an overnight coach for a regrettable 22 hour journey up to Cusco, (the Old Inca capital of the country). Here at over 3000 metres we had to acclimatise to the altitude. The city was very colourful, and every day there seemed to be a parade going on. Loads of history, but we felt quite ignorant as we realised we knew little of South American history. We know



Colourful Cusco

the Spanish conquistadors invaded about 1400, pinched all the gold, and tried to ship it all back to Spain, our history tells us that we pinched a fair bit off the Spaniards though (tee hee)! Cusco was full of tourists with prices to match! We had organised a trekking trip to end up in Machupichu, This was not the classic Inca Trail you generally hear about, as that seems quite regulated, over walked and the bit we saw was certainly not for us. We went off into the mountains to a



Sue's trusty steed

place called Lares and with our guide Miguel and a cook, assistant cook and 2 horsemen. Sue had her horse, and I had a pair of boots! We camped and were awoken at dawn with a cup of Coca tea (that stuff from which cocaine comes from) no, we were not getting into drugs, if we wanted to that we could have done that in Columbia, and would probably be still there now! Coca tea is legal and it is drunk to help cope with the altitude, for the sweet



Cheerful Mountain Children

tooth, you can also buy Coca toffees as well!

The chef, who was wearing a white hat, had come up trumps, table and chairs, full cooked breakfast and all the trimmings. We made tracks to leave, Sue mounted her steed, together with Miguel our guide we set off. We started at 3500 metres and made it up to 4000 for lunch, the scenery was amazing, great snow capped peaks towering above us, a few farms scattered about, and sunshine, small children would appear out of nowhere, they looked pretty hardy, stunk of smoke from the fires in their homes, but always had a smile and they knew we were possible source for treats, or to buy some locally made useless nick knock by them.

For lunch the chef had gone on ahead and prepared a 3 course meal, the back drop of our mountain dining area was to die for. We camped at 4200 metres, which was



Machupichu

pretty high. Awaking the next day to the cup of Coca tea, the ground was white over with frost, and the area around the tent was surrounded by llamas all fast asleep, really magical. We set off and finally made it to the finish of the trek, where we had to catch a train to Machupichu, where Sue had booked us into the most amazing hotel right by the ancient city. But there was a problem, the railway had been damaged in a flood

earlier this year, so we had to go some of the way by mini bus, that

was fine, we set off down the road, turned right and crikey we were driving down the railway track! Eventually we made it to a station, where we picked up a luxury train to the base of Machupichu.

I won't go into loads of details about the lost civilisation and city, that is well covered by TV and magazines on a regular basis, only to say the experience of being there was well worth while, and we are both glad it was part of our trip, (I think it is now the eighth wonders of the world).

After that, we being suckers for punishment hopped on a bus to Lake Titicaca, this is the highest navigable lake in the world at over 4000metres. Arriving at Puno we

found a hotel, and set about trying to organise a sail on the lake on a local boat, we were told that would be pretty improbable, we could go on a tourist boat but that was all. Now we all like a challenge, and I felt even with my limited Spanish, this was going to be a hard one, anyway after much head shaking, I came across Eduardo, who reckoned he could sort it. We set



Lake Titicaca

off the next day in a microbus to the middle of nowhere, the bus broke down, eventually, we arrived in Llachon, a

small village on the side of the lake, where we found our accommodation; a mud brick hut, in the garden of a family's own mud brick house this family were trying to encourage tourism in their area. We overlooked the lake which is massive, the sun was shining, and the water so blue, it was hard to believe we were so high up in the world.

The next day we met Edwino (not to be confused with Edwardo) who had the sailing boat organised. **Technical bit:** "A 15 foot gaff rigged sailing boat named "Flash" with the rig held together with bits of string and wire. An old patched sail and an oar/rudder to steer by".



Cap't Brian in his element!

We set off accompanied by the two children from our lodgings who, although small they were out for a laugh at the Gringo's. We were even heading for Bolivia at one time, you could see the high snow capped peaks in the distance across the lake, it looked and felt pretty good to be there. We helped Edwino set his nets for his days fishing then carried on enjoying what was an extremely pleasurable sailing experience.

We managed to leave on a local ferry which Edwardo had diverted to pick us up, and motored across the lake for a fraction of the cost the tourist boats charge. We ended up at Uros, an area of floating reed islands where everything is made of reeds, Edwardo met us there, this again was not at a busy tourist island, but, the small family island of Santa Maria, where people just got on with living or could be surviving? We were shown around their huts, and they explained how they stayed afloat by replacing the reed ground of the island every few weeks. We learnt that if they lived on the Islands they were exempt of



A Traditional Reed Boat



"Yavari "

paying tax, (now don't be getting ideas, I don't think it will wash in the UK)!

We ended up our visit to Lake Titicaca, by visiting the steam ship Yavari, this ship was constructed in England, sent in 2766 pieces by ship, then train across Chile and then by mule to Peru, it took 5 years to undertake this mammoth task, and the original engine was fuelled by

dried llama dung! Any way, the ship has now been restored, and is open to viewing, it made us proud to be British.

We then set off by bus to La Paz in Bolivia for what turned out to be too shorter visit, the journey there took twice as long as planned, we had to cross the lake with the bus on a precarious raft, whilst all passengers were ferried across in 18 ft cabin cruisers, (what is all this health and safety we hear so much about!), there were only about 30 people in each boat! Arriving in La Paz, wow, La Paz is again very high 4000 metres, and you drive down into the city from the high plains, it did not look attractive, but as so often looks are deceiving. What a place, it was buzzing every man and his dog were up to something, the streets were packed with stalls selling anything you could ever possibly want, although the people were fairly poor, they still smiled. We ended up having an Indian meal in a restaurant owned by a Londoner, we hadn't had a curry fix for ages, a city bus tour took us to all the sights, and all too soon our time was up, we had to head back to Peru.



Arequipa

We arrived at Peru's second city Arequipa, known as the white city, we dropped down to the low altitude of 2000 metres so everything was easier to do, it was a lovely city, we just walked and enjoyed the bustle of the place, we felt so good, that Sue put on her gold necklace for the first time that trip – Mistake – the next day some lowlife snatched it off her neck and ran off, however he hadn't accounted for the

Dempsey and Makepeace Duo he had tackled, We gave chase and shouted, within 30 seconds I had a posse of locals giving chase. We caught him in a stairway, and amazingly, the police turned up in about 2 minutes, so fast that I thought we were in a scam, however after I checked their credentials I realised this was pretty efficient. He was taken to a police car, as the locals were knocking 7 bells out of him. He was carted off, and Sue and I were taken to the Police Station to give statements. We needed an interpreter, (a lady cadet) who was duly found, the police rearranged our city tour we had booked for that afternoon, after telling us that the paperwork would take about 3 hours. The press turned up taking photos of us both, which did not

please us so we managed to get the police to intervene and I was able to delete our pictures from the photographer's camera. In the end it took 6 hours, we had to identify the lowlife in a line up with the Fiscal officer in attendance. Out of the 6 people in the line up there were several of them we had seen in the police station that afternoon so identifying the culprit was



Light Bite! Fancy a Guinea Pig?

fairly easy.

The police kindly booked our restaurant that evening so we were guaranteed a table. We asked the interpreter what his punishment would be. She said a minimum of 3 years. This was all done in one afternoon, that, seemed to me to be quite an efficient system, the police appearing so quickly as well, rather shames much of our Great British Criminal Justice System when it comes to petty crime. Perhaps we can really learn from some of the third world ways of doing something. We ended up being escorted to our hotel and the police called the following day to see if we were ok. Full marks to the Peruvian way of ensuring the visitors were protected. Before leaving Ariquepa, we had a meal of the Peruvian national dish – Guinea Pig deep fried, it tasted a bit like chicken, but as they say, when in Rome....!

We flew back to Panama and rejoined Darramy, we only had about 6 weeks before returning to the UK for what seems to be becoming our annual visit. We decided to go on a summer cruise like we used to do when we worked, we started at the Chagres river which is the overflow for the Panama Canal, what a place, Howler monkeys in the trees, much colourful bird life, and we understood there were even crocodiles in the river.

We were joined by Dick and Moira on Equinox (OCC members) for a few days, we persuaded them to come on a croc hunt on the night of a full moon. We set off in one dinghy up these tiny canos (little rivers), shining torches to look for the red eyes of the croc. The night sounds were pretty magical from the wild life, after a couple of hours of not seeing any of our quarry, we returned to the main river, and did a dinghy drift back to the boats in the moonlight. A great evening.



One of the thousands of islands

we met up with “Kelp Fiction” and “Sea Bird” whom we first met in Venezuela. They had been there a while and we were able to fast track to all the good places. The main town of Bocas is like a colonial town with all the houses, shops and restaurants having jetties down to the waters edge, so tying up the dinghy was easy, just like parking your car outside a shop at home. We visited some really nice



Isla Escudo De Veraguas, Bocas

spots, just drifting along under sail in light breezes between all these island, We are hoping to be back there for Christmas, Once again, our time was soon up, and we had to make our way back to Shelter Bay to prepare Darramy to be lifted out of the water whilst we come home.

Always a sad time, we did not realise that we had been living on the boat for 11 months since we last launched in Curacao in October of last year.

We flew home to the great British weather, and went sailing in Holyhead as it was the Gaffers weekend where there are many traditional sailing boats taking part in a rally, I was fortunate to race on “Mad Cap” the oldest boat (built 1875) a Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter, we were doing well in the race until the topmast broke, and the main mast developed a 6ft split in it, the next day we both sailed on a 1910 Scottish converted Herring boat called “Bracon Lass”. Both boats came over from Ireland for the event.

Now it was time for Sue to enjoy her Grandchildren for a couple of weeks, whilst I had other plans:

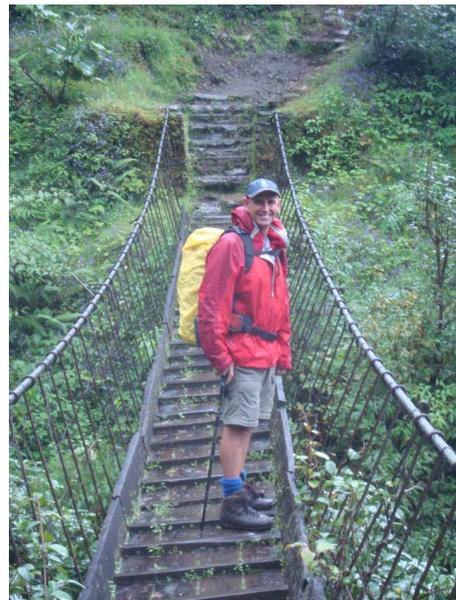


One of the many rivers we crossed

You may have noticed the greeting at the beginning of this travelogue. “NAMESTE” which is Nepalese for “greetings”. I headed off to Nepal to do some trekking, a place where I had dream’t of going for many years, as a youngster I had read of many accounts of climbing these great mountains, attended lectures given by some of the famous climbers of the 60’s. So I arrived in Kathmandu, having booked on a 13 day trek to Annapurna Base Camp (ABC). 7 days in and 6 out, well the weather was pretty foul, mist and rain most days during the ascent, after the third day of walking up a 1000 metres or so, then down again only to do the same thing over, or around the next mountain, I thought blimey there’s 4 more days of this just to arrive at ABC, well the weather didn’t get any better, so no

views, we stayed in lodges on the route, which were all fairly basic, but when you are miles from anywhere you can’t expect luxury.

The other guy Ming whom I had not met before was a Malayan of Chinese descent who had been to University in Australia, had a great sense of humour, and we got on like a house on fire, we had a female Sherpa guide, and a Sherpa porter who although 5ft nothing he carried our heavy bags without a struggle, in fact he made all the walking look easy. We past many tea houses on the route, who happily cooked a fresh lunch for us, although the menu was always the same choice it was filling and plentiful, but beer did get more expensive the higher up the mountains you went. Don’t forget everything has to be carried up, even for the porters it took 3 days to get anywhere near to the base camp.



Another Rope Bridge

We were wearing the latest in gear, Gortex clothing, hiking boots etc, these guys either had pumps or Wellingtons on, and a couple of tee shirts and an old anorak if they were lucky, whilst carrying loads up to 45kilos. They always seemed happy and gave you a quick “Nameste” whilst overtaking you on the trail. We were even overtaken by three porters, each with a full sized bed on their backs, amazing.



Khadi our porter

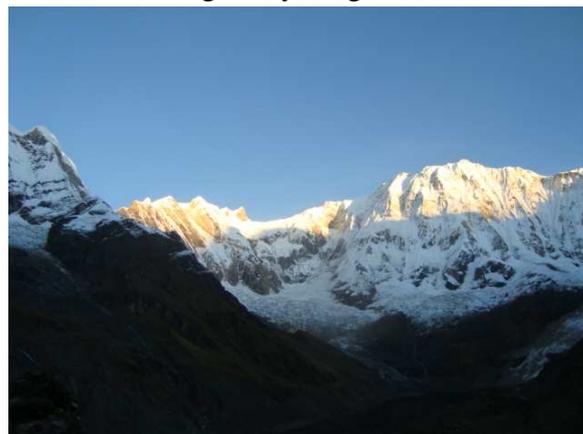
Anyway I witter on, we arrived at ABC on day 7 in the mist, but all was not lost the next morning we were up at 5.30 to see the sunrise and the views. It was



Pre Sun Rise Annapurna Base Camp

like another world, the dawn sky was clear, you could make out all the Annapurna peaks in the range As the sun rose you could see the colours changing a beautiful white background with some of the worlds highest mountains in my vision. A special moment. We were able to eat breakfast outside, and I even managed to climb up another 300 metres to the base of the glacier. We were fortunate, because although by 11 o'clock the mist had rolled in blanking everything out, we had

booked an extra night at ABC so were able to repeat the whole experience again the next morning before descending down into the mist on our return trek which should have taken 6 days, but as the weather was still poor we did a lot of extra hours walking and came down in 3 days, changing flights (flew on Yeti Airways!) and arriving back home a few days earlier than planned.



Sunrise 6.00a.m.

The whole Nepalise experience, was marvellous in spite of the weather, the people were hardy and resilient, and the scenery when we had clear visibility was endlessly stunning. Unlike Peru where the Inkas are no more, these people carry on their way of life as they have for hundreds of years, it was good to be among them and also be able to make the Nepal/Peru comparison, and one got possibly, a clearer picture of how the Incas may have lived before the Spaniards arrived.

We are now getting ready to return to South America, where we hope to do some more land travelling in Chile, Patagonia and hopefully get on an Ice Breaker and go down to the Antarctic for a visit, after that, not sure, we plan to be back on board by Christmas, and will decide if and when we will transit the Panama canal into the Pacific which will be a new ocean for us.

So it s TTFN

(Delete as applicable)

Best Wishes *Kindest Regards* *Love and Hugs* *Cheers*

Brian and Sue

You can view our previous travelogues of the last five years on our OCC site

http://www.oceancruisingclub.org/component/option,com_mamblog/Itemid,102/task,show/action.view/id,2236/Itemid,102/

Click on this link if you are still really bored!

Our Panamanian phone number is 00507 6078 6328

When sailing you can check our position on Pangolin click on this link

http://www.pangolin.co.nz/yotreps/reporter_list.php We are listed under DARRAMY so click and see where we may be, we try to update each week, but on passage we try and do it each day