Cusco is a beautiful city! It was the capital of the Inca Empire. The pretty gardens at Coricancha, the most important temple of the Incas, are still maintained. After the Spanish conquered the city, the Cathedral of Santo Domingo on the Plaza de Armas was built over parts of Coricancha. There are also other more modern buildings in Peru, such as the football (soccer) stadium. Football is the national sport in Peru and is very popular!
Much of Cusco is built on the old Inca foundations even today! Here you can see the difference between the Inca stone work and the later stonework done by the Spanish. On the right side of the picture below, you can see that the Inca stone work uses no mortar. Instead, the Incas shaped the stones to fit tightly together.

Rocks weighing as much as 200 tons were used to build the fortress Sacsayhuaman overlooking Cusco. Much of Sacsayhuaman was destroyed after the Spanish took over because the rocks were used to build churches in the city.
A picture of the mountains surrounding Cusco, taken near the hotel. Cusco is located in a valley, yet it is still two miles above sea level!

At these high altitudes some people struggle with altitude sickness due to the thinner, oxygen-poor air. The hotel we stayed in kept O₂ available for the guests.
To help fight altitude sickness, many people chew coca leaves or drink coca tea. Coca leaves can be bought in the markets at Cusco. The market is amazing with all sorts of textiles, ceramics, and food to buy, including many varieties of beans, potatoes and corn. These are staple foods here and can be found in many delicious soups and entrees! A dessert pudding and *chicha morada*, a sweet juice-like drink, are made from the sweet purple corn.
A traditional Peruvian dish, beef cooked with onions, peppers, and tomatoes in a *pisco* brandy sauce. Inca Kola is a popular soda in Peru. It tastes similar to cream soda with a little bit of pineapple Dum-Dum lollipop flavor.

The famous 12 angled stone of Cusco. But please don’t touch, or else the men will get a little angry!

A rainbow over Cusco. They occur often during the rainy season. Rainbows were considered to be a god by the Incas.