A Taste of PERU
Sara Tipton - Spring 2011

Cusco’s Marketplace

Pan de anis - Traditional Bread of Peru
Passion Fruit
Prickly Pear
Peruvian Mize
A Taste of Coca Leaves
The chewing of coca leaves is used as a common and effective way to treat headaches and other altitude related illness. Aside from treating altitude sickness, coca leaves are used culturally as a tradition when greeting someone or starting a day’s work. One person chooses three coca leaves (a small, medium, and large leaf) and passes them with two fingers, as Ethan demonstrates (right picture). The three leaves represent the Andes Mountains. The receiver takes the leaves and blows on them in prayer to the spirits, and slowly begins to chew the leaves. The giver and receiver then reverse roles.

While we all learned of the magnificent effects of coca leaves, we visited numerous historical sites surrounding Cusco including Saqsayhuaman. Saqsayhuaman is a walled complex, many times called a fortress, built by the Incans at least millennium ago. The giant boulders are cut and smoothed to fit perfectly in place on the hill side.
After exploring Cusco, we traveled south to the ruin of Tipon. The terraces of Tipon were used for growing medicinal flowers and foods (Big Picture). Like all the terraces in Peru, the Incans carved out the mountain sides and then layered sorted gravels before constructing the walls in order to allow proper drainage to prevent washouts. After Tipon we visited an aqueduct built by the Incans (Bottom Left), and then a Pre-Incan city (Top Left).

A Taste of Guinea Pig

Genuia Pig, or Cuy, is a traditional meal of Peruvians. In many of the Cathedrals there are renditions of the Last Supper. Scattered around the table you see Peruvian potatoes and blue corn beer. Then, centered on a plate in the middle of the table is Cuy.
A Taste of Geologic Failures

Once our tour ventured out of Cusco and into the Sacred Valley, many landslides and creeps became evident in the hillsides. At many points Dr. Laudon pointed out that many of the hillsides were made of landslide material from years past. One of our first stops in the Sacred Valley was the ruins above Pasic. Looking down from the ruins, a valley of hummocky topography was noted indicated the entire valley was possibly formed from one giant landslide.
The circular terraces of Moray provided a magnificent site. After driving up the Andes to a flat plateau filled with agriculture and livestock, we came across a sunken area of land (a sink hole) terraced into perfectly round levels. A prominent theory is that the terraces were used for experimental agricultural. Through the years traces of plants, such as coca, which are not natural at such a high elevation, have been found in the terraces.

After visiting the circular terraces of Moray, we drove into a valley to walk around the salt mines of Moras. The mine is fed by one salt water geothermal spring. In the dry season, the terraced salt pools are able to fill with the warm water and over time precipitate salt. The ancient community nearby was called Kachi, “salt” in the local language.

A Taste of Salt