

September 2007

Guinea pigs can be useful.

This missive comes to you from the thin air of Peru. My previous trips have been to the Amazon area. It is hard to imagine that this is the same country! I am traveling with Dr Carlos Pinto, who I recently hired to look after our Latin American commitments. This trip is to introduce him to the various ministry leaders and provide orientation on Partners International involvements. Dr Pinto works with HCJB and just received his doctorate degree from Wheaton College. I am now surrounded by Psychologists with a daughter, daughter-in-law, father-in-law and coworker prepared to correct my dysfunctions.

I set a new personal best today driving through Andes to a city called Tarma. I passed the 16,000 mark for the first time. We spent 12 hours driving to various remote Quechua villages, all above 14000 feet.

Our driver seemed somewhat ambitious at times. The road was good but travel to Lima was literally downhill for more than 3 hours. 16,000 feet to sea level in 5 hours. He tried to pass 3 large transports at once as we approached a switch back curve. A car was approaching from the other direction. Both cars locked their brakes but not before skidding and colliding head-on. The damage was significant but we were able to pay the other driver 160 Solis cash (\$60) for damage and after 30 minutes of trying, got our car rolling again. Damage in Ontario terms would have exceeded \$3,000. No one was hurt and I was grateful to have seen the light and put my seatbelt on 10 minutes before the accident.

My host threatened to make me eat Cuy while here in Peru. In English, cuy means “you just ate your kids’ pet”. Cuy is Spanish for Guinea Pig. Partners International supplies a micro-enterprise project that trains Quechua villagers how to raise and market Guinea pigs. These critters are a good source of income and protein. He made good on the threat in a small village sitting in front of the hosts. It was impossible to turn down without offending them...and it does taste ‘just like chicken.’



Latrine Evangelism. No that is not a misspelling. We also help dozens of villages with water projects ranging from water wells and distribution to latrines to improve sanitation. I have been to the high Andes many times and the process is never pretty. The villagers often find a convenient spot behind a mud wall or other more obvious places. Needless to say, you do not want to be breathing the dust in the constant winds up here. The latrines greatly improve the health and safety of the community. The

community help also opens doors (don't get me going on the puns) for the Christian workers to share the love of Christ. All this work is done through local churches on a long term basis.

Top 10 reasons I like traveling to Peru

- 1) Macchu Picchu
- 2) You fly for 9 hours and are still in the same time zone, even though you are on the Pacific Ocean.
- 3) If you don't like the weather, you can drive an hour and get something different
- 4) If you don't like the people, you can drive an hour and find a totally different ethnic group
- 5) You wake up in the Andes thinking you are having a heart attack because you cannot breathe. You are relieved to find out that there is no oxygen, with the potential that the result will be the same
- 6) If you live in Lima, you can suffer from the lack of sunshine for months, even though you are close to the equator
- 7) You can live your entire life in clouds but never see rain.
- 8) “The coldest winter I ever spent was summer in Lima.”
- 9) You can meet snakes big enough to swallow you whole.
- 10) There is only one language on your cereal box, Spanish.

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