

SCENIC SOUTH AMERICA FAMIL 2014

From 26th Aug 2014 I participated in Scenic Tour's 14 day South America Familiarisation.

Our itinerary:

2 NIGHTS SANIGHTIAGO
1 NIGHT LIMA
3 NIGHTS SACRED VALLEY
1 NIGHT MACHU PICCHU
4 NIGHTS CUSCO
1 NIGHT LAKE TITICACA
1 NIGHT LIMA

Overall this trip was amazing! Such a unique destination –Peru in particular with its rich history and breath taking sights.

Scenic Tours were excellent and professional at all times: I have no hesitation to highly recommend Scenic Tours.

Santiago Chile

Here I experienced both the **Grand Hyatt Santiago** (5 star)

Excellent hotel with prime view location of the Andes mountains, beautifully appointed rooms, (standard room 52m²) good quality amenities.

Shower in bathtub. Close to park some eateries and medium Mall.

Intercontinental: (5 star

This is the alternate Scenic Hotel we inspected. Here the clients stay in Club rooms, with it's own exclusive entrance. (rooms 42 m²)

Lovely rooms, location is more central walking distance to more cafes and large Mall.

I observed Santiago as a city with different “pockets” to visit.

Some nice areas are Buena Vista ,(beneath San Cristobal hill) Providenza , Constitution St, (15 mins from hotel) and the area I visited: Borderio- beautiful little valley of restaurants 10 min by taxi (cost 8000 pesos AUD).

Sacred Valley (2430m above sea level)

Tambo del Inka Hotel: 5 /6 star

“one of the most outstanding hotels I have ever experienced”

This hotel is located in a valley with breathtaking views of the mountains wherever you look. Each room has a sitting area to look out .

Exquisitely appointed rooms (superior room 41m²) with attention to detail (quality bathroom accessories and toiletries , walk in wardrobe with full length mirror, very spacious bathroom.)

The complex was filled with impressive art pieces one can discover something new daily. Lobby with fire place and comfortable seating very inviting. Restaurant excellent with reasonable prices.

Has its own exclusive station at walking distance for Vista Dome train to Machu Picchu.

Hacienda Huayocari visit

- Mansion with historical art pieces and furniture
- Unique restaurant experience with traditional Peruvian cuisine
- Bonus visit from local women from Chichero Village who displayed traditional weaving techniques

Ollantaytamo (2792 m above sea level)

- Inca archeological site with ruins steeped in history, Inca nobility.
- Half way point to Machu Picchu
- This town popular with back packers –very quaint

Sacred Valley –the local community school

- Truly a special and unique experience
- Scenic sponsor this school delivering food supplies and Scenic passengers may bring gifts for children
- Some children walk 2 ½ hrs each way for school, many in sandals not sneakers
- They came to meet us on a Saturday and brought along younger siblings
- They sang for us and had prepared special drawings for us
- We packaged some fruit/snacks for them then handed out with the toys
- Their expressions were priceless . one tiny boy (prob 2 years) placing all his gifts in his teeny back pack with pride

Pisac tour of the Inca ruins and colourful markets

- Pisac was wonderful many terraces with original waterfalls, tombs atop mountains
- Our guide truly brought this site to life
- Comfortable pace (high altitude felt)

Vista Dome train to Machu Picchu

- Comfortable with panoramic windows
- Scenic have exclusive waiting room and include additional snacks on board
- Entertainment provided on way back with music and fun alpaca fashion show

Machu Picchu (2430m above sea level) UNESCO World Heritage Site

- Inca site from 15th Century, -abandoned from 16th Century after the Spaniards conquered the Incas : the lost city was discovered in 1911
- Absolutely breathtaking experience again our Scenic Guide brought this to life
- We felt the high altitude here as there are either small or large steep steps to navigate leaving you breathless, some Agents had supplies of oxygen
- Being there you can envisage the city and try to imagine their way of life
- The backgrounds are just beautiful commanding a photo at every turn you feel the peace at the site
- Best time to visit is Aug/Sep

Sumaq Hotel Machu Picchu: (5 star)

- I would have rated this property more 4 to 4 ½ star
- More traditional and with rustic features, great view of river
- Short bus distance (10 mins) to Machu Picchu, -winding road, bus stops at this hotel
- Bedding not as comfortable, great location

Cusco Palacio del Inka

“another outstanding hotel I have had the privilege to stay at”

- Built on original Inca foundations, traditional and pure opulence!
- We stayed in junior suites (32 m2) I had balcony with view to Cathedral The Superior rooms are also more than adequate
- Every where you turn there is someone to help you
- Walking distance to main square
- Walking in and out of this hotel you can't help but admire it immensely and you actually feel a sense of harmony
- Restaurant excellent!

CUSCO (3400 m above sea level) UNESCO heritage site

- The most adoring city , the capital of the Inca Empire
- Charming Square is central point with Cathedral
- Historical architecture and some excavations are at your footsteps!
- Markets both craft and food to explore and local restaurants a delight
- Very reasonable cost of living
- Very safe and easy to navigate

Juliaca (transit)

- Quite industrial, with mining and cement exports
- It's the “China” of Peru, black markets and smuggling (Bolivia is on border)
- Driving into Juliaca there were huge rubbish dumps of steel and cement rubble it looked like a deserted nuclear site !
- We passed Abra La Raya Puno the highest altitude point at 4335m above sea_level

Liberator Hotel Lake Titicaca (5 star)

- Charming hotel –the only hotel on the lake
- You have lake views from every room some with sunrise others with sunset
- Modern, great service:
- Exclusive pier so one doesn't have to back track to town, the walk to the pier is approx. 10 minutes and involves some downwards steps.
- -Another point of difference with Scenic -When returning to the pier after visiting the islands Scenic have a bus waiting to take you back to the hotel as the short walk with downwards steps on way over is much harder to navigate going upwards –because of the high altitude: this was very much appreciated by all

Lake Titicaca 3812 m above sea level

- Unique wonderful experience with trip to UNOS where villages have been built on the floating reed islands
- Very educational to learn about this dying culture as young ones move out, their survival skills and adaptation to the water are amazing
- Lovely friendly locals ready for a photo opportunity