


TRAVEL

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HIGH-LIGHT Machu Picchu is considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World

Machu Picchu left me full of wonder

IT'S just gone 11am on a wet Friday morning high in the Andean cloud forest and I'm stopped in my tracks. Bears, llamas and large spiders are common sights in this remote corner of Peru but not this kind of species - and we're face to face.

At the end of a stone path snaking through thick vegetation and teeming with exotic birds, former footballer Tomas Brolin is on his mobile.

This is the former Sweden star whose Euro 92 goal famously helped dump Graham "do I not like that" Taylor's England side out of the tournament.

He's the last creature I expected to see at an altitude of 6692ft.

But Tomas and I turn out to be in reverse-Taylor style agreement over our visit to the Inca wonder Machu Picchu - do we both like that.

Brolin-sized surprises crop up as often as roasted guinea pig on a menu in this wonderful Latin American country.

Take the capital Lima, home to a third of the country's 30million population, and now a direct British Airways flight away from Gatwick.

Overcrowded, uncomfortably humid and permanently shrouded in mist, first impressions aren't great. Then there's the traffic. There are two million cars on to the city's congested roads and, with next to no public transport, getting anywhere fast is nigh on impossible.

But this is a city going places, albeit very slowly, and Lima is experiencing a cultural revolution.

It has a thriving food scene, largely located in the hip seaside Miraflores district. And the city attracts big-name rock 'n' roll acts such as the Rolling Stones and Coldplay.

Drive down the Pacific Ocean coastal road and you'll find surfers riding big waves, tennis courts packed and beachside restaurants teeming.

If it's ancient ruins

»» **BEN RANKIN**

you're after, you don't need to travel far. There's the pre-Inca Huaca Pucllana pyramid in Miraflores or the Pachacamac temple archaeological site on the outskirts.

Most visitors to Lima spend a day (at most) here before going home or fleeing to the hills. There's no need to rush to the mountains because it's just a one-hour flight to the Andean capital Cusco.

In fact, travellers are urged to rest after a long flight so their bodies are ready for the stresses of altitude. Going from sea level to 11,154ft in just 60 minutes can be a shock to the system. Being short of breath and having a slight headache isn't uncommon as you walk off the plane.

But when you do catch your breath you'll soon have it taken away again by the incredible scenery.

As the sun set behind snow-capped mountains, we drove past grazing alpacas and fields of potatoes on our way to Urubamba in the Sacred Valley.

At Ollantaytambo, a little town where the Inca Trail starts, we caught a train for the short journey to Machu Picchu town.

We stayed at the rustic Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, a favourite with Mick Jagger and dance DJ David Guetta, as well as Brolin.

At sunrise the next day, we followed the trail to Machu Picchu's Inca citadel and two hours later, we were looking out over it. It was magical.

Back down the valley, we caught the train back to Ollantaytambo.

Later we checked in to Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba and the following morning went mountain biking.

Our last stop was in Cusco. I thought the ancient Inca capital would be low-key. But it was party time, as I found out when I crawled home at 3am, slightly Inca-pacatated.

»» **KATRINA TWEEDIE**

WITH three sons to amuse, we are experts in camping or renting cottages to seek out adventurous holidays exploring Scotland every year.

Let me rephrase, my husband camps while I scour websites for pretty cottages with proper beds and a fridge for chilling the wine.

This year, the designated destination was Applecross, the tiny and very remote village on a peninsula in Wester Ross.

It is accessible either via a circuitous and picturesque route round the peninsula, or across the infamous Bealach na Ba, the historic single-track road twisting over the mountain.

The Bealach is also a must-do road for serious cyclists and one that my boys wanted to tick off their list.

Our route there wasn't exactly a direct one, via Perthshire and Glencoe, so it was a challenge only made possible because we had a motorhome for the week.

I took notes as Graeme Whitmore from BC Motorhomes in Ayr talked me through the necessities of our home on wheels.

And that's exactly what it felt like, with enough beds to sleep six, a fully functional kitchen (with fridge) and a toilet and shower room.

At more than 7m long, turning corners had to be anticipated in advance but the motorhome was easy to drive.

Night one at Scone Palace campsite in Perth was an important lesson in organisation and order - not always easy with three sons aged, 14, 12 and seven.

Night two in Glencoe we began to understand the importance of personal space and increasingly the kids began to stay outside on their bikes.

Our third destination was Wester Ross, after a long but beautiful drive 125 miles north through Fort William up to the Kyle of Lochalsh, with a brief stop at Eilean Donan Castle before powering north again.

Kinlochewe campsite was a perfect base for parking and settling for a few days to explore the extraordinary landscape.

"Like Arran on steroids," said my husband Lindsay, as we gasped at

Late deals

- Flying from Glasgow to Bulgaria on June 10, seven nights at 4*Tiara Beach, all-inclusive, from £389pp.
- Flying from Glasgow to Cyprus on June 18, seven nights at 4*Avanti Hotel, half-board, from £439pp.
- Flying from Edinburgh to Madeira on July 7, staying at 4*Hotel Raga, half-board, seven nights, from £479pp.
- For these and other deals, visit a Stewart Travel store or call 0800 091 2757.

IDYLL BE FINE, REALLY

Tackling a steep, twisty mountain road is quite a challenge in a motorhome - and it's quite tough on a bike, too



OUTDOOR ADVENTURE Katrina and Harry take a breather on the lochside

the spectacular mountains and ever-changing sky.

The next few days were spent exploring the area from Torridon to Gairloch and stopping for cappuccinos and cakes in Highland cafes serving fashionable food.

With menus offering chia seeds, quinoa salads and flat whites, many could have been transported from the west end of Glasgow.

On one drive to Gairloch, the boys spotted a golf course and decided to go for a quick nine holes. Max and I collected shells on the beach that overlooks the Minch, on what felt like the first

really warm day of the year. Then, while we waited for the golfers, we brewed up a cuppa in our mobile kitchen in the golf club car park.

That's one of the real luxuries of a camper van, being able to turn any beauty spot into your own personal cafe.

But we hadn't come all this way not to tackle the Bealach, so on a morning with blue skies and no wind, they set off cycling the 30 or so miles to the start of the hill, stopping for a hot chocolate to calm nerves before they tackled the pass.

Behind the wheel of our support

vehicle/home I also anxiously tackled the road while the cyclists puffed their way up the mountain.

In the end, I was fine and met Lindsay and the boys Harry and Cammy at the summit for the obligatory victory photos.

The descent into Applecross was just as daunting, with steep slopes and twisty bends. By then, I was driving like a pro and I knew there was a great reward - seafood lunch at the world-famous Applecross Inn.

After a week of parking up the trusty motor home in a series of first-class campsites, we decided to wild camp for our last night as our

motorhome had enough power and water for to be completely self-sufficient for up to three days.

We found the perfect spot on the banks of Loch Torridon.

I got the kettle on while Lindsay snuck hand-dived scallops bought from a fisherman in the tiny village of Shieldaig. The boys spent an hour skimming stones on the loch just feet from the vehicle.

It sounds idyllic - and it kind of was.

Facts

- Katrina's motorhome and trip was organised courtesy of www.freedomtogo.co.uk. Hire for a week starts at £500.
- For hire companies and camping sites, call 01342 336944 or go to campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk.



LOCH AND AWE Spectacular scenery as motorhome parks up

News

Cruise like a celebrity

BARRHEAD Travel are delighted to announce that in partnership with Celebrity Cruises, they are offering an exclusive new way to fly and then sail on selected Mediterranean itineraries.

For 2017, there are even more sailings on board Celebrity Constellation® to entice you.

With Jet Set Sail, your holiday starts with complimentary on-site parking at Glasgow Airport. You'll be fast-tracked through security and for Aqua Class cabin customers, you'll enjoy complimentary access to the airport lounge.


You will be whisked off to your European port of departure, direct from Glasgow aboard a VIP private flight exclusively for Barrhead Travel customers. On your Jet Set Sail flight, you can look forward to leather seats, a complimentary meal with drinks service and a luggage allowance of 25kg*.

After touching down, you'll be greeted by your airport representative, who will direct you to your VIP transfer to the embarkation port.

And this is all before you have embarked your glorious Celebrity cruise ship. Continuing the VIP treatment, you have priority embarkation and disembarkation. As the name suggests, Celebrity Cruises are the epitome of exclusive, luxury

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

Signs let drivers know what they're in for. Inset, Lindsay and boys playing golf and on big cycle



FINE DINING On board the ship

cruises. "When the journey matches the destination" is a phrase used by the company - and it is certainly fitting. When you step on board, you'll be greeted by Celebrity's friendly and welcoming staff who will ensure your whole journey is special.

There are dozens of dining options available to you, as well as plenty of places to relax and enjoy a drink while taking in your glorious surroundings.

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With prices for this exclusive VIP treatment starting from only £1648pp, there has never been a better time to Jet Set Sail.

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Late deals

- Flying from Edinburgh to Corfu on July 29, staying in the Theo Hotel in Aghios Georgios, bed and breakfast, seven nights, from £347pp.
- Flying from Glasgow to Costa del Sol on June 11, staying in Villa Las Palmas in Mijas, self-catering, seven nights, from £427pp.
- Flying from Glasgow to Majorca on June 11, staying in HSM Club Torre Blanca in Sa Coma, all-inclusive, seven nights, from £1167 for a family of three.
- For these and more deals, visit barrheadtravel.co.uk or call 0141 222 2223.