



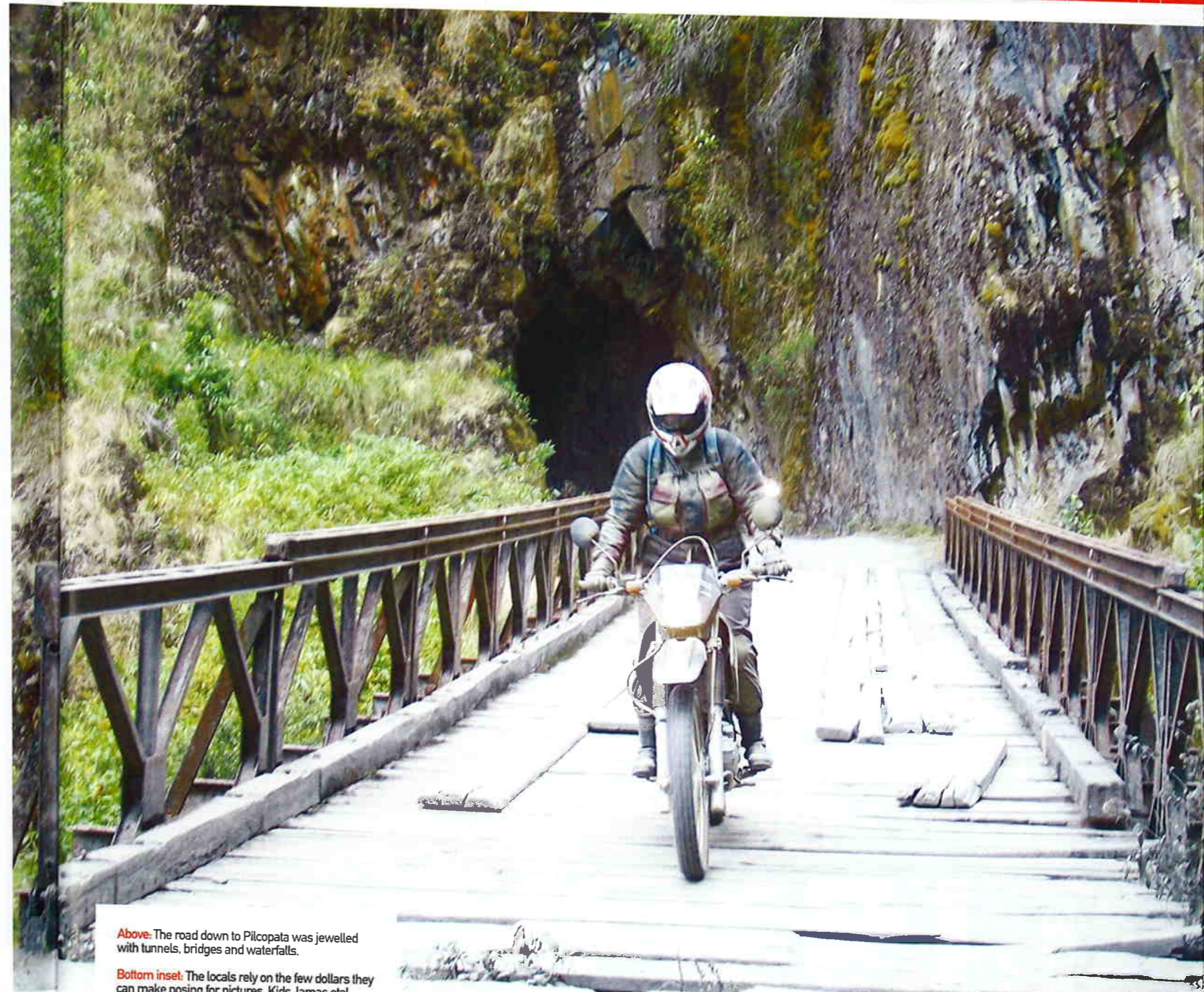
THE ANDES TO THE AMAZON  
**Peruvian Gold**

**Above:** Alex the tour guide descending one of the many mountain passes.

**Bottom left:** Jerry shows his artistic (feminine?) side near Lares thermal springs.

**Bottom center:** The Salt Mines of Salinas where the natural salt spring water is captured in pools and evaporated to leave salt. Each pool is typically owned and mined by a family and handed down through generation.

**Bottom right:** Refuelling at Paucartambo with some 84 octane, more suited for kero heaters than Hondas.



**Above:** The road down to Pilcopata was jewelled with tunnels, bridges and waterfalls.

**Bottom inset:** The locals rely on the few dollars they can make posing for pictures. Kids, llamas et al.

**DAYS 8/9 – PILCOPATA**

enough luxury, we were heading for the jungle. This was a big day on the dirt, refuelling in the cobbled town of Paucartambo and stopping for lunch at the Tres Cruces Pass at 3500m overlooking the Cloud Forest.

We were about to fall off the Andes into the pristine Manu National Park on the edge of the Amazon, and it was all downhill – 3000m of downhill! We experienced the only rain for the entire trip on this enjoyable descent into the rainforest and reached our destination in Pilcopata a tad damp but happy.

Villa Carmen, our accommodation, could best be described as a farm stay from the Discovery Channel, where a stroll through the gardens found animals like tapir, kapiburra,

Picari pigs, monkeys and caiman. Our hosts (who have a daughter in Melbourne) have a winner with this place and offer up some great food.

The next day was free with options to explore on horseback or jungle boat and rafting. That afternoon was spent exploring the area on the bikes.

**DAY 10 – HUACARPAY**

**There is only one trail to Pilcopata (or a seven-day boat trip down the Rio Madre de Dios), so it was back via the Tres Cruces Pass through some really thick fog.** Visibility was two bike lengths and it was bloody cold. Our fuel tanks were well into reserve, but it was all downhill to lunch at

Paucartambo. The next section to our lakeside bungalows saw the end to the concentration of great roads and wild scenery that is typical of the Cusco region.

**DAY 11 – CHIVAY**

**We were on the blacktop now, heading south. In an earlier life this might've been fun, but it was just "transport" compared to where we'd been.** Happily we turned on to dirt at Sicuani heading for our lunch spot at Yauri, a town with all blue roofs. BHP has its claws in this region and I bet I know where the inspiration for its new name came from.

The landscape had become typical of high plains, but livened up with a nice range down to the town of Sibayo. The leg to Chivay had some

rough sections, made worse by the setting sun in our eyes and fatigue from the long day. Chivay is a pretty basic town so we weren't expecting much, and I can't explain how sweet it was booking into our hotel with a flash restaurant, sauna and spa. Good one Alex.

**DAYS 12/13 – AREQUIPA**

**First up was to see the condors soaring in the Colca Canyon, the deepest canyon in South America. It's quite a tourist attraction and we were fortunate to see several of these majestic creatures in this spectacular place.**

The tourist drive has several tunnels on it, one of which caused some carnage in the 1989 Inca Rally. It caused us some concern

for the same reasons – being rutted, filled with dust and bent in the middle."

The road to Arequipa started off sealed as it wound its way up to the Patapampa Pass at 4900m. The pass is adorned with thousands of man-made rock cairns, which is quite a sight. The road then turned to dirt and very nasty for about 40 kms. I resorted to riding in the drain for a lot of it. Jerry's and John's wheels resembled 50-cent pieces afterwards. Fortunately we joined a sealed main road that continued over the plains and descended into Arequipa, ending with some good twisties.

The next day was free to visit the picturesque city, which lies in the shadow of an extinct volcano, Misti. An enjoyable afternoon was had cruising around on the bikes,

finishing at the indoor kart centre for some serious fun. Australia lost the cup, but then the Peruvians didn't play fair, adopting their everyday driving techniques to intimidate us.

**DAYS 14/15 – LAKE TITICACA**

**This was the final day on the bikes and we had the option for tar or gravel. We opted for the tar, which begun with the twisties we had enjoyed earlier and led to the high plains where vicuna, a relative of the llama, could be seen in herds.** A nice bit of road with the occasional range and river valley got us to Puno on the edge of Lake Titicaca. The lake's claim to fame is that at 3900m it's the highest navigable lake in the world. It also has the floating islands of Uros

made from reeds where people have lived since before the Inca realm.

That evening we finalised everything and said goodbye to the team who had given us a truly standout tour of their amazing country.



**Road rules:** We heard they had them, saw some signs and markings too. Best to keep on the right-hand side.

**Moments:** Jerry's front went flat at the wrong time, but his sphincter took over and held it all together.

**Costs (per person \$AUD):** Approx \$3000 for flights, international and domestic. Approx \$3100 for tour, including: Bike hire, all accommodation, meals where none was available. Insurance.

**Extras:** Fuel for bikes and support vehicle approx \$30 per day each. Other meals approx \$15 per day.

**Tour Company:** PeruMotoTours  
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