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HERALD

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JUDI CUERVO began her freelance cruise writing in 1998 with *Porthole Cruise Magazine*. A New York City native who met and married her husband Michael, on board, Cuervo's cruise writing has appeared in regional, national, Canadian, U.K., and Australian publications. When she's not sailing, Cuervo may be found Monday through Friday at a major New York City book publishing company where she's Associate Director/Client Services.

TERRY ELWARD is a writer travelling the world in search of the densest jungle and the finest Champagne. An avid English enthusiast, her work has appeared in publications such as *International Living*, *Time Out Istanbul*, and on her blog, remarkabletravels.com.

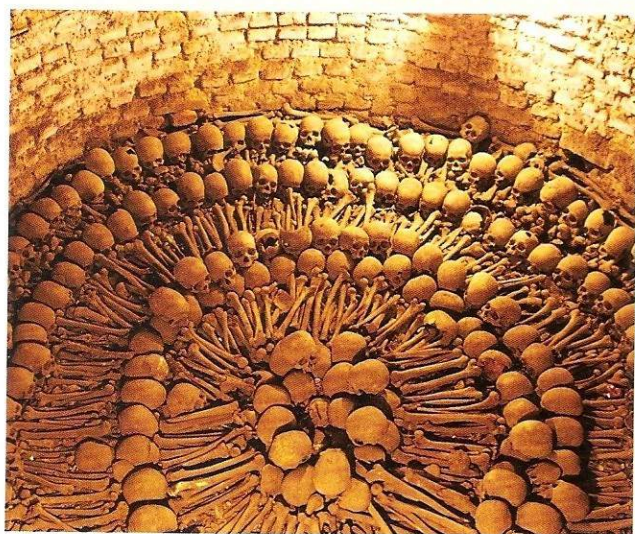
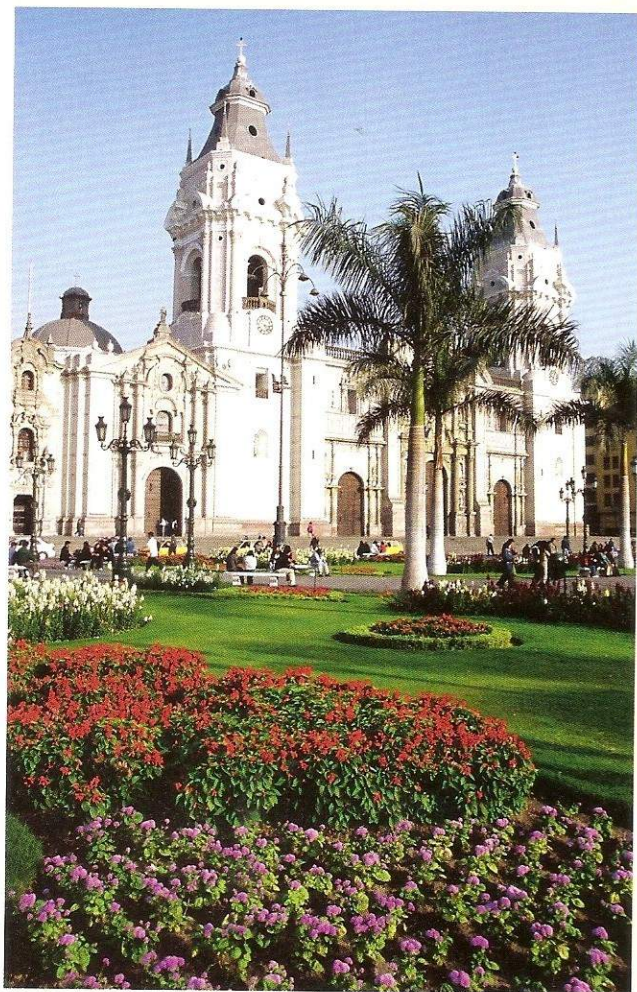
NARVE RIO is a photographer, writer, natural resource economist and international development consultant. Born in the coastal city of Bergen, Norway, his work has taken him to Afghanistan, China, East Timor and the Philippines, as well as across Indonesia, and his articles have appeared in publications from *Travel Post Monthly* and *Outdoor Photographer* to *Heraldo de Aragón* and academic reports by the Chr. Michelsen Institute for Development and Justice.

EMMA TRELLES, an arts & culture writer and an editor, is the author of *Little Spells* and *Tropicalia*, winner of the Andres Montoya Poetry Prize and a finalist for Foreword Reviews/IndieFab poetry book of the year. Her work has appeared in *The Best American Poetry*, *Terrain.org*, the *Sun Sentinel*, the *Miami Herald*, *Newsday*, *Latina* magazine, and others.

A former television news reporter, Houston-based freelance travel writer RICHARD VARR is a member of the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW). His stories and photos have appeared in publications including *USA TODAY*, the *Dallas Morning News*, *Porthole Cruise Magazine*, *Islands*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Good Sam Club's Highways* and *AAA's Home & Away*.

Good Bones: How Colonial Lima Perseveres.

BY RICHARD VARR



SINCE 1657, the catacombs of Monasterio de San Francisco have been through 20 earthquakes and thousands of tremors — but these crypts have always survived.

“The catacombs are an anti-seismic structure. We don’t know how it works but it softens the seismic waves,” explains Jesus Torres, leading a tour of Lima’s impressive colonial-era church and convent complex with its sunny-yellow façade, domed chapels and glazed-tile cloister.

“Sometimes the walls cracked or part of the ceiling fell, but the arches and main columns have never collapsed,” he says. “The catacombs are considered the safest place in the church.”

I walk slowly along the cramped brick-lined tunnels, continuously ducking beneath the arched doorways of this subterranean maze. Below us are crypts of human bones, neatly arranged and randomly topped with a skull or two.

And in the next chamber, an even more eerie sight with an artistic touch — intricate patterns of bones and skulls ringed in a circular well.

Monasterio de San Francisco is one of Lima’s must-see surviving colonial sites, offering a glimpse back to when conquistadors walked the fledgling capital’s narrow streets. The monastery stands just a few blocks from central Plaza Mayor, home to the imposing twin-tower Cathedral and Government Palace, built on sites handpicked by Francisco Pizarro, the governor of Spanish South America.

“There was an Inca population here,” explains city tour guide Sandra Vargas. “The local Inca chief was living where the Presidential Palace is now.”

Throughout the centuries, Lima’s palaces, mansions and places of worship have been rebuilt after numerous earthquakes. “All the buildings are a mix of architectural styles,” she says. “Sometimes we’ll see a beautiful colonial church, but the towers are neoclassical. That’s because when they collapsed, they were rebuilt in the architectural style of that time, so they’re a mix of different periods.”