

# QUOTE

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### Where to next? Why the travel map is changing

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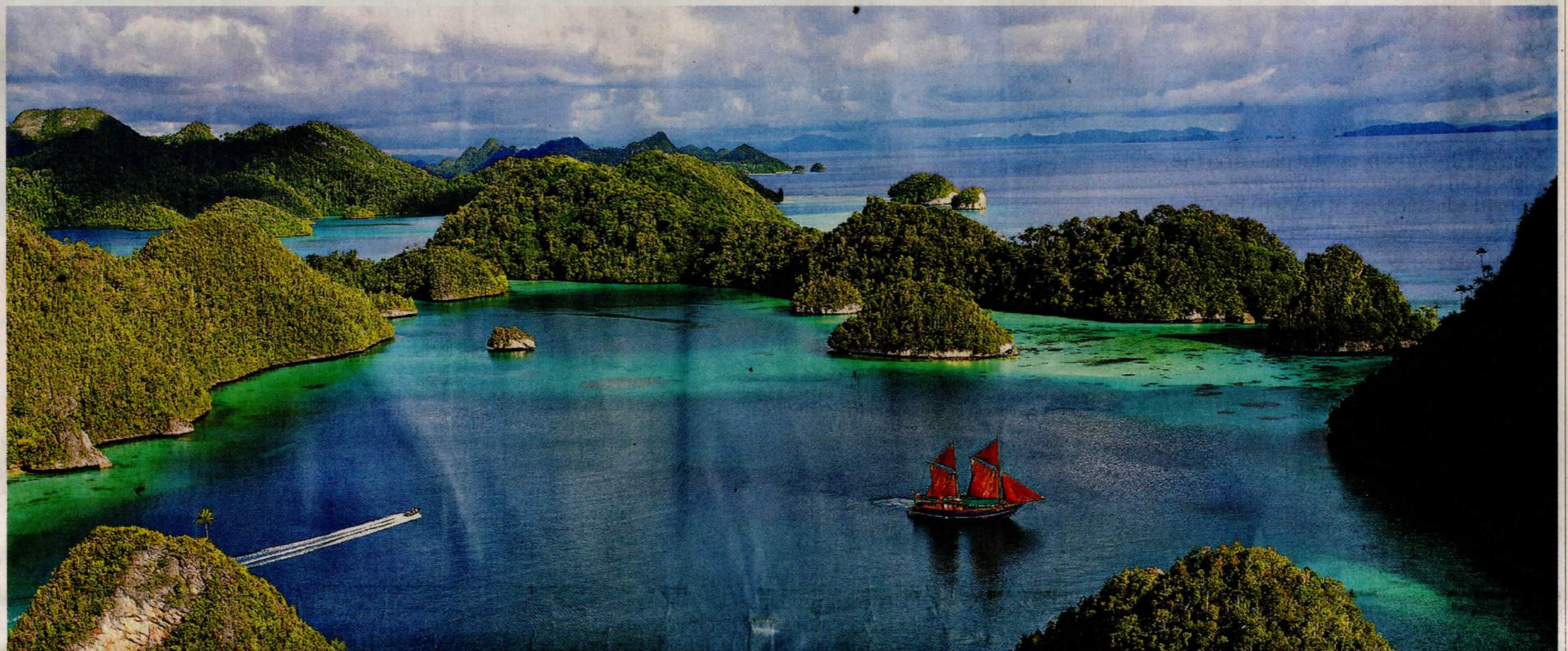
### Best foot forward 10 great walks in Pembrokeshire

... and each one begins  
and ends at a cosy pub  
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TRAVEL SECTION  
OF THE YEAR

# TRAVEL





## FAMILY TRAVEL



# 'We'll always have Peru, mum'

*Judith Woods finds that travelling in South America with her daughter is the perfect bonding experience*

**M**ummy, mummy are you going to die?"

"That would be nice," I mumbled sotto voce, as another stomach spasm hit me. "No, no, darling. I'll be..."

"Is that you throwing up again?" my daughter's voice quivered indignantly in the darkness from her bed across the hotel room.

"This isn't nearly as much fun as I thought it would be."

Love bombing. That's what the psychologist Oliver James calls it; a way of bonding one to one with your child, resetting the emotional thermostat, setting up new ways of communicating. The idea is to take your child away from home, giving them 100 per cent of your focus and time and, by letting them set the agenda, feel empowered and secure.

That was the theory behind my once-in-a-lifetime trip to Peru with my then 12-year-old. I was travelling out with the British charity Plan UK to visit a little girl I sponsor in the remote deserts of the north. I decided to bring Lily because she was on the brink of teenagedom, with all the hormonal upheaval that entails. It was clear she would soon break free from me and gravitate instead towards her peers, but before she became too obsessed with shopping and social media, I wanted to connect with her. And yes, I also wanted to impress upon her



Judith and Lily at Machu Picchu, above; and Pisac market, right

that as a girl growing up in the First World, opportunities are hers for the taking, a luxury not afforded to millions of other girls.

And so we arrived in Lima, strolled about admiring the buzz of the city, counted 50-plus semi-feral cats lounging about in Parque Kennedy, watched a dramatic sunset from Parque del Amor, the Love Park, where couples go to court, and then went to dinner at a low-key restaurant. I toasted our arrival with a pisco sour, a national drink made from the distilled spirit pisco, lemon and whipped egg whites. It was delicious and went down a treat, but within 20 minutes I was bent over double in the hotel as it rocketed back up again.

On the positive side, it served as a useful primer in the perils of consuming raw egg from low-key restaurants, and Lily was suitably horrified, so not an entirely wasted night but not one I would ever care to repeat. The next morning – an excruciating 3am – our cab arrived to

take us to the airport and we flew to Pura in the north of the country.

I've detailed our incredible off-road, off-grid journey elsewhere in these pages; meeting my sponsored four-year-old, Sheyla, and her family was almost overwhelming. They were kind and hospitable, and as we ate lunch, scraggy bantams and black piglets rooted in the dirt beneath the table. Indoors. I mention the animals because throughout the next leg of our journey, down to the Sacred Valley, Cusco and finally Machu Picchu, it was the animals that held Lily's attention most.

I won't pretend it wasn't frustrating to begin with; she would lose interest in pre-Columbian history and wander off to stroke a lamb held by a woman in traditional dress, who charged us for the privilege. A wild chinchilla was easily more exciting than the ruins it was nesting upon.

But then I had a tiny epiphany. A flashback; aged 11, my elder sister and I were brought to London by our mother for a three-week cultural bonanza. We visited the Tower of London, made brass rubbings of medieval knights at Westminster Abbey, took in a West End show that blew our budget. Afterwards, she asked me what I had enjoyed the most. I told her, truthfully, that it was feeding the pigeons at Trafalgar Square. She slapped me so hard across the legs in fury, it's a wonder the marks aren't still there now.

More than three decades on, as the days passed in glorious, fascinating Peru, I gradually remembered, at a cellular level, what it was to be that age; how it felt to be force-fed culture while I struggled to assert my own will and recalcitrantly refused to be impressed. Lily's seven-year-old sister loves being shown new things. But at 12, it's annoying to be constantly told: "Look! Can you see? Aren't you overwhelmed and moved and grateful and humbled?"

The answer is invariably a resentful shrug. So I learnt to hold back, bite my tongue and let her see the llama first, point out the interesting architecture and roll her eyes when I was







apparently too slow to see the pretty painted houses we just passed. What I hoped to achieve with our itinerary was “authenticity without hardship”; I had no wish to backpack or to be in cosseted luxury. And so everywhere we stayed was an adventure; in the ancient city of Cusco, a World Heritage Site and capital of the Inca Empire until the Spanish conquest, our hotel was a grand colonial mansion.

A guide gave us a tour of the local market and, seen through Lily’s eyes, the wonder lay in the little traditional woven whips for sale in the market (small ones for babies), the jungle dwellers who turned up with an enormous dead snake to be chopped up for medicine, and the live frogs being ladled out of basins to make restorative tea.

That evening we decided to try the Peruvian speciality: guinea pig, but too squeamish to eat it cooked the usual way (“squashed under a rock” and deep fried), we took the coward’s way out and ordered “confit of guinea pig” in an upmarket restaurant.

“It doesn’t taste of chicken!” I laughed, knowingly. My daughter, being a generation of clichés behind, pulled a scornful face. “Why would it taste of chicken?” Indeed, why would it? (If you’re wondering, it tasted sweet and fibrous, like suckling pig.)

In Europe, my husband and I tend to get a bit didactic as we drag our daughters around galleries and Romanesque churches, Renaissance palaces and ancient temples. I will admit (although he wouldn’t) that we are occasionally guilty of being so immersed in the glories of the past that the serendipitous pleasures of the present pass us by. But in Peru, because I knew little of its history or culture, Lily and I were both on the same journey, which made for a uniquely equal sense of companionship.

A major plus was that she had no access to the internet by day, only at our hotel. There we would sit in companionable silence in the lounge, she catching up with friends, me drinking pisco sours (see, the first one really was a one-off dud).

We travelled to the foot of Machu Picchu in a smart wooden train and watched the landscapes whip by. We talked about everything and nothing: human rights, the practicalities of ferret farming, the shortcomings of Harry Potter. I switched off my schoolmarmish side and went with the flow. Arriving at Aguas Calientes, the town nestled below the 8,000ft summit, we checked into Inkaterra, a hotel set in the cloud forest. It was magical: just the two of us sitting on benches, watching iridescent hummingbirds feeding and bickering. Later Lily spotted two Andean cock-of-the-rocks, the country’s



The rarely sighted Andean cock-of-the-rock is Peru’s national bird

**Essentials**

● Judith Woods travelled to Peru with Sunvil Latin America (020 8758 4774; sunvil.co.uk). A nine-night trip including three nights in Lima, two nights in the Sacred Valley, one night in Machu Picchu and three nights in Cusco costs from £2,789 per person based on two sharing. The price includes transfers, guided tours, some meals, internal flights and return economy flights direct from London Gatwick (commencing May 2016).

national bird, which many locals have never even seen.

Next day, a bus took us up to Machu Picchu itself and as we ascended into the ancient city, we gasped in unison, turned and smiled at one another. The love bomb had well and truly blown us away. And when we returned home? Things were different; when she told me that holding the lamb was her favourite part, I didn’t slap her legs. But I also genuinely believe our relationship has benefited, because I have learnt to respect Lily’s boundaries a bit more and vice versa. Although now a teenager, she still actively wants to talk to me, share confidences and spend time with me, a state of affairs so astonishing that only the parent of a 13-year-old could possibly understand.

She has asked if we can go away somewhere every year, just the two of us. She’s thinking of the Great Barrier Reef. I timidly suggested a b&b in the New Forest. Her reply?

“I don’t mind where we go. We’ll always have Peru.”

**At 12, it’s annoying to be constantly told: ‘Aren’t you overwhelmed, moved, grateful and humbled?’**



The Inkaterra hotel is set in a cloud forest at Aguas Calientes

**LILY’S STORY ONE-ON-ONE**

When my mum told me I was going to Peru with her, it was a dream come true. I was excited about travelling somewhere so exotic but also about spending one-on-one time with her, as normally I have to share her with my little sister.

I really think the week we were together created a bond; we had a couple of disagreements but we soon cleared the air by giving each other a little bit of space and then talking things through. We still have that ability to make up very quickly. By comparison, I have friends who have stand-offs with their parents that last for days.

In Peru, my mother treated me not quite like an adult but definitely not like a child. I think she got to understand me better and she definitely learnt to listen rather than talk. I was made to feel special, and when she described me as a wonderful travelling companion, it felt like a huge compliment.

Communication is important in families and I don’t think there is anything I couldn’t tell her. I hope we always stay this close and I really hope we can go on more adventures together. But maybe next time without the throwing up.



**Are we there yet?**

‘Flopsy’ rescues a harassed *Ben Hatch*

**M**y daughter’s birthday falls in late July. Every year it finds us in transit.

Once, on a flight to Cyprus, the captain encouraged everyone on board to sing *Happy Birthday*. Phoebe didn’t hear a word of it, as she was crying because I’d accidentally shut her finger in the toilet door. Last year, on the AutoSlaap overnight car-train from the Netherlands to Italy, we marked Phoebe’s big day not with the cake we had brought (it had remained on the platform), but with a pre-packaged breakfast cheese roll. One year the birthday fell on a visit to an onion museum in France – research for a guidebook I was writing. After an hour looking at farm implements, Phoebe remarked: “Not exactly Legoland, Dad.”

This year we marked the occasion on a Brittany Ferries ship. Halfway between Portsmouth and Santander, my wife woke me, hissing across our four-berth cabin: “Ben, get the presents. She’ll wake up in a minute.”

I dressed and headed to red zone deck five, only to find a locked door blocking my way. To open it in an emergency there is a red button the size of a side plate. Is this an emergency?

No. A passing French crew member said that it was *interdit* for passengers to return to vehicles mid-crossing. I rang my wife. “Tell her about the presents, she’ll understand.” She didn’t.

I was about to leave when another staff member beckoned. There is one exception to the rule, she said: pet owners can visit lower decks to feed their animals at nine o’clock.

Back in the cabin, I grabbed my upset daughter’s arm.

“Just remember, when I say you have a rabbit called Flopsy, you nod.” She nodded.

“Good. And what’s the name of your rabbit?” “Flopsy.”

In Le Grand Pavois’ cafeteria, I bought a salad and a box of cereal. I tipped away the cereal and placed the lettuce in the empty packet. We reached the information desk bang on 9am. Wielding the lettuce, I explained about Flopsy. The same unhelpful crew member, looking suspicious, disappeared to confer. Two other passengers were waiting: a Frenchman with a sick macaw and a Surrey lady with a gerbil.

The two crew members returned; the friendly one smiled at Phoebe.

“Your rabbit is hungry?” Phoebe nodded. “And what is the name of your rabbit?” asked the unhelpful woman.

Phoebe looked at me. “Flopsy,” she said.

A man in a high-vis jacket led us to the lower decks. He waited by the door as we beetled off to our vehicles. At the car, I retrieved the bin-bag of presents. Phoebe said, a little too loudly, “Breakfast, Flopsy!” Back at the door, high-vis man stared at the bin-bag.

“We cleaned out the rabbit,” I told him. Phoebe held her nose. He let us pass.

On the sunny top deck, in the middle of the Bay of Biscay, Phoebe smiled, holding up her favourite present, new headphones.

“Daddy, I left my iPad in the car,” she said.

“If we pretended that Flopsy was...”

“No,” said my wife firmly.