



The rooftop at Hotel B in Lima, Peru – Hotel B

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: OCTOBER 2017

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**Peru** is an endlessly fascinating country. A succession of ancient cultures can be dated as far back as 3200 B.C. And its terrain rises from stark coastal desert to the glaciers of the Andes, before descending steeply to the Amazon jungle. The purpose of my recent trip was to try new hotels in Lima, Cusco and the nearby Sacred Valley, as well as to ride on the new *Belmond Andean Explorer* luxury train.

Although Lima is not one of my favorite cities — from April to November, it is usually covered by a gray blanket of foggy drizzle — I greatly enjoyed my stay at **Hotel B**, a hospitable and refined boutique property that overlooks the Pacific in the fashionable Barranco district. Amazingly, the Andean city of Cusco contains three exceptional hotels. As well as the grand **Belmond Hotel Monasterio** and the intimate **Inkaterra La Casona**, the 55-suite **Belmond Palacio Nazarenas** now provides a stylish and atmospheric base from which to explore the Inca capital. The Sacred Valley begins just north of Cusco and extends for more than 60 miles to Machu Picchu. On this occasion, I chose to stay at the new 50-room **explora Valle Sagrado**, which opened in July 2016. It proved to be a resort best suited to fit and moderately adventurous travelers, who embark on guided hikes and mountain-bike excursions through a dramatic landscape overlooked by snowcapped peaks and glaciers.

The new *Belmond Andean Explorer* offers one- and two-night trips from Cusco to Puno on Lake Titicaca, and onward to the southern city of Arequipa. The 24 cabins are complemented by two dining cars, an observation car, a library, a cocktail lounge and a piano bar. Comfortable 140-square-foot Double Bed Cabins come with private baths and walk-in showers. Although passengers can go on excursions, the real pleasure of the trip comes from watching the spectacular Andean landscape unfurl and chatting to one's fellow passengers, pisco sour in hand.