

A Peruvian Appreciation

Two weeks in a different kind of paradise:
the world's longest left, crazed cormorants and ...
if you pray for surf in Peru, you'll get it.

BY S. C. SIPMAN

Rampaging corduroy
rimming a parched finger
of brittle earth on the
central coast of Peru.
This is as good as it gets,
the might-as-well-be-
endless waves of
Chicama.

Peru is not for pussies.

That's what the local surfer replied to one foreigner who blogged his whining complaint about the robberies and shootings of visiting surfers there. I read on ... the general news about Peru was either really good or really bad. Whatever the case, the satellite photos were intriguing and my friends were probably fed up with my own whining about all the stand-up-paddle surfers at my favorite spots here on Maui. It was time to go on safari.

By mid February the general dearth of surf on Maui was a tad depressing. Sometimes the winter is just weeks of stormy muddy surf. Sometimes not. January and February were pretty wet in Haiku. I rarely stray from this island, but I always wondered if there really *were* long empty lefts in some faraway place ... like in the magazines.

Meanwhile, the State of Hawaii wants to dredge up Kahului harbor to about 30ft deep to accommodate more Superferry visits, giant cruise ships, and more freight, more often. The governor also seems to want to punish surfers for stopping her Superferry invasion up on Kauai. The Kahului dredging will kill four surf sites forever. It will also kill a zero-maintenance playground for people from nine to ninety. Yeah, Woody Brown's playground. Besides the surfing, there are all the outrigger canoes in there, and the old timers who fish there.

Also in jeopardy, my retirement plan, which was pretty simple: When they take away my driver's license my daughter will just drop me off at the harbor, and I'll surf there 'til the sharks eat me. Meanwhile, my pal Justin Anderson (a low-key shredder from Jacksonville) was in Peru emailing me about the nuggified quality of the

place. Finally he calls me from somewhere south of Lima and says, "Just get the ticket."

Holed up like a Haiku hermit for so long left me unprepared for the vicissitudes of faraway travel. My next-door neighbor, Scott Trudon, who is always traveling, gave me a really nice DaKine backpack (mahalo!) and one piece of advice: "Just go." (And good riddance) Mahalo again. Bruddah Scott is one of the lucky few who can SUP-surf Hookipa and not get hassled!

One last call to the Peruvian consulate on Oahu and I'm packing. The gentleman at the consulate told me I didn't need a visa, don't drink the water, and don't leave surfboards on the car at night or they will disappear. "In Peru," he said, "you are robbed by the poor. In Hawaii you are robbed by the rich."

So I bought tickets, a GPS, a water purifier, and several boxes of snack bars. I dropped in at

Lightning Bolt Maui and got a stash of Bolt stickers, a couple Bolt T-shirts, and a ding-repair kit.

FEBRUARY 21, 2008

Thrwewe planes later I'm sitting on the LAN flight from LAX to LIM with a steel knife in my hand looking out the right side window at the Sea of Cortez, across the Baja Peninsula, all the way to the Pacific. I love airplane windows.

The guy sitting next to me assures me the army and police will have everything under control when Justin and I take the Cruz Del Sur bus 11 hours north to Pacasmayo the following night. Apparently the photos of the rock-strewn highway and the bus passengers amid the rubble on the front page of the day's Peruvian newspaper were no cause for concern. The governor declared a state of emergency in La Libertad and Ancash districts, he told me. So I

CHRIS KLOPF

felt better, because this was where we were headed.

I knew things were going to be pretty different now, as I pondered the knife in my hand, the irony of the carry-on-item restrictions, the plate of food in front of me, and the generous servings of wine the flight attendant poured into our glasses along the way. The gentleman also cautioned me not to travel in *el Norte* with more than \$200 cash and to never leave my drink unattended in a bar or club. A beautiful woman might drug me and rob me. Oh well, I've been robbed by beauty before – it's always funny later. "Mas vino por favor." My Spanish seemed to be working well enough.

FEBRUARY 22

Most flights seem to arrive in Lima at midnight, and after an easy slide through immigration and

into the waiting throngs of locals, I found Justin, and we caught a taxi to a hostel near the Klimax shop in Milaflores. There we split up the stash of protein bars, energy bars, and Zipfizz packets. I gave Justin a yellow T-shirt and decided to take a shower. "The toilet paper doesn't get flushed," he advised me, "just put it in the can by the toilet". I was really glad I brought those little bottles of Purell.

Lima was loud, smoky, and fast compared to Haiku, and as I tried to figure out the shower adjustment, I began to feel like I was on a surreal journey into the Twilight Zone. That's probably where it happened. Bam! Shower, brush teeth, and ... whoops – the water! A week later I'd be hooked up to an IV drip trip in Clinica Metallica. But before that happened I had to buy a board in Lima and catch the bus to Pacasmayo at 9pm.



Left to right: Jesus and the vulture watch over the empty lefts of Pacasmayo. Cooperating with the local authorities ... Pacasmayo street sign. Dr. Juan Angel Paredes Costilla and a re-hydrated Steve at Clinica Metallica.

three-wheeled motorcycle with a red vinyl awning over a rear bench seat, I was pretty surprised, but we just strapped our boards to the roof and tied our bags onto a back rack. “This thing would be so cool in Haiku,” I told Justin as we weaved, beeped, and braked our way down the crowded narrow streets to the carcass-littered lane our hostel was on.

At first it is a little strange to smell all the decay and shoo the flies constantly, but after a while it just becomes familiar and normal.

Our hostel was surrounded by a perimeter of live electrical lines with a big warning sign above the wrought-iron gates. The place was a tiny green oasis situated amongst the roofless collapsing walls of the former waterfront boomtown. Directly behind and above the hostel was a huge statue of Jesus with outstretched arms. Perched on His arms were several large black vultures. I took note of that as we checked in.

I could hear a radio blasting Peruvian music – tight brass and percussion, and catchy, smooth vocals “... te vas, te vas, te vas ...” (www.grupo5.com). I decided to take a shower and rinse off the road trip. Indeed, I may have picked up the ‘revenge’ from the biomass thriving in this water. Later, I would have time to ponder what the incubation period was.

That afternoon we surfed near the pier, but the fishing gear in the water was a concern. Clearly the water was way too warm for the wetsuit I had purchased for the trip in L.A. a few days before.

It seemed about the same as Maui that February, maybe 74°. Next day, I hacked the legs off the wetsuit, but it was still too hot, and I hated paddling in the thing, so after that it was just my boardshorts and a Fong Store T-shirt.

If you like fish and rice or fried potatoes with fresh fruit juice, Peru is the place to eat. Beef and pork are seldom on the menu, and chicken is the other white meat. My New Year’s vegan vow was soon compromised when I was warned to avoid the salads, and tofu was nowhere to be found. Breakfast was usually one of those continental deals of coffee, bread and butter, and juice ... or some fish ladled up with some really good sauce and fresh mangos. Maybe we were just lucky ...

APPARENTLY THESE PRETTY POSERS WERE CONTESTANTS IN THE LOCAL PAGEANT. THEY SMELLED WAY BETTER THAN THE ROTTING THINGS SCATTERED ALONG THE SHORELINE



which, of course, we were.

Crack-o-dawn patrols in Pacasmayo were unnecessary. The wind was generally light and offshore most of the day. The mototaxi drivers needed their sleep, and nightlife seemed to start at midnight. The usual workday for many people was a 12-hour shift if their business was open from 8am to 8pm.

For about \$1.30 you could get a ride out to the point, where your driver would insist you paddle out at a certain location, no matter what you see or say. Pedro was our driver and best friend. His driving skills were superb as he negotiated the sandy, rutted road out to El Faro (the lighthouse) south of town. (It would be a good idea to bring some foam pipe insulation for the bars that support the roof of the mototaxi, as the ride can be a dinger to a lightly-glassed stick strapped to the lid.)

After two days at the hostel we moved to fancier digs at El Faro resort on the bluff. Our \$60-per-night room included breakfast, pool, internet, restaurant, and 24-hour security inside a four-meter-high wall with a guard tower. I saw lots of guard towers and bullet holes in Peru, but I never saw any apparent evildoers.

FEBRUARY 24

After a nice little session off the lighthouse, Justin and I were standing around on the beach watching a handful of local kids ply the lefts, while we waited for Pedro to come for us in his mototaxi. Off in the distance we notice a funky old blue van escorted by two cops on a dirt bike

navigating the sandy path, headed our way. They stopped nearby, and a bevy of local beauties, dressed in white with satin sashes, exited the van, followed by a photographer who began to arrange them beneath the big checkered lighthouse. We turned our backs to the waves to watch the young women smiling for the camera as the photographer practiced his craft and the cops smiled at us. We smiled back.

Next thing we knew, these two local authorities were walking towards us, carrying long billy clubs and saying something in Spanish. We were wondering if we should bail, when they unexpectedly begin to arrange us and our surfboards as the photographer rearranged his tripod and the wahines squeezed in between us. These photo-op masters smelled way better than the rotting things scattered along the shoreline behind us. Apparently there was a big festival in town and these pretty posers were contestants in the local pageant, which explained the sashes, and the cops.

As Pedro’s mototaxi was crossing the desert bluff towards us, we exchanged email addresses with the photographer. Everyone was all smiles as they drove off in the blue van followed by their security team on the little dirt bike. Then the cop on the back extended his left arm and gave us a big ‘shaka’. Welcome to Peru.

Day by day, we fell deeper in love with the place. Every morning we had breakfast on the lanai overlooking the lefts that usually went unriden as they wrapped from the lighthouse to the pier. The sideshore current from the south was rather swift and paddling back to the point after a long wave was a lot of work. Eventually we just raced toward the pier catching left after left, then grabbed a mototaxi back to the lighthouse. Or sometimes we’d walk the bluffs past the old *El Duke* building to the *El Faro* hotel/green zone. That was nice, too. But I was starting to feel a little ...

FEBRUARY 27

The invisible things that make one sick were getting to me. After three and a half days of no food and scant liquid, with my surf leash tied to the toilet, it was decided I should be taken to the



Clockwise from above: Quiksilver ‘Mini Gun’ Cristobal de Col throwing tail during a Billabong comp at Cabo Blanco. Justin Anderson, El Faro. The author, Sips (‘I hate that wetsuit’) slidin’ away on a small, clean day at El Faro.

Lima is a huge city but longboards are rare and so are the shops that carry them. One day, walking the streets of Lima and riding in psychotaxis zipping about honking and swerving, I fell in love with Peru. Stores open at 8am, close at noon, and reopen from 4 to 8pm. There is barbed wire and spiked fences and armed guards like I have never seen back on Maui (except when the Superferry came to Kahului after the Kauai incident). And yet, the whole vibe of the place was mysterious and seductive.

After I bought a nice new 8’8” board at the Klimax shop, we stopped at a church in Milaflores, said a quick prayer of thanks, and put in a request for some nice waves and no

robberies. Justin booked us into the front-row, upper-level-impact-zone seats for the luxury thrill ride of a lifetime – El Cruz Del Sur – heading north into lower latitudes.

Once you leave the opulence of the Milaflores district of Lima, the apparent poverty and ecofriendly lifestyles of the lesser consumers is riveting yet intriguing. Much of the urban landscape looked post-apocalyptic, yet there was a certain quality of life among the survivors, which only such selective pressures as those wrought upon them might have fostered.

The trip north was pretty exciting. The rules of the road are different in Peru, and size does matter. While everyone else seemed asleep at

3am I was fully focused on the flashing lights and screaming horn of the tractor-trailer coming at us at great speed as we passed a row of busses and trucks on a blind curve over a double-yellow line ... again.

FEBRUARY 23

The morning light revealed a monochromatic world of flat desert, sculptured dunes, and large mountains of sand and rock. The sides of the highway were dotted with shrines, presumably dedicated to its many victims. Eventually reaching our stop at Pacasmayo, Justin told me there would be a taxi from the hostel to pick us up. When I saw that my first ‘mototaxi’ was a

TITI DE COL CARLOS RIOS

SIPMAN, JORGE, LUIS PINILLOS CORREA, JUSTIN ANDERSON

local clinic. After a short ride in Pedro's mototaxi, we parked in front, and he and Justin escorted me into the place, which was empty except for the doctor and his assistants. No forms to fill out, no waiting.

The building was probably a hundred years old, built in the days when British merchants exported minerals from the mountains via a railway with its terminus on the port's now-derelict pier. Victorian architecture dominated the waterfront, crumbling slowly in concert with adobe-walled buildings and a big-old yellow church.

My Spanish was even weaker than I, so Justin and Pedro talked to the doctor for me. He took one look at me, pinched the skin on my forearm, and said something about *muerte* and pointed to his heart. They led me to a small blue room with a high ceiling with ancient unfinished crown molding and a funky metal bed and a blanket made of llama hair.

I had never had an IV stuck in me before, but apparently I needed some fluid, and I understood *muerte*. When the initial attempts to tap a vein got a little messy, and blood was dripping all over my shoes and onto the floor, I noticed Justin was looking a little concerned. Not one to watch the needle action, I jokingly asked Justin if they were practicing on me. He just squeezed my ankle and said, 'Duuude ...'

While Pedro and Justin took off for the local *farmacia* to score more IV liters, needles, and Cipro for the doctor, I just laid in the blue room staring at the ceiling and listening to the pounding, blasting sounds of the music coming from the next room as 'stuff' dripped from the plastic bottle, down a tube and into my arm. I noticed the bottle was nearly empty and as the last of the liquid headed toward my dangling arm, major air bubbles were coursing through the clear tube headed for my bloodstream. Based on what I knew from documentaries on junkies, etc., I figured those bubbles spelt doom if they got into me. I raised my arm high enough to reverse the flow, and the tube turned red as my blood pushed the bubbles back towards the



Above; Cemetery mural, Pacasmayo.

Very large day Pacasmayo and the photographer with the white car, who is nearly always there. If you're staying at Chicama, Pacasmayo is where you go when Chicama is flat.

empty bottle. "Doctor! Holaaaa!" I tried to call over the echoes of the screaming tunes from the next room.

After the bubbles were removed from the line and a new bottle was installed, I fell back into my diurnal reverie, tripping on the endless loop from next door, and contemplating the necessary miter cuts to complete the crown-molding above me, left undone a hundred years ago. Now the nurse was in and out more frequently, checking on the drip and asking me something in Spanish, to which I just replied, "Bien, gracias."

Justin and Pedro came back with medical supplies including a couple more liters, which they said exhausted the town's supply. Justin handed me his copy of *The Book of Tao*. I told him I almost ate the big one while getting hammered by the endless cd bouncing off the halls and walls of the clinic. "What the hell is that music?" I asked. "It's kinda gnarly, and my head is pounding."

My pals just laughed, and someone said, "Metallica."

"Oh" I replied, a little embarrassed at my naiveté. Justin asked the doc who was blasting Metallica, and the doc said he was. He *loved* Metallica. The doctor asked what I felt like eating, and I asked for some soup, so he sent one of the staff off to make some. After the doc left, Justin slipped out and turned down the

CARLOS RIOS ALVA



Peru's "Señor Tubo" Cesar Aspillaga living up to his name for the millionth time at Cabo Blanco. Considered one Peru's top tube-riders Cesar is famous for many things including a 23-second tube ride in Mancora during an el Niño year.

THE SWELL WAS BUILDING FASTER THAN MY STRENGTH, BUT OCCASIONALLY I'D PADDLE OUT, SNAG SOME INSIDE LEFTS, DRIFT BACK NORTH TO THE HOTEL, AND DRINK SOME MORE ELECTROLYTES.

tunes. I was feeling better already.

A couple hours later the doctor came back with chicken soup and a beaker of fresh-squeezed lemonade for the boys. I was feeling pretty chipper after three liters from the dripper and turned down the fourth. Justin took a picture of the doc and me. I paid the medical bill, which was 158 soles (\$55.58), including the soup and lemonade. Sicko.

FEBRUARY 28

It was fiesta time in Puerto Pacasmayo, and random fireworks rocketed into the sky day and night. There were about 30 events scheduled in a two-week period. These ranged from bloodless bullfights to beauty pageants, from surf contests to grand-prix street races. Peru's top musicians, like the Fusion Kings and Grupo 5, were on tap, and there was even a carnival with rides and food booths, which raged nightly. And the surf seemed to join in.

It was also my 57th birthday, and the boys from Brazil in the next room gave me a Brazilian

powerbar and a sympathetic look. I lent them the ding-repair kit. I traded my red long-sleeved Bolt shirt for a red wetsuit top from Brazil. They rode out to the point with Justin in Pedro's mototaxi. Carlos Rios, the local *paparazzi de la playa*, took pictures from the beach.

The doc gave instructions to our hotel about what I should and shouldn't eat. He also gave me a prescription for Cipro. I was told me to drink two liters of Peruvian 'electrolyte' daily, which is like Gatorade with more potassium and less sugar. So I hung around the hotel, drank fluids, and watched Justin carving the lefts reeling north along the half mile from the lighthouse toward the pier below. The swell was building faster than my strength, but occasionally I would paddle out, snag some inside lefts, drift back north to the hotel, and drink some more electrolytes enhanced with Zipfizz, while lounging by the pool.

MARCH 1

One lovely hot afternoon we were spooking the empty lefts below from the shade of our lanai.

Earlier, we had walked into town and checked out the cemetery on the hill above the pier. The murals painted on the walls were so impressive, we photographed every one of them. It seems that art, religion, and everyday life are blurred into a singular theme in Peru. Still, I was not fully prepared for what happened next, as I sipped my beverage in the shade and Justin checked his email in the cabana at the bar.

The sight of a beautiful woman in Peru is rather common; we both agreed that only about one in five was *not* extremely attractive. But then ... she walks by. Miss Peru. Yowza. Right here in our sleepy little fortress, she struts by with that cadre of local beauty-queen hopefuls in tow. Following them are the photographer and his assistants, the local mayor and the honchos from the local cement plant. She leads them into the cabana where Justin is sipping a beer and contemplating Chicama as the swell builds.

After our first encounter with the wahines out at the lighthouse, we just figured it was a chance encounter of the benign kind. Now they had





Left to right: The Sphinx Toes at Chicama – they lend a sense of the surreal as you’re being swept down the point. It’s a llama, the notorious South American camelid. The authors number plate ... Justin, perusing the Peruvian perfection.

invaded our refuge and brought the local heavies with them for a luncheon by the pool!

After the queens had their little snack with the mayor and the assorted dignitaries, they gathered around the pool for another photo session. That night was the pageant, and they were all smiles and curves for the camera. Justin wandered out of the restaurant and was beset by a bevy of pretty little posers who clung to him for one more gringo-enhanced photo op. Good naturedly, he obliged, and I observed their catty competition from behind the fronds hanging from the cabana roof along with the local boys from the bar. It may have been his blond hair and charming smile that got him into the fray, but I think his new yellow Bolt T-shirt was the coup de gras.

MARCH 2

The building swell meant Chicama was going to happen, so Pedro arranged for a friend to drive us down there in a real car after Sunday mass. It was tough to leave Pacasmayo. It was the most interesting place we had ever been. The people everywhere welcomed us. The food was great. The surf was great. The accommodations at the hotel and the hostel were great. Music and art were omnipresent. Pedro took great care of us. The folks at Clinica Metallica were lifesavers and made excellent soup. There were mysteries yet unexplained about the history of the place, about Duke Kahanamoku and his fabled visit in 1912, and the trains rusting behind the walls of the old station. There were enviable funeral processions that made Pacasmayo seem like a romantic place

to grow old, make friends, and die. Our faces were sore from smiling at the endless encounters with inexplicable good fortune. The drive down to Chicama was like paddling in even though the waves are still fun and deserted. I asked Justin to ask Pedro to tell the taxi driver to take it easy. “Tell him I’m from Hawaii, and we like to go slow.” They laughed at me as we sped off.

If ever there were a place for extreme Olympic sandboard action, the coastal mountains of Peru would be it. There were countless mountains, thousands of feet high with insane sand runs that just waited to be ridden. We zipped south along the Pan American Highway, through a barren expanse of dunes, desert, and enormous cloud-shrouded mountains, which were mere

Left: Cristobal de Col boosting in front of the fleet. Hemingway used to fish here. Cabo Blanco, Northern Peru.

Opposite Left: Justin on a long, long journey, El Faro.

Opposite right: Titi de Col showing his style.



JUSTIN ANDERSON, SIPMAN, TITI DE COL



foothills to the Andes – the 20,000-foot rain-blockers that lay beyond, separating this arid beige world from the green complexity of the Amazon. I took notice of all the roadside memorial shrines, crossed myself, and thought about being the only one in the car wearing a seatbelt. Clearly, this was no place for faithless pussies.

As we entered the outskirts of Paijan, we turned off the highway into some complicated and crowded backstreets. I detected a degree of tension in the Spanish exchanges between Pedro and our driver. I took another chug on my bottle of red-flavored electrolyte and looked at Justin. “This place is dangerous,” he translated. It seemed like a mixture of small furniture-making shops, light industrial sheds, stray dogs, and carnival midway. We humped over a couple of speed bumps and headed west, through an expanse of refreshing green agriculture and large fenced compounds with guard towers and armed men at the gates, to Puerta Malabrigo. The green fields smelled fresh and familiar as we passed mango, avocado and papaya trees. A large sign welcomed us to the longest left in the world.

I saw the pier, the same pier I saw in the Google Earth photos a few weeks earlier on my laptop at home. As we turned into the frontage road along the bluffs south of the pier, the lines of surf unfolded ‘like pages in a book’. The waves were head high or better, and there were at least 20 surfers dotting the lineup from the point to the pier. The waves were fast-reeling peelers, typically makeable and plentiful. I took a Cipro and another chug of red stuff and hoped for a toilet in my immediate future.

We ran into the Brits, Irish, and Aussies we saw up at Pacasmayo. We all checked into Hotel Chicama Beach. Our rooms overlooked the hollow inside section, and the swimming pool was clean and full. The sideshore current was moving at about two knots, which made paddling out somewhat unpredictable. The wave period was about 12 seconds, and I found it a bit

I DETECTED A DEGREE OF TENSION IN THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN PEDRO AND OUR DRIVER. I LOOKED AT JUSTIN. “THIS PLACE IS DANGEROUS,” HE TRANSLATED.



tricky getting outside before the current dragged me back north past the ‘Sphinx Toes’, sand slides, and the staircase on the bluff just below the low-rent hostels next to our hotel. The younger paddlers on their thin little boards duck-dived out with enviable ease as I shamefully tried to navigate my longboard 50 yards out towards the backlit beauties that remained exhaustingly just out of reach. After a couple compromised rides, I hit the pool, took a shower, and ate another powerbar.

The cement walls of the hotel lanai amplified the sound of the waves, and the flies on the ceiling above my bed tried in vain to launch attacks on me as I watched them from the safe side of my mosquito-net cover. The restaurant upstairs served up more of the excellent fish, fried yucca, rice, and fresh juice we had grown used to in Peru. Compared to Maui everything was inexpensive and uncrowded. The Cipro was starting to work. The waves eventually dropped to handicap-access proportions. The beach became deserted – totally empty, except for happy dogs, cormorants, and the hunters.

The surf at Chicama was full of marine life. Birds in huge numbers dove on schools of fish offshore. Near shore, delicate, well-dressed little beach birds worked the shallows below our hotel for the tiny fish hiding from the bigger ones in the surf zone, which were hiding from the bigger ones a little farther out. The cormorants

ruled the bird world from the bluffs to the boats anchored outside the pier. They owned the offshore rock at the point near the takeoff spot.

Early one morning I watched a hunter in a red jacket killing cormorants with beach rocks. The severed heads and wings scattered along the shore were evidence of the subsistence skills of recent hunters. Justin saw one hunter at the top of the sand-slide nailing the birds with a small wine bottle filled with sand as they flew out from above the bluffs fronting the lineup. Each stunned, duck-like seabird would tumble to the beach, and the guy would run down the steep sand, nail it with well-thrown rocks, and lop off its head and wings. The biodegradable carnage amidst the beautiful red marble beach rocks was a vivid scene to walk barefoot through on the way out to the point.

Later that morning Justin was paddling back out as I ended a long small wave off the sand slide. Ten feet beyond me was a cormorant swimming in the surf zone and coming toward me. I was intrigued by this bird’s proximity and said something like, “Hey there, buddy,” when Justin said, “He looks like he’s going to attack.” Yeah, and then I saw it in his eyes. This guy was pissed. We scrambled away as, I swear, I felt a nibble on my leash. The rest of that session we watched that bird on the inside, waiting to launch a vicious can-opener attack on anyone who ended up nearby. I knew seabirds sometimes live as long as 70 years, so perhaps this guy had lost a lifelong mate to the red-jacket killer. Perhaps my red wetsuit top was a trigger. Who knows?

Next day Justin and I decided to grab the last of the shrinking swell. As we approached the roosting rock and were about to paddle out, we saw two crouching humans wading through the waves towards the rock. Suddenly they climbed up and started wailing on the sitting ducks with handfuls of rocks. The pissed-off cormorants launched into the surf, congregating right where we were about to paddle out. Standing in ankle-deep water, looking at these birds scattered



Left to right: El Duke was here? Trainyard dogs and the girl in the pink dress. Fiesta time in Pacasmayo. A day at the races.

throughout the take-off spot, we don't know what to do. Then a clean little set rolled through, and some of the birds caught a couple waves, pattering along in the whitewater, going left. Eventually our feathered foes dispersed and we paddled out, trying to emanate bird-friendly vibes.

Justin wanted to get a Peruvian guitar, so he headed out to Trujillo one afternoon with Mick and Claire, the Irish couple I met in Pacasmayo, who were now staying at our hotel. Claire lost a bag in transit and needed to make a police report for the insurance. It was too late to catch the bus back from Trujillo to Chicama so they sprung for a taxi to make the hour trip back to the hotel. They were told by the local police not to travel that route at night. They were advised to stay overnight in Trujillo, but they found a driver with a tiny little car with poor suspension who was willing to chance it. Apparently, the road from Paijan west to Chicama was noted for nighttime attacks, and robberies by gangs who descend on vehicles slowing down for the speed bumps. Evidently the cabdriver had never driven to Chicama. While Mick and Claire slept, Justin rode shotgun, directing the driver through the gauntlet, bottoming out on the speed bumps in full combat mode. It was close, but no guitar.

MARCH 5

A couple of days later Justin and I went back to Trujillo, where he found a magic guitar. Safely back in Chicama, we walked out into the desert night with a stray dog, to the bluff beyond the hotel, where we heard the nocturnal Peruvian breeze playing chords as it blew across the six strings, resonating with the Amazonian wood of the native instrument.

With the waves only knee to shoulder high, but still perfect (all day), and the wind just a soft, warm offshore, Justin and I realized what a good thing we had been given. Our non-American gringo chums had left us for their respective corners of the British Empire, while the Chileans were southbound and the Brazillions had headed back east. We feasted on the leftovers for four days

The people at the hotel were always cool. Stray

WE WATCHED EMPTY WAVES, HOPING THEY WOULD SECTION AND BE UNMAKEABLE ... JUST TO RELIEVE THE GUILT OF WATCHING THEM.



dogs would escort us to the point and play with bird wings while we surfed. We found a tiny store nearby that sold yogurt drinks. We drank Peruvian beer at night and Peruvian coffee in the morning. We watched empty waves, hoping they would section and be unmakeable ... just to relieve the guilt of watching them, while we lounged on the lanai over our continental breakfasts and protein bars. One evening the sun reflected off some atmospheric mirror and became two suns setting in two separate places. Never saw that before. The sky seemed preternaturally quiet. Very few aircraft seemed to fly over this part of Peru.

There were certain things I liked about Peru that will probably never change, which was a comforting thought. We got what we came for and then some. Pedro kept leaving messages at the front desk, inquiring about when he should come to take us back to Pacasmayo. We had unfinished business to wrap up there. We had to hit the library. We needed to know more about 'El Duke' ... and about the trains.

MARCH 7

The library in Pacasmayo was supposed to be open. It was a Friday afternoon. We had to catch the bus back to Lima on Monday morning. The old man at the door wouldn't let us in. "Lunes, Lunes," he repeated. So Pedro took us on a desperate and dangerous mototaxi run north to San Pedro De Lloc, the nearest town, but ... no library open there either. A funeral procession passed, and the same threnodic brass and drum music as in Pacasmayo could be heard over the

traffic, halted for its passing.

Pedro's mototaxi raced west into the setting sun, as we headed back to Pacasmayo, wondering about the history of the town and the legend of El Duke.

On Saturday morning, we caught a ride out to the point and surfed back to the Los Faroles hostel in time for a late breakfast. This little oasis was a great deal, and the food was excellent.

We decided to check out the old train station and were surprised to find it was now a gallery of local artists' paintings. The attendant in the gallery was Manolo Lau, and he had painted many of the pictures on its walls. We asked him if we could take photos, and he said, yes. And then he told us about the trains and the history of Pacasmayo. We asked if we could go out back to the train yard and take photos, and he suggested we come back at four when the lighting would be better.

When we came back, Manolo had a camera, too, along with an old man named Daniel, who looked more homeless than the famous dam engineer he turned out to be. Manolo locked up the huge entrance door, while we waited by the opposite door, which led to the yard. On the other side of the old glass windows three large, angry dogs barked and charged the door. Manolo handed everyone a three-foot-long varnished walking stick. Justin asked what the sticks were for, and Manolo answered, "For the dogs." Apparently he didn't mean to fetch.

As we gingerly opened the door, a small barefoot girl in a pink dress appeared in the yard; she pointed to the ground, and the dogs laid down. Under the watchful eyes of the vultures perched on the roofs above us, we walked around snapping photos, keeping an eye on those train-yard dogs.

MARCH 8

Gran Prix, Pacasmayo style: The bell tower was tolling above the old church, and I noticed the waves at the point beyond. We had opted for a day at the races instead and were now sitting in the retreating morning shade on an old adobe wall above a curve in the road, a critical turn on today's race track. An emergency crew had

stationed fire extinguishers every 50 meters or so, parking their ambulance and fire truck near the gnarly zone below.

Once the race-cars started their qualifying runs, things got interesting. Random dogs darted between the souped-up little sedans as they screamed up and down the boulevard below. The high, rocky embankments above the course were packed with local families, red-vinyl mototaxis, and beautiful Peruvian women, many wearing that ubiquitous lime-green color we dubbed Lima lime. Vendors selling water, beer, and snacks perused the crowds lining the course as the morning sun climbed higher, slowly erasing the shade as Justin kept buying the beers. I watched the shadows of the vultures move like black cursors across the road and through the crowd perched on the crumbling cliffs above the racecourse. We picked our favorite cars and grew nervous about the apparent carnage that was sure to come.

But the race ended without bloodshed. The fire extinguishers, ambulance, and baton-swinging constables disappeared as the population converged on the drivers at the awards ceremonies. Packs of mongrels searched for shade or morsels dropped by the vanishing spectators. Justin and I watched the distant whitewater march relentlessly northward from the lighthouse. It was rideable, but not quite Chicama.

It seemed like everyone from the hostel was

going to see Grupo 5. It really was a big deal. I was surprised to see our expedition grow to two taxis full. Someone cautioned me about pickpockets in the crowd at the fairgrounds. But the prevailing 'aloha' of the Peruvians was humbling and overwhelming.

One thing that Justin and I found interesting was the extra portion of personal respect afforded us in situations where police, security guards, or even bandits were involved. We were treated a bit like VIPs, whereas locals might be searched, scrutinized, or hassled. It was almost as if an undeserved degree of status was given us, which was almost uncomfortable at times. It took a little getting used to. Peruvian aloha.

The concert was excellent. Most everyone danced and sang to every song. The toilet was just a wall at which a dozen guys stood, backs to the crowd, pissing their beers away. The whole affair was like one huge family party. On the way



back to the *hospedaje*, I wondered why I was leaving this beautiful place ... and I was going home to Maui!

After a couple of hours of sleep, we enjoyed our last breakfast in Pacasmayo. The morning bus to Lima charged \$4 more for first-class seats on the lower level. Justin snoozed, while I stared at the Peruvian landscape for the last time. By the time we got to Lima, it was dark. The big city chaos was hectic and noisy. We checked into a hostel in Miraflores and ate a late supper. The crowd was rather cosmopolitan and sophisticated. The power went out in our hotel, and everyone was issued a candle. The night air resonated with the din of humanity. Horns honked and sirens wailed incessantly. I fell asleep while a group of drunken Aussies and Brits argued outside over whether Mick Jagger could sing. "Kids," I thought as I drifted into dreams of dangerous ducks and surreal surf.

Waiting to board the LAN flight from Lima to LA, I started feeling kinda funky. Sixteen hours later I was sitting in the doctor's office in Upcountry Maui getting another dose of Cipro. Yeah, the guy was right. Peru is not for pussies.

Semi-retired eco-warlord, carpenter, and single dad, Steve Sipman lives in Haiku, Maui. Surfing since 1964, he graduated from University of Hawaii in 1976 (BA in psychology, emphasis in marine mammal behavior).



MARIA EUGENIA ASPILLAGA

JUSTIN ANDERSON, SIPMAN

Chicama – time to get up and get on it. You can just make out the boat racing the surfer on the wave in. Looks like they're on their way to pickup the surfer in the middle of the picture who didn't make the fast section heading into the right side of the frame. Note that you can't even see the point on the left side of the frame – shows how far down the line they are already.



Huanchaco Pitu

Do surfer's have an umbilical spiritual attachment to the world's longest left and the deserts that surround it? Mark Krakowizer, and many others, would certainly like to think so.

BY MARK KRACKOWIZER

Our Tahitian friends say that Raiatea is the 'pitu' (a spiritual and geographic bellybutton) of Polynesia – the place where all Polynesian people originated from. While our Hawaiian brothers and sisters might disagree, perhaps our *pitu* as surfers is actually in the Huanchaco area of Peru. After a recent return to Chicama (about an hour north of Huanchaco, which is about six hours north of Lima), the place many call the world's longest left, we definitely felt a spiritual homecoming and a recurring pull to keep returning to this place, where waveriding has been practiced for more than 2,000 years.

There are remnants of Peruvian civilizations here that predate the Incas by over a thousand years and whose iconography includes pictures of waveriding and ocean themes on frescos and pottery dating back to 400 BC. Today, you can look out at the ocean and see fishermen and their kids riding waves on the same ancient reed craft – termed *caballitos de totora* (little horse of reeds) or Tup – as you break from great

surf, while eating some of the best *cebiche* in the world. These famous *caballitos* of Huanchaco (individual reed boats for fishing and riding waves into the beach) are the focus of 1965 World Champion Felipe Pomar and others, who are working with to certify the people of this area as the first known waveriders.

All along the surf-rich Peruvian coast you see the swell lines stacked to the horizon – exactly the way they are depicted on the walls of historic Chan Chan, the remains of an archeological site near Huanchaco, carved over 800 years ago. The importance of ocean, tides, and sea creatures is evident in the amazing art and archeology throughout the region.

The Peruvians have been “on it” for a very long time. Glenn Hening, a founder of the Surfrider Foundation, is quoted (in a recent book about Miki Dora) as saying that “as far back as 3,000 years ago, the Peruvians venerated waves, they considered them the

most tangible reference point for divine power on the planet.”

From this central coastline a rich surfing culture extends up and down the coast, encompassing the iconic Club Waikiki, the hot young kids of Lima, ex-world champions like Sofia Mulanovich and Pomar, and, far to the north, barrels that equal some of the best I've seen in many years of surf travel. There is a reason that Ricky Grigg and other legends are still coming back to Peru over 40 years after the 1965 World Contest.

Chicama holds a special place in the development of almost every surfer in Peru. The older ones all have stories of roughing it to catch Chicama – donkeys eating their food and waking them up, no food in the only shop, etc. – suffering the place as only surfers will. Since the break was first discovered in 1965 (see “Chicama Discovery” sidebar), nearly every Peruvian surfer has a story about a trip to Chicama. In fact, this is one of the few surf

KRACKOWIZER



breaks that has had a successful song written about it – *Chicama Way*, a big hit in Peru in the early '70s by the popular group, Traffic Sound.

The barbaric conditions of Chicama are legend. “Chicama makes you Peru,” remarked one surfer. Ten years ago we (my surfing wife Tonina and I) named the restaurants in town ‘no hay’ because no matter what you ordered they didn't have it. Cocaine was cheaper than beer; theft and no food were constant companions. Today, *no hay* no longer applies. Peru is holding. Not just waves but yoga camps, archeology, safe places to stay (in surf camps or without surf guides), world-class surfers, and heaps of surf.

LIFESTYLE ASSIST

Recently, after nearly a decade away, Tonina and I returned with our five-year-old son Dane to revisit friends and waves that we had been thinking about for a long time. Despite many trips through the South Pacific, Indo, South America, and homes in both Byron Bay and Mexico, we still found ourselves drawn to the long lefts of Peru. We considered that last trip to Peru probably our best surf trip ever – for quality of waves, people, and cost.

When we arrived in Lima, we spent a couple days in town, then booked a flight and headed north. We rented a house near one of the best breaks in Peru and settled in for a few weeks of family beach time and sessions at the tubing left reef down the beach.

In Lima and up in the north, we heard about a new luxury hotel at Chicama that was equipped with a Zodiac to ferry you back to the point after surfing the longest lefts in the world. We were planning to check it out but had some *big* misgivings about the boat thing. Having a boat had always sounded like the way to surf the point without the brutal long walks, but our dislike for polluting machines in waves (other than non-paddle situations) made us a bit apprehensive. But the word from our friends was: “It doesn't bother anyone, and it dramatically improves the experience of surfing Chicama.” So, this was in the backs of our minds.



Discovering Chicama

By Chuck Shipman

In 1963 and '64, I attended Santa Barbara City College in California. Along with Paul Strauch and others from Hawaii, I surfed Rincon virtually every day it broke over a foot. I really liked that wave, so when I was in Peru, following the 1965 World Surfing Championship at Punta Rocas near Lima, I was determined to find a similar pointbreak. I purchased a poster-sized map of Peru that I hung on the wall of my pension in Miraflores. I knew that the largest and most consistent swells came from the southwest, but so did the prevailing winds. South of Lima, the coastline fell away to the east, so the winds would be more and more onshore. But north of Lima, the coastline seemed to offer real possibilities that waves might refract around a point resulting in offshore or side-offshore winds. These ideas were confirmed on a number

of long surf expeditions with Joaquin 'Shigi' Miró Quesada, the Barreda brothers, and the Hanza brothers. We traveled as far south as Pisco or Ica and north as far as Paramonga or Trujillo. Studying my map, I focused on three large, hook-like headlands that projected out from the coast north of Chimbote, Peru. The first point was near Viru, the second bore the name 'Chicama', and the third was Pacasmayo.

Eventually, my tourist visa expired, and I left for Miami on APSA, the Peruvian airline. I knew that the surf was running about 2 meters (5ft, or over head-high) with bigger sets, and as the plane lifted off, I noted the appearance of the surf at familiar spots. Fortunately, a severe El Niño episode kept the fog offshore, and the views from the plane were exceptionally clear. The plane followed the coastline, and I had my map in my lap. Eventually, I was able to recognize Bermejo and Viru.

Then, a little later, the Chicama headland appeared, just as it was on my map. I asked the stewardess to check our location with the pilots just to be sure.

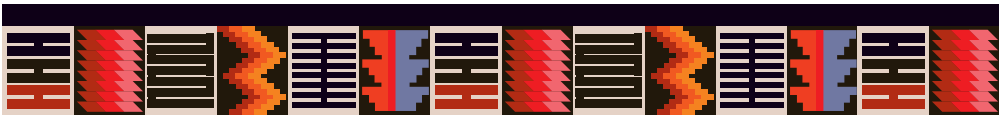
I clearly remember watching a set of waves refract around the point ... and my excitement that the waves peeled without sections the entire time that the surf was visible to me. Six months later, flying back in Peru during the El Niño, I clearly saw Chicama again – with a single wave peeling the whole four or five minutes of the aircraft's passage.

This wave became an obsession, and I was able to convince Miró Quesada, Peru's first surfing photojournalist, to mount a long expedition north. The usual crew of Barredas and Hanzas joined me on the quest for the 'perfect point surf'. We found small waves with offshore winds at Bermejo and Viru, but they were slow and powerless. Going north, we searched for



Google Earth democratizes the view that Chuck Shipman enjoyed way back in '65.

GOOGLE IMAGES



some hours for a road or jeep trail to Puerto Chicama, but without result. Further on, we surfed head-high waves at Pacasmayo and Chiclayo, but with onshore winds and sloppy conditions. It was a long trip, and our crew returned to Lima somewhat disappointed.

On my final departure in 1966, the sky was cloudless again, and I was able to view the extraordinary point for the last time. I was very lucky to have seen it breaking three times, as it is less consistent than most other surf spots. Back in Hawaii, I corresponded with Miró Quesada, Flaco and Gordo Barreda, and Ivo and Gringo Hanza quite a few times, always with the mantra 'Chicama'.

It was perhaps two years later that another expedition, mounted by Miró, finally found the unmarked, unpaved road to Chicama. I remember receiving an excited letter from the Barredas, telling how they had caught exceptional surf at the point. They said that Miró had filmed the first rider (Oscar 'Chino' Malpartida) on a

screaming wave with an 8mm camera, running out of film long before Chino pulled out of the wave – almost to the pier! As surfer's do, they kept the location a secret, and for a number of years the code name for this spot was 'Puerto Chuck' (pronounced chook).

About three or four years ago, Felipe Pomar told me that a Peruvian surfer was nosing around some old warehouses at the 'Casa Grande' sugar plantation, just north of Puerto Malabrigo. (The long pier at Chicama was for shipping sugar from this plantation, perhaps the largest in Peru.) In one of the warehouses, several old wooden surfboards were discovered. From the description, it sounds like they resembled Waikiki surfboards of the 1920s and 1930s. During this period, Hawaii was the leader in sugar production and the sugar planters supported an outstanding agronomy institute. I imagine that some Hawaiian sugar experts were recruited to work at Casa Grande and seeing the

outstanding waves, perhaps being ridden by fishermen on caballitos de totora, they put some local carpenters to work carving boards resembling those I left behind at the Outrigger Canoe Club. They were much better than we were at keeping secret the perfect waves of Chicama.

Epilogue: While attending the Travel Industry Management School at the University of Hawaii, I wrote a thesis that was a business plan for a luxury surfing resort at an undisclosed location, which happened to resemble Chicama. I received an 'A' for this paper from the distinguished hotelier and professor, Robert Burns (Regent Hotel Group). In 2007, an ambitious Peruvian hotel group opened 'a luxury surfing resort' at Chicama (www.waterwaystravel.com/peru). Perhaps, we will someday find ourselves fortunate enough to be guests there, sipping Pisco Sours, sampling ceviche, and talking about the old days ...

Aloha and adios, Chuck Shipman

After a few weeks in the north we were ready to move on to our planned surf exploration of the Galapagos Islands. However, a check on the Internet showed a unseasonably large south swell headed our way, and that could mean Chicama. The Galapagos could wait.

As it turned out, we made the right surf decision – one of the best in nearly 30 years of surf travel. In this case, it was a rare convergence of a big, off-season south mixed with a large north swell – a combination some say had not been seen since the mid '80s.

When we called Marino Costa, one of the partners in the new hotel, he told us that it would be a bit crowded at the in for the weekend, as a group of Brazilian WQS surfers, magazine guys, and Peruvian pros would all be coming in for the swell. In response, we stepped up our plans to get in a few days ahead of the crew.

After a late-night arrival and pickup from the local airport, we found the hotel fairly empty and a massive improvement over the \$2-a-day primitive concrete room we'd rented the last time we were at Chicama. Marino's place is a

I dropped in and pulled into an overhead barrel. Many turns, a couple more cover ups, and nearly 1 km later, I kicked out.

top-of-the-line surf destination. There are guys to take care of your boards, two types of sauna, a workout gym, and, of course, the boat. We lined up an early morning session with the boat captain and hit the sack after a gourmet meal. They definitely *hay* at Hotel Chicama.

Morning arrived and three of us headed out in the Zodiac with two boatmen. Tough to describe the sight, heading out to the point, watching these incredibly long, empty lefts, feeling the unusually warm, no-wetsuit ocean temp. The pilot, a young local surfer named Delmar, told us to wait while we idled outside the peak at the point.

As usual, the rip was running strong down the point and since there was nobody out, we waited until a set came to jump out at the right time. After an, "Okay, now!" from Delmar, we were over the side. After a couple of strokes, I dropped directly into a steep wall and pulled into an overhead barrel. For quite a while, I could hear the boys in the boat hooting. Many turns, a couple more cover ups, and nearly a kilometer later I kicked out – completely blown away, legs hurting, and wondering how I was

going to be strong enough to keep this up for another week or two. At that moment, I figured maybe we'd never leave ... especially when the boat picked me up and drove for about ten minutes to get me back up the point, at which point I was dropped off for another ride!

CHICAMA-RAMA

The wave at Chicama has five very long sections. But the surfing is mostly done at the last three points: The Cape (an outer point), The Point (the longest wave of the group), and El Hombre, which can peel all the way to the pier in the center of town. I have no clue as to how long the wave actually is, but on the right swell you can ride it from the Cape, kick out, catch one at the Point and, if you're really lucky, link up with one at the El Hombre section. Any one of these rides might well be the longest of your life.

However Chicama is not always paradise, as reflected in this excerpt from my 1999 journal:

There were more good days at the points, but the merciless, biting cold, offshore wind began to grow old. Particularly when in the water waiting for infrequent sets, then a classic wave would come. Starting at the outside point, the set would slowly move down to the point we were surfing. When it came you would fight the offshores to catch it and avoid a 20-minute wait for the next one. Once up, a 30-50-second battle with the strong wind would begin, trying to connect the small wave sections without getting blown out the back of the wave. However, at the end of the wave, you would be thoroughly stoked just on the length of the ride. The ride would be followed by a walk back over the sharp rocks in raging offshore winds. The place inspires a classic love-hate relationship. The effigies on the point, bones everywhere along the beach and endless rock formations, all give the Chicama a spookiness that has to be experienced to be understood. Most people stay nearby and come to Chicama when it's big everywhere else. Staying there is only for the truly hardy.

While you can still rough it in Chicama, staying at the famous El Hombre hostel, there are now a few nicer hotels. The pinnacle is the new Chicama Beach Hotel where we stayed. Marino's place was a new experience for us in surf travel. I haven't been to Tavarua, but I don't know of any other surf hotel where you can get this level of service, with facilities geared specifically to surfers in the style of the original Club Waikiki. For example, services include: waxing your board, rinsing and drying rashguards and wetsuits, massages geared to surfers, lots of good food, clean water, good cocktails. After a long day in the water, the two saunas (wet and dry, with eucalyptus branches for opening the lungs and pores) and indoor Jacuzzi were almost necessary to prepare for another day of leg-busting long waves.

After that first long day of surf, the good

waves kept up as the tribe began to assemble for the advertised swell. The arrivals included a couple of Brazilian crews, Magoo De La Rosa with the team to produce his weekly television show, and lots of traveling Americans and Aussies. It's such a great feeling, like the excitement when a 'rare bird' makes its appearance, when the conditions come together for the right swell at a classic spot, and it all starts to happen. The surfers arrive (travelers, pros, locals from other towns), the photographers start setting up, and the waves begin to build.

In this case, the excitement built and lasted for four days. Boards were broken, bodies bruised, and countless turns and barrels were recorded in the surfers' memory banks and on the flash cards of the photographers. And then, just as suddenly as it arrived, the swell faded, and the travelers packed up ... leaving smaller conditions and peace their wake. The smaller conditions didn't

last, though, as it never really dropped below 3-4 feet!

TO BOAT OR NOT TO BOAT

Surfing from the boat is an incredible way to surf the point. After you kick out from a kilometer-long ride, the boys pick you up and run you back out, saving a half-hour or longer walk up the beach and out over the rocks. In concept, it may not seem very soulful, but in reality it's an unreal way to surf Chicama. We came as skeptics and left converted. The boat helps drive your wave count way up and, teamed with mega-long rides, makes for an unreal session.

The drivers mostly stopped at the Point, short of the Cape, allowing surfers who were walking back from their rides to have a few waves at the Cape before they hit the Point. As the waves are so long and the overall area quite large, the boat

Right: The Cape section outside Chicama point.



Below: Moto taxi – the post-surf Pacasmayo ride home. You can catch one back up the point after a long ride at Chicama, too.



Chicama Sunset. Is there time to run back around for one more? Probably not – it is a very long walk.





Left: El Capitan DelMar racing the boys out for another long one before sunset. Del Mar, a hot surfer whose father is a local fisherman, is the boatman at Chicama Surf Resort. His knowledge of the break and respect for the local fishermen and surfers is key to making the boat scene work smoothly.

Below: Old School Tattoo. The feet of the exquisite mummy known as Señora de Cao, a Moche Queen whose tats would be the envy of many a Polynesian

As the waves are so long and the overall area quite large, the boat is not much of a distraction.



is not much of a distraction, as long as everyone is in a good rhythm.

A few of the locals also rent a Zodiac service to groups of visiting surfers who are staying elsewhere. One day, a group that rented the boat kept taking off too deep and getting shut down just after takeoff. Then they would get picked up by the boat right away and dropped right back outside to do it again. Our crew typically picked off the long ones or tried to paddle back out against the rip to get another one if we didn't make the first section. These guys didn't get it, though, and soon stink-eye from a few surfers escalated into a tirade from a local against the way the boat driver was handling the situation.

That was when I realized that, as usual, the boat wasn't the issue; it was the people using it. As long as respect is flowing, there were never any issues. I asked a few of the locals, and they didn't have any problems with the boat. "There

are plenty of waves," was the answer. I hope it stays that way, because the situation has the potential to get a bit hectic if more boats start showing up.

We continued to surf for the next two weeks; it dropped to the point that we were surfing the Cape for a couple of days, but otherwise the point continued to reel down the line for a few more classic overhead sessions.

On the smaller days, we fit in trips to see the archeological sites. A great combo – surf in the morning and in the afternoon get our mind blown by the new discoveries that had been found since we were there in '99. For instance, at the Huaca de la Luna, an entirely new wall to the pyramid had been discovered, with countless images on it. At El Brujo, our favorite site, the Wiese Foundation unearthed a mummy of a Moche queen who has been dubbed 'Señora de Cao'.

'La Señora', as she is known to the

foundation staff, is around 1,400 years old, but her teeth are perfect, and you can still clearly see her tattoos – sea creatures, serpents, and other elements. A truly amazing find, this little queen (who could easily check the surf from the top of the pyramid), in homage to the ocean's bounty, was laid to rest in 32 layers of fabrics and golden treasure. The foundation is building a museum at the site to display the Señora along with her beautiful ocean-themed tapestries and jewelry.

I'm sure I logged over a year's worth of linear surfing in my two weeks at Chicama (and I surf pretty regularly at some long waves like the Pass at Byron and Lennox Head when we're living in Oz). Eventually, we had to leave. By that time we were saturated, my son had the mostly female hotel staff wrapped around his finger, and my wife had covered more wave distance than she had in the previous five years.

The Chicama Valley is special for more than just one of the longest lefts in the world. Aside from at least three other long, consistent lefts and a few beach breaks, the area has some magnificent archeological sites representing two distinct cultures, the Moche (around 500 AD) and their successors, the Chimu (around 1100 AD). As a surfer, the sites are particularly compelling due to the symbols of the *cabbillitos de totora* (little horses of reeds), sea creatures, and sea birds. The valley is rapidly gaining a reputation as the second Cuzco (the jump-off spot for the fabled Machu Picchu and other sites).

ANTONIO, MUMMY PHOTO COURTESY OF FOUNDATIONWIESE

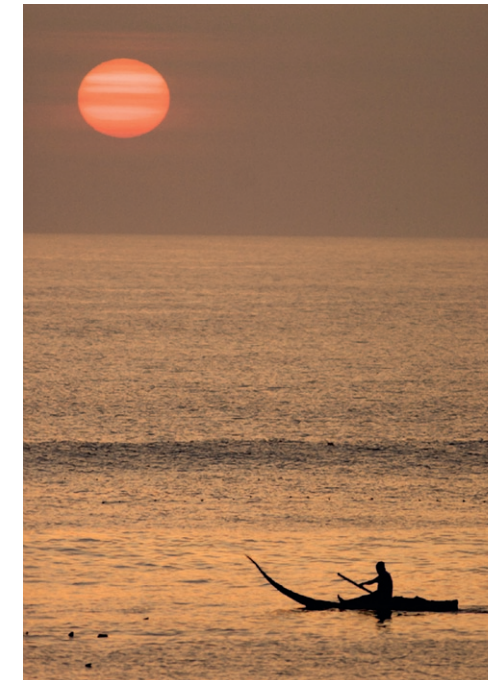
The environmental awareness of the earlier inhabitants was clearly amazing. Many Moche temples are still standing, while nearby churches built by the Spaniards lie in ruins. Other cities built by cultures 200 years after the Moche have been washed away, but due to good planning and an understanding of their environment, the Moche temples have survived countless El Niños in much better shape than their successors.

The Moche pyramids contain large carvings of prisoners being led to castration, watched by nobles and surrounded by images of pelicans, fish, manta rays, and other sea creatures. These images, mixed with savage heads with waves for hair, make for pretty fascinating glimpses of an ancient culture. Amazingly, the colors are still vivid since the cultures that came after the Moche covered all the frescos and pyramids with dirt to obliterate any signs of previous rulers and gods. The Moche themselves even put a new layer of carvings over the previous ones every hundred years. Always positioned near great surf, these archeological artifacts are must-visits!

After a bit of downtime in Lima, we headed up to the Galapagos as planned. What went on there is another story for another time. On the way home we had to route through Lima for a few days. We caught up with friends, hung out at Club Waikiki, tried to catch a few waves, and witnessed the preparation for the upcoming ISA World Masters Championships.

One of the best spots in Peru is Herradura, a

break often compared to Uluwatu, but due to its urban location in central Lima, it's typically very crowded. Thus, most of our friends were not keen to deal with the place when I wanted a dawn patrol partner for our last morning in town. Despite this, I couldn't leave Peru without a shot at Herradura, where I had surfed some classic lefts the last time through. So, after a pre-dawn ride from downtown in a taxi, I found myself standing on the rocks staring at an



inconsistent, almost empty lineup next to a couple of shady characters at the bad end of an all-nighter. Not what I had imagined, but since the taxi was already gone, I jumped in through the rocky shorebreak. The water was much colder than the north, and it put even more doubt on my decision throughout the long paddle out.

Luckily, a few bumps appeared. When the first set came through, I got the last wave. It lined up nice and long ... like you draw on your schoolbook ... and I pulled into the fabled Tecera (the third section) and into my best barrel since Chicama. Didn't come out, but I managed to get a few more before the tide killed it. As I made my way back to the hotel, you couldn't have wiped the grin off my face with a stick.

Peru has always been very good to us. Muchas gracias to all our good friends for a great trip. It won't be another ten years before we return again.

Note: For more on the *caballitos de totora*, look for the 2005 documentary, *The First Wave* by Dax Pointon and Melissa Ramirez (Humanoid Productions). 🐾

Mark Krackowizer and his wife Tonina (known collectively as KrackaToa) provide webcasts and digital media services throughout the Pacific Rim. They currently split their time between Northern Baja, Mexico and Byron Bay, Australia.



Tup, a cabbillito de totoro surfer blending the centuries.

TTT BE COOL