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TRAVEL | AUG. 3, 2022

## A Not-Too-Planned Trip to Lima and Lake Titicaca Ceviche lunches, alpaca knits, and remote peninsulas.

By Tessa Tran  
As told to Monica Mendal

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Photo-Illustration: The Strategist: Photos: Tessa Tran

*Everyone knows that person who spends weeks sniffing around travel blogs, going deep into Tripadvisor rabbit holes, collecting Google docs from friends of friends, and creating A Beautiful Mind-style spreadsheets to come up with the best vacations and itineraries possible. In this recurring series, we find those people who've done all the work for you and have them walk us through a particularly wonderful, especially well-thought-out vacation they took that you can actually steal.*

When Tessa Tran, CEO of accessories line Chan Luu, and her husband began thinking about their first big trip post-COVID, they knew they wanted something new and unknown. "We had never been to Peru," Tran says, "let alone South America." They decided to look into flights and booked their tickets only two weeks before the trip. "Peru has always been on my radar, specifically its rich biodiversity, from the Andes to the Amazon rainforest to all the way to the coastal regions," she says. While there were certain bucket-list experiences Tran was excited about, like visiting Lake Titicaca and checking out the food scene in Lima, they didn't make any concrete plans ahead of traveling. "Whenever I visit somewhere new, I like to stay put for at least three nights to get to know the area," says Tran. "I don't love having a packed itinerary with plan after plan. I like to wander and see where the day takes me." The one caveat to spending a week 12,500 feet above sea level? "Altitude sickness is a real thing." Here, Tran shares her favorite local craft markets, morning tennis spots, and the Andean chowder she now re-creates at home.

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DEAL OF THE DAY  
**Our Favorite Alex Mill  
Sweater Is \$75 for Cyber  
Monday**

### Day 1

#### 4 a.m.: Check into the hotel

We touched down in Peru at 4 a.m. — flights were not the most convenient.

## Day 4

### 1 p.m.: Shop for alpaca knits and antique spoons

We took a direct flight from Lima to Puno. From the airport, Hotel Titilaka was about two hours away. I asked our driver (booked through the hotel) if he knew of any local craft markets on the way. He brought us to a market selling handicrafts and produce. I picked up two alpaca knits, slippers, a hand-embroidered jacket, antique silver wedding pins made from spoons, and a few knit llama ornaments for my nephew.



### 4 p.m.: Check into hotel on Lake Titicaca

While the hotel was checking us in, we took a stroll around the property. The hotel is located on a remote private peninsula on the lake. The next neighboring town is an hour away. This location has it all: vast open fields, water, farmland, and the most magical sunsets.



### 6 p.m.: Sip coca tea



Coca leaves are sacred to Incan culture and treated like gold. We had tea several times a day to help with the altitude. Lake Titicaca is 12,500 feet above sea level — higher than Machu Picchu, which is approximately 7,900 feet. Throughout the day we were drinking a lot of water, coca tea, and muña (Andean mint) tea, plus getting a hit of oxygen here and there. Dealing with the altitude was a small price to pay to experience Lake Titicaca.

## Day 5

### 11 a.m.: Make pom-poms

The hotel arranged a pom-pom-making lesson with local artisans who stop by once a week to deliver locally made textiles and ceramics. I learned how to create traditional pom-poms, made from vegetable-dyed alpaca wool. While sitting with the artisans, we learned the placement of their hat signifies their marital status. If it's on the top of the head, it means that the woman is married. If the hat is on the side, it means she is single or a widow.



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Before they left, we bought a few textiles and a ceramic bread basket (which was used at the restaurant), all made in their village a few miles away.



#### 4 p.m.: Cook up some lima-bean chowder

I found myself ordering the Andean chowder five times out of the four days in Lake Titicaca. It is made with quinoa and lima beans, both staple ingredients of Peru and grown on the property. I loved it so much, the chef invited me to cook with him to prepare dinner service. I learned how to make the Andean chowder and quinoa salad, which I frequently make at home now. My husband caught me adding notes in the dining room after the lesson. While the food was amazing and over the top in Lima, I much preferred the food near the lake. It is rustic and simple.



### Day 6

#### Noon: Stop by Taquile Island



combos I never would have thought of.

On one of our last days, the hotel arranged a boat ride over to Taquile Island, which is located on the Bolivian side of the lake. The island is home to traditional weavers. The clothes in Peru are so refreshing. The women were wearing bright color

### Tessa's Peruvian packing list



#### Disposable Tea Bags for Loose Leaf Tea

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I dehydrate my own herbs and flowers to make tea on the go. I prepack bags of tea to sip on the plane or in my hotel room early morning or late evening.

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