



## A Very Different Journey

In this newsletter , I share with you a wholly unique, standalone travel experience from my epic overland odyssey in South America, back in 2009. A continent that I traversed up, over, and across, wandering through seven of its 12 countries, spanning some 8-9 months in total (and not working a single day).

When I originally sent this as an email many years back, this one piece got more replies than all my other travel emails combined!

Before we get there though, for future reference (and to make it easier to find this newsletter in your inbox), I've added an emoji in the subject header. Just look for the book stack 📖 in the upper left-hand corner when you want to find it again.

I'll have an exciting announcement to share in an upcoming issue (maybe the next one), so make sure you stick around to find out.

In other news, this newsletter is now open to sponsorship opportunities. I'm also creating a small community block, which I'll add in the next issue. In that section you can share your great news, creative endeavours, select events – for free!

For more information on how to sponsor this newsletter I've affectionately dubbed *The Journey*, or to have your news or event listed in the community block, reach out and hit reply to this email.

Finally, for those who mentioned upon signing-up that they can't wait to get my award-winning novel, here's three places you can purchase it in either ebook or paperback version. Simply click your button of choice.

**Okay, ready to dive into a journey of a totally different kind? Then read on...**

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## **A Travel Experience Unlike Any Other!**

To me travel is many things. From seeing new sights and countries, visiting new places and cultures, to trying exotic foods or mingling with the locals, you can gain a very different perspective on life. It's also about being open to the more unusual and unique adventures that you can never have back home.

I don't know how much you know about San Pedro, but here's a little info for you:

- San Pedro contains a number of alkaloids, including the chemical mescaline.
- In most countries it's legal to cultivate, but in countries such as the USA, Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, possession, cultivation, and/or consumption, is illegal and highly penalised.
- The cactus is ingested to invoke a spiritual healing state.

Now I have never been into drugs, never understood the fascination really. I have always been high on life. Sure I've dabbled here and there, including once trying Ecstasy and having the perfect, most blissful trip. But overall, I'm just not interested. Never done LSD, meth, or heroin, and not about to start. I get more of a kick from a block of chocolate than I ever would injecting my arm full of toxins.

So that's why this 'San Pedro experience' will be remembered for a long time to come.

While in Peru, my girlfriend and I decided to take the plunge and try out San Pedro in Cusco, whereby we had met a great French/South African couple who shared with us some of their amazing experiences. Because they also lived in Cusco, they knew a Shaman who'd been practicing for years.

### **TEMPLE OF THE MOON**

**The ceremony was to be held at a house up in the Cusco hills, right near the Incan Ruins called 'Temple of the Moon'. I couldn't think of a more ideal place.**

As it is not only a medicinal plant but a highly revered spiritual one, you needed to come with a couple of questions with the aim to learn from it. I came asking two things:

1. Improve my knee after years of post ACL problems.
2. Bring back that fun, carefree spirit, which had wandered off.

The small, intimate ceremony began with Lesley (the Shaman) introducing herself and talking us through a brief history of the plant, its use among ancient indigenous tribes and how they revered it, and her own experiences during her training to be a shaman. Lesley also told us how she had been ritually cooking and readying it the night before in preparation for our initiation.

She then walked us through what we may experience while under its influence, things to be aware of and mindful about, and how to simply trust and let go, before we were then handed our very own glass of liquid San Pedro to drink.

After swallowing down the glass of this thick, sludge like material (similar to Aloe Vera but thicker & dirtier), the taste was only ever going to be one thing – disgusting! We had to wait 45 minutes (without throwing up) for it to be absorbed into our system for it to take full effect.

After the elapsed time, the two girls of the group (one being my girlfriend) did their best not to throw up, while I moved into a reclining lounge chair to sit and be, before San Pedro took hold.

### **HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED NEXT!**

**At first colours and shapes swirled about not making sense. It was like having kaleidoscope vision.**

I saw an image of my mum (I needed to reconnect with her), but then I saw lots of bright, yellow flowers from within the garden of the property we were on. However, it was the sunflowers that stood out the most, with their happy, smiling, child-like faces beaming back out at me. I took it as a sign of my fun, carefree spirit was returning.

As I sat there it seemed easy to drift in and out of reality. First I saw my girlfriend from behind a vivid purple fence, on all fours trying hard not to vomit. Then I noticed all the small pot plants and other array of gardening paraphernalia nearby.

**When my mind drifted back outward, the colours I saw were amazing. Luminous yellows, dazzling pinks, vibrant purples. It was like Earth was telling me, "Hey, check me out. I'm brilliant!"**

At this point I moved across to a low slung hammock and rather than lie in it, I chose to lay across it, with my head resting on the grass. I looked up at the sky, where the kaleidoscope vision remained as the clouds spiralled about above me.

I had a constant smile on my face, accompanied by tears of joy that streamed down my face for no explicable reason. Impossible to explain.

I continued to lay observing the clouds, when an opening started to appear among them in the shape of a heart. Not your typical perfect Valentine's Day thing, but a heart shape nonetheless.

I looked on in wonder it as it slowly opened up and got bigger and bigger until it eventually revealed a sunny blue sky behind it. I am convinced it was telling me to open up my heart, something I don't do enough (or didn't back then).

**THE MORE I LOOKED UP AT THE SKY, THE CLOSER I FELT CONNECTED TO EARTH.**

**I could see and feel the clouds and trees and mountains all breathing in complete unison, as if the Earth was one, where everything surrounding me was a giant pair of living, breathing lungs, inhaling in, exhaling out. Absolutely everything was connected!**

I felt truly privileged to witness this phenomenal, mind-blowing spectacle. It's a moment I have never ever forgotten in all the years since.

To this day, it remains one of the single greatest travel experiences of my entire life. Only an unusual cave event in Brasil, and a recent astral travel encounter, rivals it.

With my girlfriend struggling and conscious she was, I felt I needed to check up on her, even though I knew our Shaman and her caretaker, Miguel, were doing so. Yet at the same time, I wanted to allow her the space in which to enjoy and bask in this wholly unique experience and bizarre state of mind I felt in.

Feeling a sense of duty, however, I checked in on her. We held each other tight, at one point crying over what I do not know. But I needed her to experience her own thing and let go, just as I had been doing. So I left her in the room to hopefully find herself in this moment and enjoy the adventure.

### **Letting go was the first lesson I took from San Pedro.**

I need to not think like I have to control everything. It was a welcome lesson.

After somewhat of a cool, cloudy day, the sun seemed to come out at the perfect time for me, because I needed to feel its warmth and energy.

I stood up, hands by my side and faced the sun, feeding on its radiance.

Lucent and barefoot, I then strode slowly outside, and away from the house and protection of the ceremony minders, fully feeling the ground beneath my feet (something else I needed to do more of).

Once outside, I was unsure which way to walk and it wasn't until I saw or imagined a white horse, that I remembered the Shaman's advice:

**"Follow your heart, trust your instincts."**

But before I moved off towards it, I had to reassure myself that no, it wasn't a unicorn. Convinced it didn't have a horn, I began to walk forwards.

It was weird but I felt like there was a path of sunlight being lit up right in front of my feet. I knew at times I was walking across discarded rubbish and over animal faeces but it was something, that again, I felt I needed to do. I had to see beauty in everything. Plus, it felt like the sunlight was directing me to exactly where I should step, illuminating my path.

Before I could get too caught up, a few dogs came at me from one of the nearby houses, but I shooed them away. I was determined to follow this path of light and get to this white horse.

It was only then when I looked up that I saw another horse, a plainer palomino, which was tethered and tied up. For some reason, I now felt I needed to go this horse instead, so trusting that, I began to venture in the direction of it.

**I have no idea at this point if they're real or not, if I'm hallucinating or not, or even whether I am safe or not, but I move closer towards the horse anyway.**

Inexplicably, the white horse has come over to the palomino horse and is biting through the rope, pulling at it like it wants to free it. I just stare in awe for a while at the struggle before my mind drifts over to the woods some distance away, where I notice a clearing.

I walk off for it instead now, but different dogs come at me. This time the female owner nearby has to hold them back. She says in Spanish (which sounds Martian to me), "*Where are your shoes?*"

I reply, 'I'm ok, I don't need any, I am being guided.'

One of the nearby workers, who is whitewashing some houses with a group of other men, calls out in Spanish, "*The gringo's on San Pedro,*" before they all burst out laughing. But I'm not bothered because I'm enjoying my escapade.

### **I sit on a lone rock, soaking up the sun's rays and reflect on my trip.**

Eventually at some point I decide I better make my way back to the house. Bad move! The same aggressive dogs the local woman held back earlier, come at me again, only this time she's not around. I'm not scared though, and simply stand my ground. But one comes in real close and nips at my right leg.

The woman hurriedly returns and scares them off and cannot apologise enough. '*Lo siento, lo siento, lo siento,*' she says. I reply, "No worries, it's just a scratch," as I pull up my jean's leg to show her but it's much more than a scratch.

The little fucker has bitten me hard and left his mark. With the lady doing her best to hold the dogs at bay, I decide to make my way back to the house.

### **BUT BEFORE I GET THERE...**

### **I hear the thundering of horses and notice that the palomino horse which was tied up, is now running free alongside the white one, as they gallop right by me.**

I freeze in wonderment.

Another signal? Real or am I delirious? I have no bloody idea. I take it as a sign though, that anyone or anything tied down can truly be free if they want to be.

I finally find my way back to the house to show the bite. My girlfriend doesn't believe me until I roll up my pant leg. But it's real all right, and it's bleeding!

A friend of the Shaman's, and a St. John's medic who's been watching over proceedings, pours alcohol on it, wraps a bandage around my calf, and tells me I'll be fine. And I know I will be.

I tell them of my pilgrimage outside, the path of sunlight, the "non-unicorn" white horse, the dog attack, both horses running free right beside me, and all.

### **I'm in an excited state, most likely rambling but I feel like I make the most perfect sense.**

San Pedro has now also made me incredibly hungry, so I wolf down whatever gets put in front of me, as we all exchange tales with each other, although their stories seem a lot more subdued compared to mine.

Eventually night falls and the four of us get to stay the night in a little bungalow on the property, which is usually not the norm. I am so grateful our French friend,

Amadine, is friend's with Lesley, because I cannot imagine heading back down to town in this condition.

For some reason it's up to me to cook. It's difficult but I succeed. I even manage to get the log fire cranking. A feat in itself!

### **WE WANDER OUTSIDE TO LOOK UP AT THE STARS, WHICH IS A TRULY ASTONISHING SIGHT.**

**At this altitude, and away from all the town lights of Cusco, it's an extravaganza of the highest order.**

With San Pedro lasting 10-12 hours so far and counting, and in this heightened state, they twinkle and shimmer more glittering than I've ever seen them before.

Under the influence of San Pedro, the night sky is like billions of sets of Christmas lights, all flashing and blinking their greens, yellows, reds, whites, and blues everywhere. It's utterly amazing.

Somehow we all make it to bed about 12 hours after first ingesting San Pedro, but not before watching the film, *The Hours*, which stars Meryl Streep, Julieanne Moore and Nicole Kidman. If you don't know it, each character magically morphs into the other at various points throughout the film. Let's just say it messes with your head as you watch one woman seamlessly transform into another. It's not the most ideal movie to watch as you're spacing in & out.

It's a cold and disrupted sleep but eventually after some 16-20 hours, my San Pedro experience is finally over.

#### **And here's what I learned:**

1. To let go (not try to control everything),
2. My fun, carefree spirit is very much alive,
3. I need to reconnect with my mum (we don't have a very close relationship),
4. The Earth, clouds, trees etc all breathe as one (one of my most memorable moments of all time),
5. Be sure to feel the earth beneath my feet more often,
6. There is beauty in the ugliest things,
7. Anything or anyone tied up or down can be set free,
8. I have to open up my heart more,
9. No matter how grey or cloudy overhead, there'll always be blue sky eventually.

I'm sure there were more but these lessons stood out the most during my wondrous San Pedro escapade. I have taken them with me through my life since.

Despite other numerous and fantastic travel exploits I've had in the years that followed, this completely unique experience has stayed with me forever.

\* As a footnote to this story, the next day I walked back outside to where I had been the day before and get this, there really was a white horse and a tethered palomino. Tied up or not at the time, real or imagined, nothing will take away from what I encountered in the shadows of The Temple of the Moon, high up in those mountains of Cusco, Peru.

**If you made it out this far, , I'd love to hear your thoughts. Hit reply and tell me your most unique and memorable travel adventure story.**

## BOOKS

**Fiction:** [The Hangman's Daughter](#) by Oliver Pötzsch

Set in 17th century Bavaria, Germany, this tale is both different and refreshing.

**Non-fiction:** [\\$100M Offers: How to Make Offers So Good People Feel Stupid Saying No](#) by Alex Hormozi

A self-aggrandising book on supposedly how to make people empty their wallets.

## FILM

[How To Please A Woman](#)

A fun, witty, semi raunchy, and downright enjoyable, little Aussie comedy.

## MUSIC

**New song:** [Pájaros en la Garganta](#) by NNara

A Colombiana princesa with a sweet voice of gold.

**Old song:** [De Usuahia a la Quiaca](#) by Gustavo Santaolalla

A breathtaking instrumental that comes via The Motorcycle Diaries soundtrack.

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## Next issue: 'What's in a name', ?

Until then,  
Warm hugs, smiles & thanks.



**Mark T. Rasmussen**

**(Award-winning author & writer)**

**ps:** Remember, if you want to find this newsletter easily again, just look for the book stack 📖 in the upper left-hand corner of the email subject line. Cheers!

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