

# Time to reflect on my great adventure

I AM back home now, so this is my final report of this series. I hope you have enjoyed reading it as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

## BACK FROM BOLIVIA

I CAN'T believe it's all over. The flight home was smooth and uneventful, and I was greeted, predictably, with rain at Heathrow.

It was only when I crossed the Severn Bridge for the first time in ages that it dawned on me that my adventure was at an end.

Since my return, Santa Cruz has endured some pretty heavy rain and suffered a bit of flooding because of it.

That was much needed, though, because everything was so dry that the firs were becoming difficult for the authorities to control.

It probably makes the rivers more picturesque, too! I guess it will also bring the mosquitoes out in force, something which I won't miss at all!

Now it's time for me to look back on the past three months and reflect on what I have experienced.

The main obstacle was the language barrier, which forced me to improve my Spanish dramatically. Santa Cruz is a very undeveloped area of Bolivia from a

## Last letter from (South) America

by  
RUSS PEARCE



tourism aspect, and so very few people spoke English.

That suited me, though, but while my Spanish has improved, my use of my mother tongue has deteriorated somewhat! My typing has suffered too, as the keyboards over there were very different.

There wasn't even an "@" key, I had to use Alt-64 all the time, which made e-mails difficult. Even simple things like the "/" key were moved to different places on the keyboard.

## CROSSROADS

It seems strange now to get into a car and drive, having not done it for three months. The other day I sat as a passenger on the left hand side and it felt most peculiar. Hopefully I haven't picked up any bad habits from Bolivia. Crossroads were the worst as it was a war of attrition.

As cars approached a crossroads, horns were beeped and headlights flashed, but it really was a case of whoever kept their nerve the longest had priority. It made for some heart stopping moments in taxis.

Some people will ask if the whole experience has changed me. I am a great believer that we learn a little from everything in life that we do,

and so the answer has to be yes. I am certainly much more aware of how much money we all have, compared to the average Bolivian family.

I have also seen how happy some people are with their lot and I would like to think that I won't complain about things so much. Except in restaurants, though!

The service I had everywhere in Bolivia was exceptional, even in the "cheap and nasty" places.

## PIRANHA

It's also pretty hard to pick out a highlight of my trip as there were so many. Catching the piranha on the River Paraguay was certainly a high point, while Lake Titicaca is probably one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen.

The Salt Lake at Uyuni was undoubtedly the most unusual sight I have witnessed and cycling down the 'World's Most Dangerous Road' was incredibly exhilarating.

Of course, there were bad moments - there always will be - but one bad bus journey, the occasional upset stomach, and the loss of Trish's bag and passport were not as inconvenient as they could have been. It all adds to part of the experience of travelling.

And so I return to life in Bridgend and university starts again next week. I have noticed that some things change, while others stay as they were.

Walking through Bridgend, I see that we have yet another mobile phone shop and another sandwich bar.

The roadworks are, of course, still there and the bus station has still not opened. The call centre on Brewery Lane remains empty and 'To Let' - and the traffic lights on the Ewenny Roundabout are still in the news.

## SUNFLOWER

I was pleased to see that the sunflowers in my garden thrived, one was more than 10 feet tall, so I guess there was plenty of rain in my absence!

I would like to thank everyone who has been following my journey and to express my sincere gratitude to The Recorder for publishing my work. It really has been a pleasure to write about my time in Bolivia.

Finally, then, a reminder once more that I will be showing off my photos and talking about my trip at the Hi-Tide Inn, Porthcawl, on Wednesday, October 13. If you are interested in coming along, please give Denise a call on 01656 773060 for further details.