**TRAVEL RECOMMENDATIONS**:

*WELCOME TO THE HUANCAVELICA MEDICAL MISSION*,

We are almost ready to go, please read carefully and apply as you need these suggestions, born from years of experience. In the city main Square, our Hotel sits next to the Cathedral Church. Its name is Hotel Presidente. Three stars. The best in town. There is internet access in the lobby and many rooms.

Your daily lodging is covered by the Mission, but the additional personal expenses are NOT. Cost of lodging is about 55 dollars per day.

Nights are cold ( around 40 F ). You need warm night clothing. There are very few if any single rooms, so all of us share with some one or several volunteers. Some us like to hike the mountains around 6 am., 60-90 minutes before going to the Hospital. You need warm clothing for that too. And gloves. We must be at the Hospital by 8am.

Bring comfy clothing. Surgical uniforms are recommended to all of us to be used in the Hospital but are not obligatory. Look for them at Costco. The attached list is a compilation born from 15 years of traveling in Medical Missions and it befits this particular one.

Medical Care: We will always have local medical assistance, of course. But accidents happen, anywhere at any time. It is safe to have a travel insurance to cover expenses outside USA. AMA offers a very inexpensive option for that.

Burglary: There is very low incidence of criminality in Huancavelica. It is higher in Lima, as in any large city. The hotel is very safe and we have never had any problem in five years there. However be very careful with your money, there is a safe box in the reception. There was never any food intoxication here.

We will travel by land many, many hours. Curvy roads. If you need it, bring some travel sickness patches for perusal.(Scopolamine). Do not try to exercise during the first 24 hrs of arrival. Altitude is 12,000 feet above sea level and your body needs to adjust its sensors and responses to the new environment. It is almost as high as half way to the top of the Everest. So, please, rest the first day of arrival.

MONEY: Peruvian Currency is the “SOL”, plural is “SOLES”, one dollar yields about 2.8 soles. Do not bring traveler checks, they are worthless here. Cash is the way to pay for things. You may get money from ATMs. Few vendors in this small city accept credit cards, but the hotel does. Your dollar bills MUST be perfect, not wrinkled, worn out or torn. Request your bank for new bills or they will be rejected.

SKIN CARE: bring sunscreen and face cream. Apply it daily. There is less cushioning from ultraviolet rays since the atmosphere is 12 thousand feet thinner than at coastal altitude. Also bring sunglasses. A jacket is useful for cool days and nights. You may buy woolly underwear very cheaply in the local stores and markets. Wool underpants cost around four dollars usually, one block away from the hotel.

TRANSPORTATION: A chartered bus will park in the Airport on Friday of arrival and take us to Huancavelica in a 10 hour ride. Slow, but safe. It is a comfortable bus and we only hire very safe drivers. The bus has a restroom only for urinary needs and a hostess who will provide us with drinks. It has air conditioning as well. There is no airport at destination. The train service takes additional six hours. The Mission covers the cost.

COMMUNICATIONS: There are public phones that will allow you to connect to USA. Inexpensive phone cards are very easy to obtain to this purpose then you may phone from you room or the hotel lobby. There are internet cafes all over at the cost of 50 cents per hour. Of course you may use VOIP, any of the current services, or electronic messaging.

ATTIRE: Casual. Avoid revealing clothing. Shorts are not to be used for several reasons: cultural, weather, and work within hospital. We prefer to use surgical uniforms to work, any color is OK.

FOOD: very good meals are the norm. Even vegetarians find appropriate meals. But Vegans may not. When you buy bottled water, avoid carbonated water or you will bloat, same for sodas. Daily meals cost about five dollars average. We try to have a dinner together in a restaurant at least once. Cost should run about 20 dollars max for a large menu.

AIRPORT TAX: when departing a cash tax must be paid, around 35 dollars.

AIRFARE: it is better to reserve early in April or March since peak season is between June/September.

We recommend TACA airlines and also Festival Tours Agency, phone # 714 221 6382 c/o Mrs Janet White, explain you travel with the PAMS Medical Mission lead by Dr. Kuon to get the best rates and also the group bookings.

HEALTH AND CULTURE: If you have cardiac or pulmonary problems, please do not come. You will get in trouble. Females in particular, but males who may be slightly anemic, are recommended to start taking iron supplement at least two months ahead. A higher level of Hemoglobin will markedly increase the tolerance to the low Oxygen pressures that rule at high altitudes.

This area does not meet the comfort and quality standard of hospitals/clinics/auxiliary tests in USA. IF you are not willing to accommodate, please refrain in joining us. The rule here is: no bitching, please.

We come to help, and if there are problems, to solve them today or later, that is our task. Local personnel only deserve our best efforts to assist them and make their environment, tools and methods improve thanks to our input.

Thank you for your understanding and good will. I assure you will enjoy this experience.

Dr. Ralph Kuon