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As crisis deepens, MPs tell Cameron ...

SPEND OUR FOREIGN AID ON BRITISH VICTIMS OF FLOODING

FOREIGN aid funds must be diverted to help flood-stricken areas, MPs said last night.

With appalling weather set to deepen the crisis in the West Country, politicians of all stripes called for a raid on the £11 billion overseas development budget. They said instead of sending the money to increasingly rich coun-

By **Tim Shipman** and **Claire Ellcott**

tries such as China and India, charity should begin at home.

'We send money all over the world now we need to give people down here the hope that they will get what they need,' said Ian Liddell-Grainger, Tory MP for flood-hit Bridgwater in Somerset.

'We should divert some of it down

here. We don't have to divert it forever, but we need it now.'

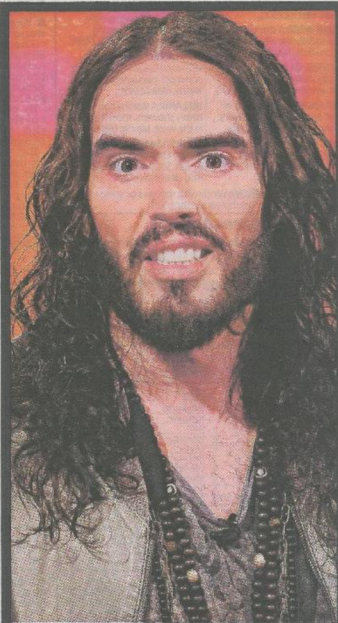
The calls came as:

■ Environment Agency boss Lord Smith was branded a coward for dodging irate homeowners as he finally visited the Somerset Levels;

■ The Labour peer repeatedly refused to apologise for failing to dredge the area and claimed he was proud of the agency's work;

■ David Cameron flew to Somerset

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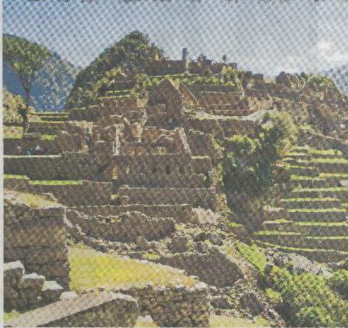


Obscene phone call: Comedian Russell Brand

Brand and Ross's cruelty will haunt me for ever, says Andrew Sachs

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HIGH AND MIGHTY



by Claire Ellicott

From river deep to mountain high, Peru can unleash your inner Indiana Jones

WHEN the explorer Hiram Bingham III reached the summit of Peru's Machu Picchu in 1911, he remarked that the view 'took his breath away'. I feel just the same after reaching the top – but that might say more about the altitude than the extraordinary vista.

The fine Inca stonework and temples that have made the site one of the New Seven Wonders Of The World is shrouded in mist and fog, but when it clears we are astonished. Orderly stone lines of the ancient citadel sit against a backdrop of rough peaks, with the winding Urubamba river below.

The view hasn't changed much since Bingham 'rediscovered' the site on a cloudy day in July 1911. Except, that is, for the addition of some 400 wide-eyed tourists.

I'd love to say that we reached Machu Picchu, situated 7,970ft above sea level, after days trekking through mountain-top passes. But we cheated and caught the train.

To compensate, we climb Huayna Picchu, Machu Picchu's bigger brother, which looms in the background of its more popular rival.

Only the first 400 trekkers to arrive at dawn each day are allowed up. Somehow we manage to slip through at about 11am.

It is an unrelenting slog to 8,920ft above sea level and you have to walk down Machu Picchu before you can go up again.

My boyfriend scampers about like a mountain goat; other poor souls are stretched out on the mountain by paramedics. I make the descent on my bottom. Our guide, Rogerio, tells us that plenty of people give up half way.

Slightly sore, we board the train back to the archaeological site of Ollantaytambo, in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, and are treated to traditional dancing. It is a relief to reach Hotel Tambo del Inka.

The next day we go to the even

Stairway to heaven: The Inca fortress remains at Sacsayhuaman

greater heights of Cuzco, the former capital of the Inca empire, which sits 11,200ft above sea level.

The city blends Spanish and Inca architecture and has impressive art galleries, museums and restaurants serving deep-fried guinea pig (cuy), with pan pipes and traditional dances by way of entertainment.

From here, we explore the titillatingly named Sacsayhuaman (you pronounce it 'sexy woman'), an impressive Inca fortress that offers panoramic views of the city.

Then we exchange Andean mountain tops for the Amazon and a three-night cruise.

catch piranha, luring the scary fish with beef and fish, then tossing them back.

As the sun drops, the deafening cacophony of howler monkeys, birds and insects increases to an almost unbearable pitch, but nocturnal trips are good for seeing wildlife.

On one, we watch as thousands of fireflies wink in the darkness; on another, we catch a couple of baby caimans (cousins of the crocodile).

We also go in search of the acouandus. These snakes, which kill their prey by constriction, can grow to 16ft. We snare a four-footer.

On the last night we watch the sunset while pink and grey dolphins play just feet away. What a finale!

TRAVEL FACTS

CXK & Kings (020 7873 5000, cousins@cxk.co.uk) offers an eight-day/six-night private tour in Peru costing £2,450pp. This includes return flights from Heathrow via Madrid with Iberia, internal flights, transfers and an overnight stay at Machu Picchu with a private guide and B&B. A three-night cruise on the Aqua costs £3,945 per person including one night in Lima, transfers, domestic flights and full-board service on the boat.

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son cartwheels in his bare feet. There are no menus. Fresh, wholesome food arrives throughout the evening. We dine through three courses and three bottles of wine, at the end of which we are charged less than £25 a head.

Back at Villa Mahal next morning, we are introduced to Buckler, who has red hair and strong arms. She offers guests massages in a cave under the restaurant. All four of us book in (not at the same time, thank goodness).

She has a menu of treatments, but whatever you order you'll get the same no-nonsense, full-body sunbathing. There's no contrived spa music. Just the sound of the sea. An hour goes by all too quickly. Indeed, that's the problem. A week flashes past dispiritingly fast. No



Wave-length: Villa Mahal's view wonder seasoned guests opt for a full fortnight.

TRAVEL FACTS

EXCLUSIVE Escapes (020 6025 3500, exclusive@exclusive.co.uk) offers seven nights' B&B at Hotel Villa Mahal in Kaliken from £1,250pp, including return flights from the private terminal at Stansted (or from Heathrow or Manchester), transfers, a Turkish bath and a day quiet cruise.

Romantic deals of the week...

SAVE £175pp

HONEYMOON HIGHS

TURKISHHOLIDAYS has just launched its honeymoon sale. Save £3,450 per couple for a week in Le Taha's Island Resort & Spa, in French Polynesia, staying in a sunset overwater suite for £3,335 per person. Or spend seven nights at Sugar Beach in St Lucia in a luxury villa with private pool from £2,765pp, saving £355 each.

Both deals include breakfast, flights and transfers. Must book between February 10-21, 2014 (01944 678 406, turkishholidays.co.uk/honeymoon).



SAVE £1000pp

SKI FOR TWO

VAIL in the U.S. has impressive back bowls and slopes for all standards. Ten nights' B&B accommodation at the five-star Lodge at Vail costs from £1,590 per person based on two sharing – down from £2,599 – including return flights and transfers. Departs April 8, 2014 (01273 224 060, sixsta@art.com/offers).