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'Machu My Picchu: Searching for Sex, Sanity, and a Soul Mate in South America' by Iris Bahr

By **BY SHAMONTIEL L. VAUGHN**
TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS | OCT 18, 2011 AT 9:40 AM

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FEEDBACK

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If you've never heard the term "TMI," you'll know exactly what it means by the time you've finished reading Iris Bahr's new book. But, in between her giving you too much information, there's a good amount of hysterical incidents that will make you look past some of the repulsive ones.

After six months of traveling in Asia, Iris heads back home and receives her acceptance letter to Brown University. She's already survived two years of service in the Israel Defense Forces, so going to an Ivy League school should be much more peaceful, right?

Wrong.

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Iris' colorful journey to college started off with her luggage . . . literally. She'll never have to worry about anybody stealing her suitcases while traveling considering her mother insists that there be 26 ribbons tied around the handle. Imagining a bag like that coming down the conveyor belt sent me on a giggling fit before she even reached the university.

Her first roommate is a field hockey player who is making it no secret that she is quite attracted to Iris. On top of that, two 18-year-old boys drop by her dorm room and do a victory dance when they find out Iris is old enough to buy them beer. College memories of aiding underaged drinking and making sure she's not groped by her roommate? Not going to happen. New roommate request.

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She ends up in a suite with "older roommates," who are 19, and, according to Iris, are two Asian girls named Julie and Mindy who look like "live breathing Hello Kitty dolls," a tall blonde named Katherine whose "expressionless face brings to mind plain yogurt," a wealthy southern princess named Mia who is "part Mexican, part 'Gone With the Wind'," and a Jamaican sprinter named Carla who is "a warm burst of Jamaican sunshine and the epitome of physical perfection, every muscle toned the way God intended before he invented food and rest."

After trying to find out which group she fits in with, she learns some interesting lessons: "Plain Yogurt" (who Iris won't call by her real name, Katherine, for the rest of the book) seems too busy getting her head banged against a wall while having sex in another room and can't be bothered with befriending Iris.

Meanwhile Iris accidentally ruins a relationship with a European boy named Carlos only to confess she doesn't like him, so she has to get out of that "friendship" quickly.

Next, Iris hangs out with a group of rich Korean students but figures out she's way too poor to hang out with them and their \$120 meals. Luckily, someone paid her bill, even though she'd only had two dumplings and a glass of water.

The "Hello Kitties" (Julie and Mindy) are too busy playing trombones and violins to hang out with Iris. Going to a frat party with Mia only hurts her self-esteem, considering none of the guys were attracted to her and Mia was too busy sucking beer from a tube peeking out of one of the frat boy's pant's zipper to realize Iris wasn't having a good time. Flip-flops, beer kegs and bad dancing just aren't Iris' thing. Carla seems to be the only one who she can have fun with.

Iris realizes for the first time that her booty is a perk while attending a BGO (Black Green Organization) frat party. Although one black woman is none too thrilled about her taking "our men away," Iris is too busy trying to figure out how black frats work. She doesn't want to get beat up for pointing out the similarities between slaves being branded and frat boys being branded. She is a big fan of the "boom-bap-bap" (the physical beats from the step show) and She's entertained by her fling Terrell, who enjoys playing cheesy R&B tunes and undressing super slow.

But as weird as the sex is for her initially, she's decided, "sleeping with a black man is like being in your own music video." So, she imagines herself in a music video, snaps her fingers to the beat of the songs, uses raunchy words along with him, and winks at her imaginary camera.

While some may be offended by the stereotypes, Iris is as quick to make fun of herself as she is other races, including wondering whatever happened to television star Balki from "Perfect Strangers," who she thinks had the "role of flamboyant immigrant market totally cornered."

While her college experience was the highlight of the book for me, she had plenty of jokes after her freshman year when she travels to Peru, Ecuador and Columbia.

Although she's terrified to fly, she finds a way to get through it: "turbulation," a combination of turbulence and a word for self-gratification. Yes, folks, this book is not intended for children. At one point, I wondered if 29-year-olds like myself were old enough for some of the graphic details included.

She travels with her associate Talia, who continuously leaves Iris to participate in travel experiences Iris doesn't want to. Iris is aware that their friendship isn't reciprocal, but she wants a companion to hang out with and Talia will do.

The rest of Iris' trip includes turning down cocaine, being accused of being high by a drug

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dealer who thinks she's too perky, trying to figure out how to sleep comfortably in a hammock, an emergency room visit, terrible restaurant meals, getting her menstrual cycle while resting with a man and a woman, and plenty of other TMI.

The incidents included in this book are the type of things one would expect somebody to hide for fear of blackmail. Instead, Iris puts it all out on the table for us to laugh until our stomach hurts or cringe from the moments women usually won't talk about (or even be in a situation to think about). Although I could've done without the menstrual cycles stories and wondered who she wouldn't sleep with (she's definitely not picky), the only other downside was the talk of depression and her parents' divorce.

The serious sides in this book, dripping with sarcasm and comedy, didn't quite fit. Iris talking about depression worked as well as making ice cream in an oven. It not only slowed the book down, but I couldn't get in the mood to sympathize with her because I was too busy cracking up from the funny scenes that came before the sad parts. Otherwise, this is the type of book that will put anybody in a good mood, and it made me miss college.

[Machu My Picchu: Searching for Sex, Sanity, and a Soul Mate in South America](#)

By Iris Bahr

skirt!, 256 pages, \$14.95

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