



PERUVIAN ANDES ADVENTURES

CIRCUIT OF THE CORDILLERA HUAYHUASH

10 or 11 days trekking
Grade: Hard

The Cordillera Huayhuash Circuit has been nominated in several guidebooks as one of the classic trekking circuits of the world.

The Huayhuash is a compact, rugged range of jagged, vertical summits, including the second highest peak in Peru, Yerupajá Grande (6634m), as well as half a dozen other peaks above six thousand metres. Every day on this trek, hikers are treated to awesome views of towering snow capped peaks, glaciers and turquoise-blue trout-filled lakes. There are 8 passes to cross on this spectacular trek, the highest (Cuyoc) at 5000m.



Cuyoc Pass 5000m

Note 1: Trek Start Point , Acclimatisation & Fitness: This is a hard trek and it is important that you are well acclimatised to the altitude before you depart from Huaraz to start the trek.

There are two different start points for these treks. Llamac at 3300m or Quartelhuain at 4200m.

Option One Quartelhuain:

On the first day when you travel from Huaraz to Quartelhuain 4200m by road you have an altitude gain of 1150m in a single day and on the first day trekking you cross a pass of 4700m. We recommend three days for acclimatisation in Huaraz, doing day hikes progressively gaining altitude to above 4000m to be well acclimatised for this trek.

Option Two Llamac:

The trek starts from the village of Llamac at a lower altitude of 3300m. On day 01 of hiking you walk up to Quartelhuain. This days hiking is relaxing and gains height gradually during the day and is a valuable extra day of acclimatisation. The hiking this day is on a road, but it is not a busy road, it is pleasant hiking with lovely scenery and helps with adjustment to the altitude before climbing up the first high pass the next morning.

Kathy from South Africa said: . The hiking was tougher than we expected due to the altitude but the 3 days of acclimatisation hikes were absolutely worthwhile and we would recommend the same for everyone doing this trek

It is important to have good physical fitness and be able to hike up to 2 to 3 hours to the top of a high pass each day during the trek.

Most trekking options in the Cordillera Huayhuash & Blanca should be considered to be physically demanding owing to the altitude (you are above 4000m for the duration of the treks) and the mountainous nature of the terrain. Trails on this trek are often steep – both ascending or descending and can be slippery & rocky in places. If you do not think you can enjoy this type of trekking, let us know and we can suggest some easier options

Note 2: Walking times are average hiking times. The altitude affects people differently. Some people will be faster than the indicated times and others will be much slower

There are two options below for a 10 or 11 day trek:

OPTION ONE: START AT QUARTELHUAIN 10 or 11 Days

There is one rest day for the 10 day trek option and two rest days for the 11 day trek option.

Day 1: Huaraz to Quartelhuain via Chiquián & Llamac by road

We drive from Huaraz to Chiquián, enjoying distant views of the awesome Huayhuash range from afar. From Chiquián we descend to a cactus-and-scrub environment and continue to the village of Llamac (3300m) and then into a wide U-shaped grassy valley with rolling hills and flanked by broad expanses of *quenua* (*polylepis* sp.) forest. We camp at Quartel Huain. (4200m)
6 hours drive, 174kms



Quartelhuain

Day 2: Cuartel Huain to Laguna Mitucocha via Cacanán Punta Pass

This morning we cross our first pass, Cacanán Punta (4700m). Here, at the Continental Divide, we sometimes observe the Andean Condor flying overhead. We descend to the Jalca plain and on to our camp at the beautiful Laguna Mitucocha lake (4220m), located at the foot of the stunning Jirishanka Grande peak, and those of its neighbours Rondoy and Ninashanca. If you have the energy, there's the option this afternoon of walking around the lake or up to one of the nearby hanging valleys. In 2013 season the local community have requested that groups do not camp next to the lake to protect the grass for their animals in the area. The campsite is now 15 minutes hike down river from the lake in a flat area
Approx. 12kms

6 hours' hiking.



Cacanan Pass

Day 3: Laguna Mitucocha Lake to Laguna Carhuacocha Lake, via Punta Carhuac Pass

We flank the Jalca floodplain then ascend south to the Paso de Carhuac pass (4650m). From here an awesome panorama suddenly comes into view; a row of Huayhuash giants: Yerupajá Grande, the second highest mountain in Peru, Yerupajá Chico (6121m) and Siulá Grande (6344m), of "Touching the Void" fame. From here we descend to our camp at the large Laguna Carhuacocha lake (4150m), with the chance en route of spotting Viscacha rodents among the moronic debris. From our camp we look directly up the lake to the peaks and ice fields of the famous Siula Grande, Yerupajá Grande and Chico and Jirishanka Chico. Approx. 12kms
6 hours



Carhuacocha Lake

Note: *If the weather is good and you are feeling strong, we can take an alternative and far more demanding route between the Laguna Mitucocha and Carhuacocha lakes via a 4800m pass, with great close-up views of Jirishanka Chica and a beautiful deep-blue high lake. There is no track to follow on the alternative route, and a short section of scrambling on rock has to be negotiated, so we only use this route for very fit and experienced trekkers.*

Day 4: Free Day at Laguna Carhuacocha for Rest or Day Hike

We spend an extra night in this idyllic spot to enjoy our spectacular surroundings. You could take a half-day hike around the lake, maybe taking in a hanging valley at the foot of Jirishanka Chico, or a day hike up to the three glacial fed lakes at the base of Siula Grande. Alternatively, have a rest day or catch some trout for dinner! (For the 10 day option, you can choose to take this extra day at Laguna Jahuacocha)



Siula Lakes

Day 5: Laguna Carhuacocha Lake to Huayhuash or Laguna Carnicero Lake

We leave Laguna Carhuacocha behind heading east, then turning up a side valley, ascend southwards towards the Paso Carnicero pass (4600m). It is not a difficult climb, although we will still feel the altitude. We make an easy descent to camp either at the isolated Laguna Carnicero (or Juraucocha) lake (4400m) or 30 minutes further on at another camp among a sprinkling of local farm homes in the open Huayhuash valley (4330m)

Approx. 12kms

5 to 6 hours



Carnicero Pass

Note: Weather permitting, we can take the alternative, more demanding and spectacular route via the glacial lakes of Siula and Quesillococha at the foot of Siula Grande, which then ascends, steeply at times, to a 4800m pass. The views of the mountains and glaciers during the ascent are very close and spectacular, and we often see avalanche ice floating in the lakes. The descent to Laguna Carnicero and Huayhuash takes us across - or around - a vast flood plain of "cushion grass". Those with sharp eyes may spot the graceful, elusive Vicuña - wild relative of the Alpaca - which live in this region. 7 to 8 hours.

Day 6: Huayhuash or Laguna Carnicero to Viconga camp

We climb to the Portachuelo de Huayhuash pass (4750m) on a steady gradient. From here, looking southeast, we see a new collection of nearby snow peaks; this is the Cordillera Raura range and the nearby snow peak of Leon Huacanan. We descend to and skirt around the large Laguna Viconga lake – look out for Alpacas - before walking up the valley for ½ hour to set up camp (4480m). There are some, *al fresco open air* hot springs near Viconga, so a hot bath could certainly be appreciated!

Approx. 12kms

6½ hours.

(Bring a swimsuit + 5 soles entrance fee)



Lunch Stop at Viconga Lake



Hot Springs Viconga

Day 7: Viconga Camp to Quebrada Huanacpatay Valley via Punta Cuyoc

Today we cross our highest pass, Punta Cuyoc, with a sustained uphill hike of 2 to 3 hours to a breathtaking 5000m. The panoramas here are breathtaking: to the southeast we see the sharply serrated ridge of the Cordillera Raura, and to the north, several of the giants of the Huayhuash range are seen from a new perspective. Sarapo (6127m) is also seen for the first time. The initial 50m of the descent is quite steep and loose, becoming easier as we continue descending quickly to the broad Quebrada Huanacpatay valley, where we stop for lunch. We then have a relaxing and easy hike down the valley to our camp (4300m).

Approx. 10kms

6 to 7 hours.



Cuyoc Pass

Day 8: Huanacpatay Valley to Huatiac Camp, via Huayllapa Village

This is a hard day because we have a sustained climb to camp late in the day. We begin by resuming our descent of the Quebrada Huanacpatay valley, culminating in a steep switchback drop off the Huanacpatay valley before turning west into the agricultural Quebrada Huayllapa valley (the first sign of crops for over a week). We continue until, just before the tiny village of Huayllapa (the first since Llamac and last before we return to Llamac), we begin a hard climb in the afternoon of about 2 to 2½ hours to our campsite high up on the flat pasture of Huatiac (4350m).

Approx. 15kms

7 hours



Donkey Train to Huatiac



Huayllapa Village

Day 9: Huatiac to Laguna Jahuacocha lake, via the Tapush & Yaucha Passes

A long, tough day, today sees us cross two passes. First we complete the climb to the Punta Tapush pass (4750m), then descend past Laguna Susucocha for an 1 to 1½ hours before turning east and climbing again to the Punta Yaucha (4800m) pass. During the descent the peaks of Rondoy, Jirishanca, Yerupajá, Rasac (6017m) and Sacra come into view. We follow the Quebrada Huacrish valley to its confluence with the Quebrada Jahuacocha valley and descend on zig-zags to our picturesque camp at the head of the beautiful Laguna Jahuacocha (4150m). Across the lake from our camp we enjoy one of the best panoramas in the Andes; the west face of the highest peaks in the range rising dramatically skyward. There are Jirishanca, Yerupajá Grande with its vast snaking glacier, Yerupajá Chico and Rondoy.

Approx. 20kms

8 hours



Laguna Jahuacocha



Laguna Jahuacocha

Day 10: Walk from Jahuacocha to Llamac via the Llamac pass. Drive to Huaraz

After an early start and gentle descent for an hour, we start our gradual climb to the final pass, Pampa Llamac (4300m), from where we have our final views of much of the Huayhuash range. Then it is a long descent back to the Llamac valley and the village of Llamac.

Approx. 14kms hiking

5½ to 6 hours

In Llamac the bus will be waiting to take us back to Huaraz and your hotel for that long-awaited hot shower!! We arrive in Huaraz at about 06:00pm.



Donkeys Crossing River Jahuacocha



Llamac Pass

Day 11: OPTIONAL EXTRA DAY

We stay at Jahuacocha. Rest Day and maybe try trout fishing? We can take an optional day hike up to Laguna Solteracocha (4120m) and then further to Sambuya Pass at the base of Rondoy Mountain (4750m). Or if you want a demanding hike we can climb up Cerro Amarrillo Peak 5000m for views over the whole Huayhuash range and down into Quartelhuain where we were the first day of trekking. This is a tough day hike and on the top you walk along an exposed ridge for a short way, and there is a short part of the descent on shingle scree but it is worth the effort for the breathtaking views.



Sambuya Pass

OPTION TWO: START AT LLAMAC 10 or 11 Days

This option has an easier start, with a hike from Llamac to Cuartelhuain which provides one day extra hiking for acclimatisation before crossing the first pass.

There is no rest day for the 10 day trek option and one rest day for the 11 day trek option.

Day 1: Huaraz to Llamac via Chiquián by road

We drive from Huaraz to Chiquián, enjoying distant views of the awesome Huayhuash range from afar. From Chiquián we descend to a cactus-and-scrub environment and continue to the village of Llamac (3300m) where we set up our first camp. 4 to 5 hours drive.



Llamac

Day 2: Hike Llamac to Cuartel Huain

We walk gradually up the Quebrada Llamac valley along the course of the Rio Llamac, passing through the small villages of Pocpa and Pallca. In 2005 a new road between Llamac and Cuartel Huain was completed, and for much of the way we follow this rarely-used road; the scenery is so interesting & beautiful that the road is barely noticed anyway. Today is a relaxing hike with no steep ascents; it is also an extremely valuable extra acclimatisation day before crossing our first pass tomorrow. Beyond Pallca, the way opens up into a wide U-shaped grassy valley with rolling hills and flanked by broad expanses of *quenual* (*polylepis* sp.) forest. We camp at Cuartel Huain (4200m).

Approx. 18kms

6 to 7 hours walking

Day 3: Cuartel Huain to Laguna Mitucocha via Cacanán Punta Pass

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peak, and those of its neighbours Rondoy and Ninashanca. If you have the energy, there's the option this afternoon of walking around the lake or up to one of the nearby hanging valleys.

Approx. 12kms

6 hours' hiking.

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Approx. 12kms

6 hours

Note: *If the weather is good and you are feeling strong, we can take an alternative and far more demanding route between the Laguna Mitucocha and Carhuacocha lakes via a 4800m pass, with great close-up views of Jirishanca Chica and a beautiful deep-blue high lake. There is no track to follow on the alternative route, and a short section of scrambling on rock has to be negotiated, so we only use this route for very fit and experienced trekkers.*

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Approx. 12kms

5 to 6 hours

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Approx. 20kms

8 hours

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Approx. 14kms hiking

5½ to 6 hours

In Llamac the bus will be waiting to take us back to Huaraz and your hotel for that long-awaited hot shower!! We arrive in Huaraz at about 06:00pm.

Day 11: OPTIONAL REST DAY EXTRA

Take a rest day either at Carhuacocha Lake or Jahuacocha Lake

Hiking Hours & Kms Hiked:

Hiking hours are estimated times including rest breaks and lunch stop. Times are for our average groups based on past experience. Some people may be much faster and others slower.

Kms hiked are estimated.

Trek Roads: Access roads to and from treks are generally dirt mountain roads (not paved) and in some places can be bumpy. Road travel times are slower than you may expect for the kms travelled.

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