



PERUVIAN ANDES ADVENTURES

CIRCUIT OF ALPAMAYO to ULTA VALLEY

13 days trekking (option for 12 days)

Grade: Hard

Highest Point: 4850m



Alpamayo

Without doubt, the Cordillera Blanca range provides some of the most spectacular and varied trekking and climbing landscapes in the world. The range boasts more than 50 peaks of 5700m or higher of which some 20 surpass the 6000 metre mark. Huascarán is, at 6768m, the highest mountain in Peru while the pyramid of Alpamayo is arguably its most beautiful peak. We find, within this 170km-long range, the greatest concentration of tropical-zone glaciers on earth. Turquoise glacial lakes abound and vertical granite walls rise thousands of metres into the sky.

Our Alpamayo Circuit trek weaves a route through the heart of the Cordillera Blanca, crossing a number of high passes which lead us into valleys with hugely varied mountain landscapes. The focal point of the trek is the famous Alpamayo pyramid, once voted the most beautiful mountain in the world. We have the opportunity to see it from Laguna Jancarurish.

The expedition sees us cross the continental divide and, after a succession of stunning views, finds us camping at the amazing Avalancha Campsite (4650m) where we look down as avalanches crash from immense fissured glaciers on the flanks of the Conrahierbas massif. The trek ends after our final breathtaking pass at 4850m and descent to the Ulta valley.

Note 1: Grading *We have graded this trek HARD. Although the hiking is not technical, you cross several high passes via steep ascents. There are also some long, hard physically demanding days. The effects of altitude make the trek more demanding than a similar trek at lower altitudes. Before taking on this trek you should be well acclimatised to altitude, have a good fitness level and be comfortable with sustained uphill climbs on sometimes steep terrain and prolonged descents of two to three hours, as well as short sections on loose ground. The trek involves several nights' camping, sometimes in cold conditions.*

Most trekking options in the Cordillera 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



Ulta Mountain

Day A: Arrive Huaraz

Day B & C & D: Acclimatisation walks. **We recommend 3 days of day hikes for acclimatization for this program.** On the first day hiking you go from 2900m direct up to the second camp at 4300 metres, followed by a tough day where we cross 2 high passes, both above 4770m. 3 day hikes to altitudes of up to 4440m will help to ensure that you are well acclimatized and fit and that you will get maximum enjoyment from your trek.

Day 1: Drive from Huaraz to Hualcayan via Caraz. Greeting Party at Hualcayan

We drive north from Huaraz, descending the vast Callejón de Huaylas valley by its paved road. We first stop to visit the memorial to Yungay, the town completely destroyed by a rock, ice and mud slide which came from the flanks of Huascarán during the 1970 earthquake. There is also time for a visit to the busy market in the small town of Caraz. We then take an unpaved road up into the mountains to our first camp at Hualcayan village (2900m), where we will be greeted by the local children. 5 hours drive including stops, 116kms.

Day 2: Hualcayan to Wishcash

We set off on a steady, continuous climb up a zig zag path to our camp at Wishcash (4300m), perched high up the mountainside. We have terrific views across the Callejón de Huaylas west to the Cordillera Negra. At night we can see the sparkling lights of the villages high up in the Cordillera Negra.

Approx. 8kms

5 hours

Day 3: *Wishcash to Ruinapampa via Lake Cullicocha and the Osoruri pass*

A tough day. We climb on a generally good zigzagging path to the crystal blue Laguna Cullicocha Lake (4650m). From here we enjoy a magnificent panorama; the summits of Santa Cruz (6259m), Santa Cruz Norte and Santa Cruz Chico rising steeply at the opposite end of the lake. As we continue our ascent towards the first pass, Paso Osoruri (4850m; joint-highest point on our trek), views of lakes and peaks get better and better. We then descend and climb again to Paso Vientunan (4770m), before embarking on a long switch-back descent to the depths of the Quebrada los Cedros Valley. Nearby, the terraced fields surrounding the thatch-roofed crofters' hamlet of Alpamayo are right at the agricultural limit. Soon after, we reach our camp at Ruinapampa (4050m).

Approx. 17kms

8 to 9 hours



Cullicocha Lake

Day 4: *Ruinapampa to Cruce Alpamayo*

An almost flat few hours' walk up the beautiful Cedros valley. On the way, we'll see some ruined structures and ancient standing stones. Eventually, the beautiful pyramidal form of Alpamayo (5947m) comes into view. Camp at Cruce Alpamayo (4150m). From the camp there is a view of the Northwest face of Alpamayo

Approx. 6kms

3 to 4 hours

Day 5: *Extra day at Cruce Alpamayo for R&R, side trips and to enjoy panoramas*

We spend another night at Cruce Alpamayo camp to greater appreciate the beauty of Alpamayo. Climb up the nearby moraine overlooking the Laguna Jancarurish glacial lake for close-up views of the Alpamayo and Jancarurish (5601m) peaks (3 hour return trip from camp). If you feel energised, you can continue upwards and onwards towards Alpamayo Base Camp (4500m). 5 to 6 hours return. If you prefer, you can simply rest in camp.



Alpamayo



Laguna Jancarurish & Alpamayo



Day 6: Cruce Alpamayo to Safuna via the Cara Cara Pass

We cross the Los Cedros river and climb steadily to our next pass, the sometimes windy Cara Cara (4830m). This is the continental divide; all rivers running west head for the Pacific and those running east eventually reach the Atlantic, via the River Amazon. From here, there are great views back to the peaks of Alpamayo, Jancarurish, Quitaraju (6036m) and Laguna Jancarurish. We descend to a plateau and spend two hours on an easy traverse to a second, low pass (Mesapata; 4500m), before dropping to camp at Safuna in the Quebrada Tayapampa (4200m).

Approx 10kms

7 hours



Cara Cara Pass

Day 7: Safuna to Jancapampa

We cross the Huilca plateau, one of few locations in the Cordillera Blanca where Alpacas are found in abundance. We ascend a narrow valley to a rocky pass, Paso Pucajirca (4600m), from which, weather permitting, we are treated to awesome views of the Pucajirca Norte snow peak (6046m). For a short time the descent is on steep scree, but it soon levels out as we continue down a shrub-filled valley, flanked by *quenua* (*polylepis* sp.) forest. We pass the beautiful tree-fringed Laguna Sactaycocha and continue our descent through rich vegetation to the broad Quebrada Jancapampa valley. We camp near the head of the valley at 3600m; directly behind camp we have views of a huge hanging glacier and waterfalls cascading down a vast horseshoe of cliff hundreds of metres high. A lot of farming families live across the valley, and it is our first opportunity since Huallapa to meet friendly local people and curious, happy children.

Approx 14kms

7 to 8 hours



Cordillera Blanca Flowers

Jancapampa Camp

Day 8: Jancapampa to Lake Huecrococha, via the Tupatupa Pass

We pass adobe village houses and cultivated fields, then initially climb gradually, then more steeply, to the Tupatupa pass (4400m), with views of the big peaks of the Pucajirca/Rinrijirca massif to the west. Our trail descends via a small lake (tarn) into the broad Tuctubamba valley which we follow downstream before making a short half-hour climb to our campsite beside Laguna Huecrococha lake (3950m).

Approx. 12kms

7 hours



Local Home



Laguna Huecrococha

Day 9: Laguna Huecrococha to Quebrada Huaripampa

We flank the north shore of Laguna Huecrococha then begin a long, gentle traverse of the steep, forested Huecrococha valley. At the valley head, the ascent steepens and zig-zags to the Alto de Pacaraju pass (4650m). At certain times of the year the lupins that cover the hillsides are in flower, and the scent can be intoxicating. At the top there are magnificent views of many peaks including the jagged Taulliraju which, at 5830m, towers over the pass. A rocky descent brings us to the open Quebrada Huaripampa valley and our Tuctubamba camp (3950m).

Approx 7 ½ kms

7 hours



Lupin Fields

Day 10: Free day at Tuctubamba Camp. Possible side trip up to Punta Union

We spend another night at the same camp to make the most of our incredible mountain surroundings. We can opt to make a day trip to the Punta Union pass (4760m), from which we look directly down the Santa Cruz valley (the route of the famous Santa Cruz trek), across to the awesome Pucajirca massif. Directly above looms the intimidating west face of Taulliraju and, with good weather, we might see Artesonraju (6025m) to the west (5 hour excursion). Alternatively, you may prefer a rest day.



Punta Union Pass



Local Bar

Day 11: Huaripampa Valley via Colcabamba to Molino Pampa

We follow the main Santa Cruz trail down the Huaripampa valley. After 3 hours, we pass through the intensive farmland of the villages of first Huaripampa (to the west, Chacaraju's east summit rises sharply) and then Colcabamba. Today we pass many farmhouses and small settlements, and many children will come running out to see us. If you have space with your luggage, it can be nice to bring along pens or other small things to give to the children. We then climb steadily for about 1 hour to another village, Challhua, before traversing easily to our campsite at Molino Pampa in the Quebrada Keshu (3600m).

Approx. 15kms

7 hours.



Huaripampa Valley



Molino Pampa

Day 12: Molino Pampa to Avalancha Camp

Today is not long, but it offers dramatic scenery and swift height gain. We begin with a steady ascent of the Keshu valley on a good path. We pass through some amazing ancient *quenua* (polylepis sp.) forest until we reach an ancient moraine enclosing a glacial lake. At this point the climb steepens as we head up the valley's north side on a zig-zag path to a plateau where our high campsite, Avalancha (4650m) is located. Across the valley from our spectacular campsite there are almost continual avalanches from the glaciers of Contrahierbas (6037m) crashing into the lake below. We have a delicious lunch at the camp and spend an exciting afternoon avalanche watching!

Approx. 6kms

4 hours hiking



Avalanche Camp

Day 13: *Avalancha camp to Ulta Valley Bridge via Yanayacu pass. Drive to Huaraz.*

We traverse and ascend for one to 1½ hours to a high narrow ledge and on to a knife-edge pass. This is our last and most spectacular pass, Punta Yanayacu (4850m) and, hereabouts, Andean Condors nest and are sometimes spotted in flight. From here we have close views of the Chopicalqui and Contahierbas snow peaks. Then there's a short zig-zag descent on an initially steep path into the Canchagua valley below. We walk past lakes and again are surrounded by snowcapped peaks, including Contahierbas, the pyramidal Nevado Ulta to the south, and the highest, Huascarán (6768m), to the northwest. We finish the trek with a long descent through quenual forest to the beautiful Quebrada Ulta valley, where our private bus will be waiting to take us back to Huaraz.

Approx. 9kms

6 hours hike.

4 hours drive 60kms - 2 hours are on a bumpy dirt road & 2 hours on paved highway.



Pass Yanayacu

For a 12 day trek, omit one of the rest days



Ulta Valley



Cullicocha 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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