



PERUVIAN ANDES ADVENTURES

SANTA CRUZ AND QUEBRADA ULTA TREK

6 days trekking (with 7 day option)

Grade: Moderate to Hard

Highest Point: 4850m



Donkeys On Punta Union Pass

This is an awesome, medium-length trek in the Cordillera Blanca range, whose popularity is due to several spectacular mountain panoramas, views of crystal-blue lakes and the challenge posed by two high passes: Punta Union (4750m) and Punta Yanayacu (4850m), not to mention our last, breathtaking high camp on the Avalancha plateau. This trek offers an amazing variety of scenery and hiking.

Note Grading: *We grade the trek as moderate to hard because, although the hiking is not technically difficult, the high altitude makes the hiking harder than on a similar trek at lower altitude. You do need to have a good level of fitness and be able to hike sustained uphill of up to 3 hours to the passes, and also be able to manage long descents from those passes.*

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 in some places steep – both ascending or descending and can be slippery & uneven in places. If you do not think you can enjoy this type of trekking, let us know and we can suggest some easier options

Day A: Arrive Huaraz

Day B & C: Acclimatisation walks 2 days

Day 1: Drive to Cashapampa. Hike up the Santa Cruz valley to Llamacorral

From Huaraz we drive along the broad Callejón de Huaylas valley to Caraz, then up to the village of Cashapampa (2900m). 3 hours. Approaching Cashapampa we have our first view of Nevado Santa Cruz, an imposing pyramidal snow peak that gives the trekking circuit its name. We begin our trek with a steady ascent through the lower Santa Cruz valley, following a tumbling river as we go. The first 2 hours are through a steep-sided gorge, with the going occasionally tough as the continuous ascent and usually hot conditions take their toll. By early afternoon, however, the gradient begins to level out and the valley to open out onto cooler *puna* grasslands as we approach our first camp, close to the river at Llamacorral (3750m).

Approx. 8 ½ kms

5 hours

Note: *Today can be a demanding first day for those lacking in fitness or acclimatisation.*



Llamacorral



Rima Rima Flowers Santa Cruz

Day 2: Llamacorral to Taullipampa, with optional Arhuaycocha side trip

Today we enjoy an easier day's walk up the open valley to our camp at Taullipampa (4250m). The direct route takes about 4 hours. The going is mostly flat as we pass two lakes (Laguna Ichiccocha and the larger Jatuncocha), with the final hour to Taullipampa camp mostly uphill. During the day's hike, the neighbouring peaks of Quitaraju (6,040m) and the famous Alpamayo South Face (5,947m) South Face come briefly into view; an optional, and recommended, side trip from Quisuar up a zigzagging trail takes you to the hanging Arhuaycocha valley and beyond to Alpamayo Base Camp and Laguna Arhuaycocha. This optional detour allows closer views of Alpamayo (once voted the world's most beautiful mountain), Artesonraju (6,025m) and Quitaraju, before traversing via a little-used track to our Taullipampa camp.

Our camp is situated almost at the base of the beautiful Taulliraju snow peak, and is surrounded by others, including Paria, Artesonraju and Rinrijirca (5,810m).

Approx 8kms direct Llamacorral to Taullipampa

4 hours hiking or add 1 to 3 hours extra if hike towards Alpamayo Base Camp



Jatuncocha Lake



Taullipampa Camp

OPTIONAL EXTRA DAY

We can add an extra day here and stay on at the beautiful Taullipampa Camp. Options would include either a hike up Centillo Peak (5000m – approx 4 hours); a mixed climb on an uneven path and rock, but not technical (rope not needed), a beautiful hike up to the Laguna Arhuaycocha glacial lake (4350m – approx 4 hours there & back), with its awesome backdrop of the Rinrijirca peak (5,810m), or a hike to a high glacial lake at the base of Artesonraju (approx 4 hours). Alternatively, you could enjoy a rest day surrounded by awesome scenery.



Centillo Peak

Day 3 (or 4): Taullipampa to Paria via Punta Union pass

From Taullipampa camp, we ascend steadily on a good path for some 2½ to 3 hours, gradually nearing the continental divide at Punta Union pass (4750m). Most will feel some shortness of breath on the approach, as the altitude takes its effect; consequently we aim to take our time. From the pass we enjoy stunning views of several snow peaks, including Rinrijirca, Pucajirca (6050m), Artesonraju and the nearby Nevado Taulliraju (5830m), a towering, jagged presence. Looking back down the Santa Cruz Valley, we see Lake Jutuncocha in the distance. From the pass it is a long descent into the beautiful Quebrada Huaripampa valley past two small lakes and several patches of red-barked *quenual* (*polylepis* sp.) forest. Tonight's camp will be on a plateau, away from the main trail, in the secluded Quebrada Paria valley (3900m).

Approx. 13kms

7 hours



Punta Union Pass

Day 4 (or 5): Hike Paria to Molino Pampa

An easy, relaxing walk through the lower Quebrada Huaripampa valley takes us through the scattered farming settlements of Huaripampa and Colcabamba. Here we pass several farm houses and encounter a lot of local people, including children. (This is a good day if you have chosen to bring small gifts for children, such as pens, pencils and notebooks. The kids are quite poor and truly appreciate such things which they use for their schoolwork). From Colcabamba there is now a road which we have to follow for around one to 1½ hours, climbing steadily to the village of Challhua. We can then take a path away from the road before traversing easily to our campsite at Molino Pampa (3600m) in the narrow Quebrada Keshu Valley.

Approx. 13kms

6 to 7 hours.



Huaripampa Valley



Molino Pampa

Day 5 (or 6): 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 *quenual*

(polylepis sp.) forest until we reach moraine enclosing two glacial lakes fed by the ice coming off the glaciers of the nearby Contrahierbas massif. At this point the climb steepens as we head up the valley's north side on a zig zag path to a small plateau where our high campsite, *Avalancha* (4650m), is located. Directly across the valley from our spectacular camp is the long glacier-encrusted massif of *Contrahierbas* (6037m). Frequent avalanches from its fissured glaciers come crashing down into the lake below. We can spend the afternoon resting and avalanche watching!
Approx. 7kms
4 hours.



Avalanche Lake Day 5



Avalanche Campsite

Day 6 (or 7): *Avalancha Camp to Ulta Valley via Yanayacu pass. Drive to Huaraz*

We traverse and ascend for 1½ to two hours to a high narrow ledge and on to a knife-edge pass. This is our last and most spectacular pass, *Punta Yanayacu* (4850m). 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 zig zag descent on an initially steep path into the *Cancahua* valley below. We walk past some small lakes and again are surrounded by snow-capped 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 quenal forest to the beautiful Quebrada Ulta valley, where our vehicle will be waiting to take us back to Huaraz.
Approx. 10kms hiking
Around 5 to 6 hours walking
3 hours drive on a dirt road, 60kms.



Pass Punta Yanayacu



Ulta Valley

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