



## PERUVIAN ANDES ADVENTURES

### SANTA CRUZ QUEBRADA ULTA TREK & PISCO CLIMB

10 days (plus one rest day in Huaraz)



*Punta Union Pass – Santa Cruz Ulta Trek*

#### **Santa Cruz Ulta Trek**

6 Days

Grade: Moderate to Hard

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. The two high passes on this trek and last night sleeping at altitude make it an excellent preparation and acclimatisation trek for the Pisco climb

#### **Pisco Climb 5753m (18875 ft)**

4 Days

Grade: PD / Moderate snow climbs – Beginner suitable – Physically hard

Pisco is an achievable climb for anyone who is well acclimatised and fit. It is a suitable climb for beginner climbers and is also a rewarding climb for experienced climbers. Most years, there is no technical climbing on Pisco. Some years or months there are short, steep sections, some hard ice to negotiate or a crevasse to navigate around, but we would help you with this. Previous experience on snow and ice is not necessary. We will provide some basic instruction at

Base Camp and support during the climb, but you do need to be strong to undertake this climb. From the summit you are rewarded with magnificent views of the many surrounding peaks, including the beautiful Chacararaju and massive Huascarán (6768m), the highest mountain in Peru.



*Pisco*

**Note 1:** *We consider the climb to be Medium to HARD because, although it is a suitable peak for beginner climbers, the altitude of 5750m does make it physically demanding. Although many guidebooks grade the climb as a “trekkers (or “trekking”) peak”, you are actually climbing while roped up with crampons and with an ice axe, sometimes on steep snow slopes and, of course, at high altitude. It is more difficult than similar climbs at lower altitudes. We do NOT regard any of the peaks in the Cordillera Blanca as “trekking peaks” and all climbs involve true mountaineering. The route from Base Camp to Morena Camp is on steep, loose moraine rock and it is necessary to carry your gear. The climbing on the glacier is sustained with continuous uphill and sometimes steep snow climbing made very demanding by the altitude. You should only consider this climb if you are strong, with high fitness levels and able to carry a medium weight backpack on steep terrain over rocky, loose and uneven ground.*

**Note 2:** *The routes used and the conditions on all the peaks are changing year by year, and even from month to month. The descriptions we have given are general only, and the routes used, conditions on the mountain and description of routes may change considerably by the time we are climbing. In some years depending on snow conditions there can be short sections of steep ice climbing or crevasses to negotiate around on Pisco. Conditions on all the mountains are changing rapidly due to global warming and rapid recession of glacial ice, and descriptions of routes that you may find in some guide books can be out dated within 12 months.*

**Note 3:** *The guide in charge of your climb will be one of our local experienced & professional UIAGM International Mountain Guides.*



## Itinerary

**Day A:** Arrive Huaraz (3090m).

**Day B & C:** Huaraz / Acclimatisation days (two days are recommended for acclimatisation if you have the time, but one day minimum is essential)

### **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 acclimatisation.



*Llamacorral at Dawn*



*Jatuncocha Lake*

### **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



*Near Taullipampa*

*Hiking to Alpamayo Base Camp*

**Optional extra day.** Stay another night at beautiful Taullipampa campsite. Options to visit Alpamayo Base Camp, Lake Arhuaycocha, climb Centillo Peak 5000m or have a rest day

**Day 3: 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 *quenua* (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: 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: 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 Campsite*

**Day 6: *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*

**Day 7: *REST DAY in Huaraz and prepare for climbing Pisco*** (Recommended, but can be omitted if you are short of time)

**Day 8: *Drive Huaraz to Cebollapampa and ascend on foot to Pisco Base Camp***

We drive from Huaraz down the broad Callejón de Huaylas to Yungay, enjoying the changing vegetation as we go. Here we turn east and ascend to the Huascarán National Park and Cebollapampa 3850m (2½ hours), passing the famous twin lakes of Llanganuco en route. At Cebollapampa, our gear is loaded onto the donkeys and we climb on a good path for 2½ hours to Pisco Base Camp (4650m). There is a refugio there where you can buy beer, wine and hot food.

**Note: *If you are a novice climber, we can organize some basic instruction in the afternoon.***



*Pisco Base Camp, Pisco is Behind*

**Day 9: Carry Gear from Pisco Base Camp to Morena Camp**

Today is a short but challenging day. We climb to Morena Camp (4900m), crossing loose ground and negotiating large moraine rocks at times.



*To Pisco Morena Camp*

The donkeys cannot come this way, so you need to carry your personal gear: climbing gear, clothes and sleeping bag. Porters carry tents, food, cooking equipment & ropes but any assistance you can offer would also be appreciated. The ground today is uneven and rocky, and the hike commences with a steep but short hike up to the top of the moraine wall and then a short but tricky & steep descent down the other side. The rest of the way is a mixture of good path with some demanding scrambling over moraine rocks and loose ground. 3 hours.

**Day 10: Morena Camp to Pisco Summit and back to Base Camp**

Summit Day. We leave early and climb for about 40 minutes to an hour on moraine until we reach the glacier, where we put on crampons and rope up. For most of the route, it is not overly steep or technically difficult, although the altitude does make it a challenge. There are occasional short steep sections and hard ice, or possibly a crevasse, may need to be negotiated. Also note that since 2009 there has been a steep (60 deg.) slope of some 30m to the summit. We will of course assist you with

any difficulties. We try to arrive at the summit to see the sun rise. About 5 hours to the broad summit where there is plenty of room to walk around, appreciate the amazing surrounding mountains and take photos.



From the summit you can enjoy fantastic views of the close-by peaks; many among the tallest in the Cordillera Blanca, including Huascarán (6768m), Chopicalqui (6354m), Huandoy (6160m), Chacaraju (6012m), Pirámide (5885m) and Artesonraju (6025m). We descend to Morena Camp, where we will prepare hot soup and have an hour's rest, collect our gear and return to Base Camp. 9 to 12 hours for the day.





**Day 11: *Descend from Base Camp to Cebollapampa and drive back to Huaraz***

It's a 1½ to 2 hour walk down to Cebollapampa, where we meet our vehicle for a 2½-hour drive back to Huaraz.

**OPTIONS for either:**

***Descend from Base Camp to Cebollapampa and drive back to Huaraz***

It's a 1½ to 2 hour walk down to Cebollapampa, where we meet our vehicle for a 2½-hour drive back to Huaraz.

**OR**

***Hike to Laguna 69 and then to Cebollapampa, and drive back to Huaraz***

From Pisco Base Camp is possible to make a traverse through the rock moraine around Pisco to reach the beautiful jewel blue mountain lake of Laguna 69, nestled at the base of Pisco. The hike is initially quite hard, passing through and over a lot of rock but later it becomes a nicer grassy trail, with a final tough little ascent 600m up to Laguna 69. The effort is well worth it when you are treated to magnificent views of the massive peaks Huandoy, Huascarán & Chopicalqui. Finish with a fast descent on a zig zag good track down to Cebollapampa. Depart from Pisco base camp 07:30am to 08:00am, arrive Cebollapampa about 02:00pm to 03:00pm



*Laguna 69*

**Trekking & Climbing Hours:**

Climbing times are estimated times and based on our average climbing groups from past experience. Some people may be much faster and others slower.

**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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