



PERUVIAN ANDES ADVENTURES

CIRCUIT OF THE CORDILLERA HUAYHUASH via VICONGA THERMAL BATHS & CUYOC PASS

9 days trekking
Grade: Very Hard
Highest Point: 5000m

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

The trek route takes you through Viconga where there are thermal baths where you can enjoy a hot soak



Viconga Thermal Baths

Note 1: Acclimatisation & Fitness:

This is a **VERY HARD** trek and it is important that you are well acclimatised to the altitude before you depart from Huaraz to start the trek. On the first day when you travel from Huaraz (3070m) to Quartelhuain (4200m) by road you have an altitude gain of 1130m and on the first day trekking you cross a pass of 4700m.

We **highly recommend** three days (four nights) for acclimatisation in Huaraz, doing day hikes progressively gaining altitude to above 4000m to be well acclimatised for this trek.

If you start your trek from Quartelhuain at 4200m without sufficient acclimatisation, the risk of becoming unwell with altitude related problems during the first days of the trek is high

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

There are **NO** rest days or extra days with this trek & you have 9 days of continuous physically demanding high altitude hiking

You should **NOT** consider this 9 day trek unless you have good physical fitness and are well acclimatised to the altitude.

Trails on this trek are often steep – both ascending and descending and can be slippery & rocky in places. Trails are not formed paths and are not maintained, they are dirt trails also used by animals and are uneven underfoot.

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.

Note 3: The Cordillera Huayhuash is becoming known to be one of the most beautiful high altitude treks in the world. Although you are trekking through a remote area, you can expect that there will also be several other groups and also independent hikers on the route

Note 4: The **Huayhuash** trek route is all on community owned farmland. There are small farm houses and some farm animals (cattle, sheep, horses and sometimes alpacas & llamas) all along the trekking route, included surprisingly at the top of the high passes

Note 5: All land along the Cordillera Huayhuash trekking routes is privately owned community farmland (not National Park or Government owned). The local Huayhuash communities allow trekking groups to pass through and camp on their private land and we ask that all hikers respect their goodwill in allowing us to hike in the beautiful Cordillera Huayhuash by leaving no rubbish, taking care of farm animals and respecting the local people that we will meet along the trek route and in campsites. Each community charges access and camping fees for each campsite (included in trek fee). As part of the camping fee they provide toilets in the campsites.

Itinerary

Day A: Arrive Huaraz (3070m).

Day B & C & D: Acclimatization days in Huaraz, three days (4 nights). We can organise day hikes.

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 some broad expanses of *quenua* (*polylepis* sp.) forest. We camp at Quartelhuain. (4200m)
6 hours drive, 174kms

Day 2: Quartelhuain 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.

From the pass we have a view of the Lake Pucacocha. Then we descend down to the Quebrada Caliente and to the Jalca Plain and on to our camp at Janca (4180m) located in a beautiful plateau area at the foot of the stunning Jirishanka Grande peak, and its neighbours Rondoy and Ninashanca. If you have the energy, there's the option this afternoon of walking around the lake Mitucocha (4200m) or up to one of the nearby hanging valleys.



Cacanán Pass



Mitucocha lake

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 30 minutes hike down river from the lake in a flat area

Approx. 12kms
5 to 6 hours' hiking.

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 the large Laguna Carhuacocha (4150m), with the chance en route of spotting Viscacha rodents among the moronic debris. We walk around the side of the lake, passing by some shepherds huts to arrive at the campsite by the lake. 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

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 Chico and a beautiful deep-blue high lake Alcaicocha. 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.*



Carhuacocha Lake

Day 4: 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 Jiraucocha) lake (4400m) or 30 minutes further on at another camp among a sprinkling of local farm homes in the open Huayhuash valley (4330m)

Approx. 13kms
7 to 8 hours



Carnicero Pass

Note: Weather permitting, we can take the alternative, more demanding and spectacular route via the glacial lakes of Gangrajanca, Siula and Quesillococha at the foot of Yerupaja and Siula Grande. First we walk around half an hour alongside Laguna Carhuacocha then we turn up the valley passing by some local farmers homes. The trail then starts climbing, steeply at times – passing by the three lakes and then climbing 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 9 hours to Huayhuash Camp (4330m).



Ice on Siula Lake

Day 5: 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 and on the north east we see Puscanturpa mountain. We descend to and skirt around the large Laguna Viconga lake – look out for Alpacas - before walking down the valley for ½ hour to set up camp near the natural hot springs of Viconga (4400m). After enjoying afternoon tea at camp a visit to the *al fresco open air* hot springs could certainly be appreciated!

Approx. 12kms

6½ hours.

(Bring a swimsuit + 5 soles entrance fee)



Lunch Stop at Viconga Lake

Day 6: Viconga Camp to Quebrada Huanacpatay Valley via Punta Cuyoc

Today we cross our highest pass, Punta Cuyoc, with a sustained uphill hike of 3 hours to a breathtaking 5000m.



Cuyoc Pass

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. 14kms

6 to 7 hours.

Day 7: 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 at 3500m (the first since Llamac and last before we return to Llamac), we begin a hard climb in the afternoon of about 3½ hours to our campsite high up on the flat pasture of Huatiac (4350m).

Approx. 15kms

7 hours



Huayllapa Village



Huatiac Camp

Day 8: 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 a 1 to 1½ hours before turning east and climbing again to the Punta Yaucha (4800m) pass.



Huatiac to Tapush 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

Day 9: 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.



Llamac Pass

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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