

Cordillera Huayhuash Circuit – Peru June 16th 2018

Highlights

- Superb high-level Andean trekking holiday
- The scene of Joe Simpson's best-selling book, *Touching the Void*
- Experience indigenous Quechua Indian culture
- Expert-led off the beaten track trekking holiday in Peru

Accommodation & Meals

- 6 nights Hotel
- 14 nights Camping
- 20 breakfasts, 15 lunches and 14 dinners

Peru's Cordillera Huayhuash, together with its larger and better-known northern neighbour, the Cordillera Blanca, provides arguably the best trekking and climbing in the whole of South America and the perfect area for a high level trekking holiday. The compact massif of the Huayhuash is famed for its dramatic mountain scenery, typified by fluted ice faces and knife-edge ridges. A stunning high-level trail makes an improbable circuit of this mountain group and provides trekking on a Himalayan scale. The area of the Huayhuash is also abundant in mineral wealth and every year new mining roads appear in the mountains. Presenting a rewarding challenge to regular hillwalkers, this classic trek crosses a succession of high passes and takes us into remote valleys for views of Peru's highest peaks, including Yerupaja (6634m) and Huascarán (6768m). We also visit Siula Grande, scene of Joe Simpson's 'Touching the Void' epic. Towards the end of the trek, there is the option to make the straightforward ascent of Cerro Jyamy (5200m), which affords views of the entire range. With superb campsites beside green glacial lakes and the charming company of our Quechua Indian crew, this trip offers a fantastic South American experience.

Is this holiday for you?

This trekking holiday in the remote high valleys of the Cordillera Huayhuash involves a variety of trekking conditions, ranging from good trails between villages in the sparsely inhabited high valleys on the perimeter of the Huayhuash, to steep paths across scree on the approach to the highest passes on our route. It is possible that the highest passes may have a light covering of snow. This is a remote area, and the trekking is sustained and challenging on account of its overall length and the high alpine terrain, together with the many high passes on our route. The days are often long, with walking times of 7 hours plus. As there are so few trekkers on the route, the trails are often rocky and ill-defined making for more difficult walking. Please note that a considerable amount of time is spent at altitudes in excess of 4500m. Travellers undertaking this holiday should be fit and experienced trekkers, accustomed to hiking for several consecutive days on difficult terrain. We have allowed time for acclimatisation prior to setting off on trek from Huaraz and there is 1 rest / exploration day built into the itinerary.

Our guide is Val Pitkethly, who will have completed this journey 78 times by the time we meet her. She has worked with the same family and hotel for 30+ years and knows so much about Peru and Nepal. She speaks the local language and I am sure we will get an insider's view of the area and its people. She runs the charity LED which we have supported from our yoga fundraising for Nepal.

Val is the preferred guide used by KE Adventure and the Alpine Club for this trek. She wrote the itinerary for KE!

The cost will depend on the number in the group but we are looking at around £2000 plus flights.

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Brief Itinerary

Day 1 Meet at the group hotel in Lima. Transfers from Lima Airport are provided during the day.

Day 2 Drive to Huaraz (3091m), taking in a section of the Pan American Highway.

Day 3 Acclimatisation day in Huaraz (3091m).

Day 4 Additional acclimatisation day around Huaraz.

Day 5 Drive to Quero, meet support crew. Short walk to Marhuay (3700m) for first night camping.

Day 6 Trek from Marhuay to the Valley of the Condors (4170m).

Day 7 Trek over two passes, the highest - Punta Sacsá (4750m), to camp above Quatilehuin (4200m).

Day 8 Cross the Cacanampunta Pass (4700m) to Janca below Laguna Mitacocha (4200m).

Day 9 Descend to the Quebrada Caliente and trek to the spectacular camp at Laguna Carhuacocha (4200m).

Day 10 Trek to Huayhuash Village (4350m).

Day 11 Using local routes we trek to camp below Trapecio (4500m).

Day 12 Traverse the Punta Trapecio (5000m) past azure blue lakes to camp at (4500m).

Day 13 Trek to Cototambo at the end of the Quanaqpatay Valley (5000m).

Day 14 Contingency day or rest day. Optional walk to Siula Grande Base Camp.

Day 15 Trek to the foot of the Punta Tarpush (4800m).

Day 16 Climb up to the Punta Tarpush, optional ascent of Cerro Jyamy (5000m).

Day 17 Trek to Punta Jahuacocha (4850m), maybe see some Condors. Descent to Quebrada Whacrish camp (4350m).

Day 18 To the Laguna Jahuacocha either directly or via a high pass.

Day 18 Cross the final pass, Punta Llamac (4400m), descend to the road head. Drive to Huaraz.

Day 19 Make the return journey by road to Lima.

Day 20 Departure day. Lima Airport transfers are provided during the day time.

Day 21 Arrive back in UK

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Full Itinerary

- **Meet at the group hotel in Lima. Transfers from Lima Airport are provided during the day.**

Meet at the group hotel in Lima, situated in the modern Miraflores district of the city. A complimentary airport transfer is provided for all clients arriving in Lima between 9am and 10pm. Val, our trip leader who will give an informal briefing on the days ahead.

- Accommodation Hotel

- **Drive to Huaraz (3091m), taking in a section of the Pan American Highway.**

An early morning departure for the 8-hour drive in a comfortable bus to the town of Huaraz, which is the capital of the district known as Ancash. Our route follows the Pan American Highway to Pativilca, where we head inland, climbing from sea level to the pass called Punta Conococha at an altitude of 4100 metres in just 3 hours driving. From the pass, we have our first views of the peaks of the Huayhuash. Dropping down from the pass, we continue to Huaraz, where we check in to the Hostal Columba which is a beautiful old Hacienda owned by one of the oldest families in Huaraz. Altitude: 3091 metres.

- Accommodation Hotel
- Meals b

- **Acclimatisation day in Huaraz (3091m).**

A sightseeing and acclimatisation day in Huaraz. An easy 2-hour walk above the town, either taking a picnic or returning to town for lunch. We can also take the opportunity to visit the local craft market, which is set up each evening along the main thoroughfare of the Luzuriaga. The best goods on offer are excellent, locally made woollen and leather items.

- Accommodation Hotel
- Meals b

- **Additional acclimatisation day around Huaraz.**

Today we have the option to make the 5-hour round trip to a viewpoint, Quebrada Llaca, which will provide us with fantastic views of lots of impressive peaks: Ranraopajca, Vallunaraju, Oschapajca and a host of other peaks in the area. Return to Huaraz.

- Accommodation Hotel
- Meals b

- **Drive to Quero, meet support crew. Short walk to Marhuay (3700m) for first night camping.**

Leaving Huaraz and heading south, we make the 2 hour drive to the small town of Chiquian (3400m). We now follow a rough road with good views of Yerupaja, the highest peak of the Huayhuash and the second highest in Peru. Crossing the low point of the entire route at the Cora Bridge (2700m), we continue driving to Quero (this depends on the state of the new road) where we meet our arrieros and burros. On this part of our route it can be very hot - up to 25°C. From here, we trek to Marhuay (3700m) where we camp in the grounds of the school.

- Accommodation Camping

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- Meals bld
- **Trek from Marhuay to the Valley of the Condors (4170m).**

From our camp, we begin a gradual ascent alongside the Rio Radiash to enter the Quebrada Radiash, where we make camp (4170m). Before lunch, there are a couple of hills above camp to tackle to assist with further acclimatisation.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- Time 2 - 3 hrs trekking
- **Trek over two passes, the highest - Punta Sacsa (4750m), to camp above Quartlehuin (4200m).**

This diversion from the main Huayhuash trail takes us into some pretty wild country, making a gradual ascent to cross the first of two passes, Punta Milau (4660m). We descend a short distance and then re-ascend and follow a rising traverse where we continue to the second pass, Punta Sacsa (4750m). From here we descend to our lunch spot. After lunch, a short ascent over a small ridge followed by a long descent then takes us to camp at 4200 metres, set near to the stone corals of Quartlehuin, which is home to some of our trekking crew. Fantastic views of Yerapaja, Rondoy and Jirishanka.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- Time 7 hrs trekking
- **Cross the Cacanampunta Pass (4700m) to Janca below Laguna Mitacocha (4200m).**

Today we cross the pass known as Cacanampunta, at an altitude of 4700 metres. This pass is at the northern extremity of the Huayhuash range and also marks the continental divide, with all rivers to the east flowing away towards the Amazon Basin. A short steep hike on a zig-zag trail takes us up to the pass. After a rest stop at the top, we descend to the broad valley known as the Quebrada Caliente and then turn into a tributary valley that leads to Laguna Mitacocha (4200m). We set up camp at Janca, below the lake. An impressive ring of peaks rises up to the south of our camp, with the largest and most striking being Jirishanca (6126m). In the afternoon there is time to explore the area. The glacial blue lake is famous for its bird life, with flocks of Andean geese and ibis. With luck our crew will have had time to catch some trout for dinner.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- Time 5 hrs trekking
- **Descend to the Quebrada Caliente and trek to the spectacular camp at Laguna Carhuacocha (4200m).**

We descend from our camp to the Quebrada Caliente and follow the broad grassy valley in a south-easterly direction until we are obliged to begin our climb up to the next pass, the Carhuac (4650m). There are close-up views of the rounded summit snowfields of Yerupaja (6634m) from the crest of the Carhuac. The pass itself is an excellent area for fossils and for those with extra energy there is a small hill nearby which affords dramatic views of Siula Grande (a peak made famous by Joe Simpson's best-selling book, 'Touching the Void'). On our descent to our overnight stopping place at Laguna Carhuacocha, there are excellent panoramic views of many of the Huayhuash peaks. We camp above the lake at 4200 metres. This spectacular camp is the best on the east side of range, lying beneath the stunning peaks of Yerupaja and Jirishanca. We may use our spare day here, depending on acclimatisation, weather and the general welfare of the group.

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- Accommodation Camping
 - Meals bld
 - Time 5 hrs trekking
- **Trek to Huayhuash Village (4350m).**

We have a choice of routes today. The first option follows a rough trail to cross a steep pass to Punta Suila (4800m) via some lakes with stunning views of the surrounding peaks. Alternatively we can follow the normal route across the Punta Carnicero (4600m), which is situated between Laguna Atocshaicho and the peaks of Trapecio and Carnicero, 'The Butcher'. Both routes make for a long but spectacular day's trekking. On the way, we are likely to encounter local shepherds and their flocks in high valleys reminiscent of the European Alps. We camp at the small hamlet of Huayhuash at an altitude of 4350 metres. This valley is home to herds of vicuna, a wild cousin of the alpaca and llama.

- Accommodation Camping
 - Meals bld
 - Time 7 - 8 hrs trekking
- **Using local routes we trek to camp below Trapecio (4500m).**

For the next 3 days, we use our local knowledge to deviate from the 'normal route' and seek out the very best of the 'hidden' Huayhuash. Leaving behind the few huts and corrals that make up the seasonal settlement of Huayhuash, we begin a steady ascent to a pass above the village. From this pass, we have superb views of the peaks of the Cordillera Raura that lie to the south of us. We then descend to our camp (4500m) below Trapecio.

- Accommodation Camping
 - Meals bld
- **Traverse the Punta Trapecio (5000m) past azure blue lakes to camp at (4500m).**

A steep two hour ascent from our camping place will bring us to the crest of the Punta Trapecio, at 5000 metres, with the reward of brilliant views of the Huayhuash to the north and the Raura peaks to the south. The hanging glaciers of the peaks are just above us. We have the option of ascending a small hill to 5170 metres for tremendous views of Siula Grande and Sarapao - some of the best views on the trek. After stopping to admire the views, we descend the scree slopes below the pass. This steep descent leads to the lunch spot below Puscanturpa and above stunning azure lakes. From here we trek to our camp (4500m).

- Accommodation Camping
 - Meals bld
- **Trek to Cototambo at the end of the Quanacpatay Valley (5000m).**

Depending on local conditions, we have two options today. We can trek directly down the Quanacpatay Valley or we can cross another pass at around 5000 metres with some of the most fantastic views of Laguna Sarapo and Laguna Jurau. The ascent to the pass is steep and there is not much of a trail but the effort is well worth it. We usually see vicuna and there is often a condor flying overhead. From the pass we make our descent to Cototambo at the end of the Quanacpatay Valley.

- Accommodation Camping
 - Meals bld
- **Contingency day or rest day. Optional walk to Siula Grande Base Camp.**

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A well earned rest day. This is a good time to catch up on diaries and laundry or to simply relax in this superb setting. For those with boundless energy there is the option of trekking up to Siula Grande Base camp, or even higher to the crest of the Passo Seria at 5200m. This is also a contingency day to be used in the event of delay or diversion to our intended trekking schedule at the Val's discretion. Please note that the contingency day may actually be taken earlier in the trek at Carhuacocha, depending upon the group - Val will make this decision.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- **Trek to the foot of the Punta Tarpush (4800m).**

Today we trek down valley until reaching the village of Huyaplla and then a long climb up to reach Whatia below the Punta Tarpush (4800m). We camp at Whatia.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- Time 6 - 7 hrs trekking
- **Climb up to the Punta Tarpush, optional ascent of Cerro Jyamy (5000m).**

Climbing up to the Punta Tarpush, we take the opportunity to make an ascent of Cerro Jyamy from the pass. This climb takes us across easy scree slopes to reach the ridge line and then we follow an easy-angled slope to the top. From the summit, at around 5000 metres, there are incredible views of the whole range and we should also see Huascaran and the peaks of the distant Cordillera Blanca. We descend via a ridge-line to a lovely camping place below a number of small lakes. Altitude at camp 4500 metres.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- Time 5 - 6 hrs trekking
- **Trek to Punta Jahuacocha (4850m), maybe see some Condors. Descent to Quebrada Whacrish camp (4350m).**

An easy trek leads downhill through a small forest of wildly contorted quenal trees to the base of the next pass. A zig-zagging trail then takes us to the Punta Jahuacocha (4850m) and above the pass an optional scramble takes us to a small peak with magical views of the Huayhuash. For the past 5 or 6 years there has been a family of condors living amongst the rocks of another small peak at the pass and it is well worth hanging out to watch them play on the thermals. A steep descent takes us to Quebrada Whacrish where we camp with views of Tsacra peaks 4350m.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- **To the Laguna Jahuacocha either directly or via a high pass.**

We have the option of crossing another pass set below Rasac and Yerapahaha to reach Jahuacocha with absolutely magical views in all directions before a long descent leads us to the Laguna Jahuacocha and a fantastic camp with one of the best views in South America. For those who want an easier day there is the option of going direct to camp with the trek crew.

- Accommodation Camping
- Meals bld
- **Cross the final pass, Punta Llamac (4400m), descend to the road head. Drive to Huaraz.**

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After an early breakfast we cross the final pass of the route, the Punta Llamac (4400m) which provides us with our last views of the big peaks. We make our final descent to reach the road-head at Llamac (3250m), where we say goodbye to our trek crew and meet our vehicles for the 5 hour drive back to Huaraz. Arriving in Huaraz we check into our hotel and have time to clean up before going out for dinner.

- Accommodation Hotel
- Meals bl
- **Make the return journey by road to Lima.**

After an early start, we set off for the drive back to Lima. Arriving in the late afternoon, we check in to the group hotel. This evening is a great opportunity to enjoy a final celebratory night dinner together.

- Accommodation Hotel
- Meals b
- **Departure day. Lima Airport transfers are provided during the day time.**

Depending on flight schedules the morning is free for independent sightseeing in the Peruvian capital. Airport transfers will be arranged for clients departing between 9am and 10pm.

- Meals b

What's not Included

- Travel Insurance
- Visa (if applicable)
- Tips for trek staff
- Airport transfers other than on days of group arrival and departure
- Lima Airport departure tax (if applicable)
- Some meals as detailed in the Meal Plan
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc.

Meal Plan

All breakfasts; 15 lunches and 14 dinners are included in the holiday price. Where it makes sense for clients to have a choice of dining options, we have not included these meals in the holiday price. In practice this amounts to a total of 2 lunches & 2 dinners in Lima, and 4 lunches & 4 dinners in Huaraz. We recommend you allow approximately \$15 to \$25 for each of these meals.