



PERU: ALPAMAYO CIRCUIT



This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.



First view of Alpamayo

- ***Trek close to the finest 6000m peaks in the Cordillera Blanca***
- ***Cross eight high passes - hard work but breathtaking!***
- ***Fewer trekkers than on other routes***
- ***High villages and local people give a good balance***
- ***Good acclimatisation time at start***

Peru

Peru is South America's third largest country, and with 25 million people, its fourth most populous. It is a country of extremes – desert and rainforest, snow peaks and sand dunes, excessive wealth and tortuous poverty. The coastal plain is hemmed in between the sea and the giant Andean chain, the spine of the country, while to the east is the Amazon jungle.

The country has risen strongly from the ravages and economic turmoil at the end of the last century and today Peru has never seemed more attractive! It can boast mountain scenery and trekking to rival even the mighty Himalayas, rainforest reserves full of animals and birds, the incredible architecture of the Incas and arguably the best museums in South America. The country does not have traditional resorts or famous beaches, it is a place for doers and is attracting in growing numbers each year, travellers, historians, naturalists, climbers and trekkers. Add the special vibrancy, colour and cacophony of its Andean and colonial culture - a visit to Peru is an experience seldom matched anywhere in the world.

Huaraz, our base for this trip, is often called the 'Chamonix' of South America. The town is a relaxed staging post for treks and climbs in the famous Cordillera Blanca range, boasting peaks like Alpamayo, 5947m – once called the most beautiful mountain in the world and Huascarán (6768m), Peru's highest mountain.

High Places in Peru

High Places have operated in Peru since 1994. It has been one of our most popular destinations and we have a long established and successful relationship with our trekking agency colleagues in Huaraz and Cusco.



Pablo and Alpamayo

The Alpamayo Circuit

This is a tremendous trek in the northern Cordillera Blanca, which avoids the more frequented trails. It passes close by some of the most spectacular peaks in the Andes including Santa Cruz (6259m) and Alpamayo (5947m).

The main trek starts high and preliminary days on acclimatisation walks out from Huaraz have proved immensely successful. The following 12 days of superb walking will be mostly on good clear paths as the trail crosses and then re-crosses the main range of the northern Cordillera Blanca. The longest day will be about 7 hours with high points of around 4850m.

Its quality, apart from the superb alpine scenery and views, lies in the widely contrasting landscapes and experiences encountered during the circuit. *"It is fantastic! Every day is different"* is a frequent response from trekkers. The sustained nature of the walking with a high pass to cross most days means it is towards the upper end of the 'Steady Plus' grade. The walking is sublime and with the built-in acclimatisation period this trip should appeal to all keen walkers with a love of high mountains. It is undoubtedly one of our best treks.

The trekking day

On trek we are supported by a cook team, arrieros (donkey drivers), a rescue horse and a local guide as well as the trek leader. We camp in two person tents. A typical day would be to wake at 6am with a cup of tea in the tent, breakfast in the mess tent and away before 8am. Trekking is best in the cool and clear air of the morning with a lunch stop at around 12 noon. Arrival in camp is usually around 3 -3.30pm in time for afternoon tea. After sorting camp out, we are relaxed and ready for the main meal of the day at about 6pm.

Climate

Our trek takes place in Peru's dry season and although this does not mean that it won't rain, the weather is generally dry and very stable. The most common daily pattern is a clear, bright morning, with a bit of cumulus cloud in the afternoon. It is usually clear again by evening. Daily temperatures vary greatly. During the hottest part of the day, and in the sun, the temperature can be 25-30° C, but at night it can drop to well below freezing especially at the camps above 4000m.

Transport

The 8 hour journey from Lima to Huaraz is usually on a luxury Inter-city type bus. Once in the mountains we travel in our own private bus or minibus.

Accommodation

In Lima we stay in a hotel situated close to the main square in the centre of the city. In Huaraz we are in a comfortable hotel just outside the city centre. All accommodation is on a twin share basis. On trek we camp in roomy 2-person tents. There is a communal dining tent for eating and socialising in the evenings.

Food

While on trek we provide all meals fresh meat and vegetables where possible. We are happy to cater for vegetarians if notified beforehand but do warn that choices remain fairly limited in this 'meat eating' part of the world. In main towns we provide breakfast only. Huaraz is a fun place to eat out and there are a variety of local restaurants to try. A meal in a good restaurant should cost about 35 soles (US\$10-12) approx.

Health and hygiene

Most people thrive in the clear air and sunny weather of the Peruvian Andes and it is a healthy environment. Acclimatisation will usually occur naturally aided by an easy paced start and an increased water intake. (see 'Altitude') Make a habit of always treating the contents of your water bottle - we suggest chlorine dioxide which comes in tablets or tincture. Caution with food is advisable especially in those first few days. "Boil it, peel it, cook it or forget it!" is an easily remembered maxim to adopt. Carrying and using sterile handwash should be seen as a default on all our trekking trips from Day 1. On trek we boil all drinking water. With increased numbers on popular treks, camp hygiene and good judgement is vital. In camp we use a toilet tent.

Altitude

Above 3000m, the air is thinner, the pressure is lower and there is less oxygen available in the atmosphere. Acclimatisation is the process by which the body adapts to these conditions. The key to acclimatisation is a good itinerary with a gradual initial height gain, walking at a slow and steady pace, and increasing fluid intake – drinking at least 4 litres a day is advisable above 3000m.

Many people have some minor side effects from altitude, such as headache, nausea or general lassitude. The optional use of 'Diamox' has proved useful for some people as it can reduce these symptoms. You will be given more information on 'Diamox' with your Final Information, between 8 and 10 weeks before departure.

Baggage

While trekking, you will only need to carry what you might use that day: i.e. rain gear, some spare clothes, camera, water etc. The rest of your kit will be carried by the burros (donkeys), so you will need a durable trek bag. You can leave some items at our hotel in Huaraz prior to the trek and a lockable bag is recommended if you are leaving valuable items.

Equipment and clothing

Full details of the equipment and clothing required will be sent when you book. You will need good mountain wear, a warm sleeping bag and light clothing for warm day temperatures. All communal and camp gear is provided.

Safety

Care must be taken in the streets and shops of Lima. Joe Simpson who has led several trips to Peru for us in the past recounts in one of his books 'Game of Ghosts' how someone removed his watch within minutes of leaving a hotel. Away from Lima things are more relaxed, but be careful. It is always a good idea to be discrete carrying valuable items and in how you use your camera. Think how you can look less like a tourist!

Language and people

A few words of Spanish, enough to say hello, count and tell the time, will make your visit more rewarding. People are usually pleased that you are making an effort to speak the language - even if it doesn't always come out right! There are few English speakers in Peru.

Cusco and Machu Picchu

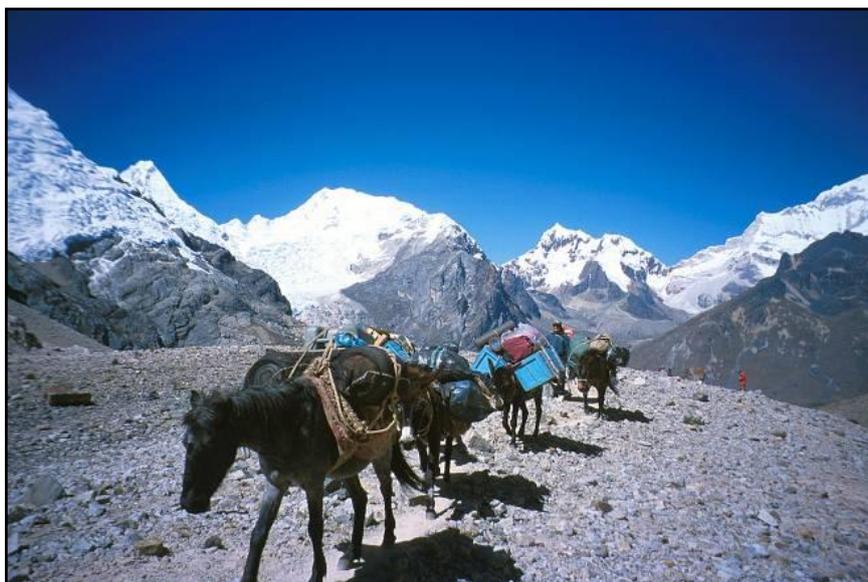
After your trek in Peru, take the opportunity of visiting one of the world's great wonders. Ask us for details.

What our clients say....

What did you enjoy most about your trip?

"Wow – what a question! It was the mountains, the trekking, not having to carry a pack, the camping, not having to cook or do housework for 3 weeks, no telephone, new culture to discover, learning to communicate in Spanish, new friends..."

Jenny Leith, Alpamayo Circuit



Donkeys on Alpamayo Circuit

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

This trip is 20 days ex LIMA. The first and last days refer to the days of arrival in and departure from LIMA, and may not be the days you leave or return home.

DAY 1 LIMA
Arrive Lima. Hotel.

DAY 2 HUARAZ (3050m)
We leave Lima early for the 8 hour bus journey to Huaraz. The first part of the journey follows an arid desert coastline with disturbing evidence of Peru's burgeoning urban population in several overflowing shanty settlements. As we head up into the mountains the landscape quickly becomes less sombre and rural life looks to be far preferable. Once over the pass of Conococha we have a first glimpse of snow-covered mountains and after a long day we finally arrive in Huaraz, the heart of the Peruvian Andes. (B)



DAY 3 HUARAZ (3050m)
At 3050m above sea level, this is the capital of Ancash province and is the trekking centre of the Cordillera Blanca. There is time to relax, recover from the travelling and start getting used to the altitude. With a local guide, a half-day acclimatisation walk beyond the town and up to a pre-Inca temple is an enjoyable first foray. A descent through fields finishes at the thermal pools at Monterey. (B)

Oranges for sale!

DAY 4 HUARAZ (3050m)
An acclimatisation day. We drive through villages up a nearby mountain valley to the road head (3850m). Laguna Churru (4450m) is a sapphire blue lake set in a beautiful amphitheatre, high above the main valley and is one of the jewels of the Cordillera Blanca. It is a tough but attainable target for the first outing and to climb high and then sleep lower is good for acclimatisation. We return to Huaraz. Hotel. (B,L)

DAY 5 CHOLIN (3150m)
To Alpamayo! The entire range of the northern Cordillera Blanca rears up from the main road as we drive west, dominated by the huge bulk of Huascarán, Peru's highest mountain at 6768m. We will pause and reflect at the memorials to Yungay, a thriving town of 25,000 people, horrifically obliterated in 1970 by a tidal wave of mud, ice and rock unleashed by an earthquake from the slopes of Huascarán. Beyond the market town of Caraz we turn off to climb up through patchwork fields towards the mountains to our first camp at the tiny adobe settlement of Cholin also called Hualcayan at 3150m. A chance of a last beer! 5 hour drive. (B,L,D)

DAYS 6-7 HERDERS CAMP (approx 3700m) or WISHCASH (4200m)
In the morning we meet our arrieros and their burros and set off climbing quite steeply in zig zags towards the skyline. The height gain to the usual campsite at Wishcash is a big jump so if there is water available (varies each season) we will

try to camp after a couple of hours and rest/acclimatise in the afternoon. It's another few hours on to Wishcash (4200m), an open grassy meadow. From camp we can follow a side trail towards Laguna Yuracocha with great first close views of one of the giants of the Blanca, Santa Cruz (6241m) and return to Wishcash. If we can't camp before Wishcash we'll have gained a rest day to use now or later, depending on energy. Total walking time to Wishcash approx 6 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 8

RUINA PAMPA (4100m)

Following a path threading between cliffs and crossing boiler-plate slabs, we arrive at Laguna Cullicocha (4650m). This is an impressive spot with fine views of Santa Cruz again. Our first pass of the day is Paso Cullicocha, sometimes called Paso los Cedros at 4850m with tremendous views of lakes and peaks. There is a descent and another climb to reach our second pass at 4800m. From here it is steeply down into the Quebrada los Cedros and a night at Ruina Pampa. Across the valley is the tiny high settlement of Alpamayo with its many Inca terraces. A marvellous day. 4100m. 7-8 hours. (B,L,D)



Approaching Cullicocha pass - Alpamayo behind

DAY 9

VALLEY CAMP (4150m)

Continuing up the valley, Alpamayo soon comes into view. We continue past our next campsite and climb up the moraine to pea-green Laguna Jancarurish nestling beneath a hanging glacier and the pyramid peak of Alpamayo. It is a truly alpine setting. If energy allows, we climb higher to visit the base camp. 4-5 hours (B,L,D)

DAY 10

QUEBRADA TAYAPAMPA (4250m)

An early river crossing and with Alpamayo always in view behind us, we climb steadily up to our next rocky pass (4830m) at the head of the Quebrada Alpamayo. The descent, rocky at first, drops into a classic feature of the Peruvian Andes, the broad grassland valley or 'Pampa' the haunt of the condor. We traverse easily to a lower pass (4460m) which reveals our next alpine views, the multi-peaked Pucajirca (6050m) and Laguna Sulfuna. We descend into the Quebrada Tayapampa to reach a fine grassy campsite by a bubbling stream. 7 hours. (B,L,D)

- DAY 11 QUEBRADA TAYAPAMPA (4250m)
With Alpamayo as a backdrop this is a great valley for a rest day with a pure water stream running through the campsite. There is a good walk across the valley and up towards the glacial Laguna Salfuna. (B,L,D)
- DAY 12 JANCAPAMPA (3600m)
Today is the 'Alpamayo' trek at its best – an exciting pass leading to a total contrast of landscape and our first Andean settlement. We begin with an ascent of a side valley from which there seems no easy way out. However a stiff climb and a final stretch of red scree brings us to the col (4600m). The initial descent on steep compressed gravel needs care for the first 30 or so metres, but then becomes easier and we enter a rocky valley with queñual woods clinging to the rocky cliffs of the valley sides. Continuing, we reach the wide flat valley of Jancapampa, full of wild horses and dominated by an immense hanging glacier at its head. Trilby hatted kids appear from nowhere and gather around our camp to guarantee an animated evening. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 13 LAGUNA HUECROCHA (3950m)
We pass village houses and terraced fields to climb up a long grassy valley towards the pass of Tupatupa (4400m). A long descent crosses another sparsely populated valley and leads to a campsite by Laguna Huecrocha at 3950m. 7 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 14 QUEBRADA HUARIPAMPA (3800m)
Past the head of the lake the track contours high above the valley floor until the final steep climb, passing a sparkling turquoise lake to Alto de Pucaraju (4650m). At the pass there is a superb array of peaks, but the most dominant is Taulliraju (5830m), towering over the pass. A steep rocky descent leads to the upper part of Quebrada Huaripampa and the main trail to Punta Union. We will find a good campsite at around 3800m. 7 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 15 MOLINO PAMPA (3600m)
We follow the main Punta Union trail further down the valley before branching off at the village of Colcabamba at 3300m. An easy rising traverse (unfortunately along a new road but only for an hour) passes attractive adobe, terracotta tiled, farmhouses and we arrive at our campsite in Molino Pampa. 6 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 16 KESHU VALLEY (4650m)
An ascent up the Keshu Valley takes us to the 'Avalanche Place' (4650m) - a dramatic campsite tucked away in a marvellous eyrie. Across the valley are the glaciers of Contrahierbas (6037m) and in the heat of the afternoon sun we can watch and hear avalanches roar down the mountain. 4 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 17 HUARAZ (3050m)
Our last pass, the Punta Yanayacu (4850m) is also the most dramatic. A narrow ledge cut into sheer cliffs crosses a rocky notch in the ridge and drops quite steeply down an old snowfield tucked out of the sun. Phew! But at last the slope relents, we emerge into the sun and descend pleasantly into the awesome Ulta Valley surrounded, once again on this magnificent trek, by a skyline of alpine ridges, peaks and turquoise lakes including the highest peak in Peru, Huascarán (6768m). Our bus is waiting by the bridge, the burros are unloaded for the last time, a fond farewell to our loyal arrieros and the trek is over. Our rough road takes us out of the mountains and back to our hotel in Huaraz for showers, food and a celebratory meal. 5hours. 2½ hour drive. (B,L)

- DAY 18 HUARAZ (3050m)
Free final day in Huaraz – sheer enjoyment after a long trek. Hotel. (B)
- DAY 19 TO LIMA
The return bus ride to Lima, usually a lively ride with re-oxygenating blood, a sense of achievement and a welcome rest from activity. Hotel. (B)
- DAY 20 DEPART LIMA
...or carry on with your own plans. (B)

If you are short of time it is possible to return to Lima early and miss the free day in Huaraz.



Our trek donkeys with Alpamayo behind

BL 10/16