



TREKS and CLIMBS in the CORDILLERA BLANCA



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.



Summit slope on Pisco, Huascaran behind photo Emma Bawtree

- **Trekking and more...!**
- **The classic Punta Union trek crosses two high passes, highest 4757m**
- **Trekkers' peaks Pisco (5752m) and Ishinca (5530m)**
- **Expect clear settled weather in the Peruvian dry season**
- **Good acclimatisation lead-in days**
- **Relaxing days in Huaraz, the 'Chamonix' of Peru**

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 is rapidly emerging from the aftermath of the terrorist conflict and economic collapse of the 1980's and 90's but at present 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, linguists, climbers and trekkers. Add the special vibrancy, colour and cacophony of its Andean and colonial culture and 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 and is the home of Alpamayo, 5947m - possibly the most beautiful mountain in the world and Huascarán (6768m), Peru's highest mountain and of course Pisco and Ishinca, our targets on this trip.

High Places in Peru

High Places have operated in Peru for 15 years. We were one of the first companies to return after the civil unrest and Shining Path activities of the early 90's and have a long established and successful relationship with our trekking agents in Huaraz.

The 'Treks and Climbs in the Cordillera Blanca' trip

This trip through the spine of the Andes combines one of the finest high mountain treks in the world with ascents of two popular trekkers' peaks, Pisco (5752m) and Ishinca (5530m).

From Huaraz our 7 day trek follows good paths and is the quintessential Cordillera Blanca experience. The longest day is approx 7 hours and the highest pass (Portachuelo de Llanganuco) is 4767m, from where we have our first views of Pisco.

Peru's Cordillera Blanca is a great first place to climb because the weather is usually stable and the mountains are magnificent and accessible. Both ascents are largely straightforward and the level of mountaineering suitable for a first sample of alpine-type climbing in the greater ranges.

By the time we reach Pisco's base camp we should be well acclimatised. A steady ascent up a snowfield winds around one or two crevasses and leads to the final slope. This has steepened in the last few of seasons and is challenging but safe. Peru's highest mountain, the mighty Huascarán is practically next door – the view is amazing.

Ishinca lies at the head of the next valley which is one of the most beautiful in the Blanca. From the glacier edge the climb meanders up straightforward snow slopes to the summit. The route is not difficult but the summit has a steeper final section. A big mountain and great views.



Near Pisco summit

The weather is generally fine at this time of year and very settled, so the chances of good conditions are high. On the peaks good quality warm and windproof clothing is essential. Ropes are used above the snowline, where we will be moving together in groups of three or four. Crampons and ice axes will also be used, though previous experience is not necessary as there will be training session prior to the climbs.

(All specialist climbing gear incl boots can be inexpensively hired in Huaraz.)

The trip involves 7 nights in hotels and 12 nights camping.

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 this drug can reduce these symptoms. You will be given more information on 'Diamox' with your Final Information, between 8 and 10 weeks before departure.

The trekking/climbing day

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

The climbing day is somewhat different. We generally leave camp between 2 and 3am to make full use of the more solid snow and ice conditions. Head torches and cold weather gear will be needed. Fitting and using crampons and ice axe in the dark and cold will be important and there will be time to practise this. We aim to be safely back in camp before the afternoon sun softens the snow. On Pisco, a high camp is required (on sandy moraine) which involves some carrying for 2-3 hours from where our support crew and horses can reach.

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 higher camps above 4000m.

Accommodation

In Lima we stay in an attractive colonial-style hotel situated close to the main square in the centre of the city. In Huaraz we are usually in a splendid hotel uphill from the town 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.

Transport

During the trip we will travel in our own private bus or minibus.

Food

While on trek we provide all meals and will take as much fresh meat and vegetables as we can. We are happy to cater for vegetarians 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. In practice, we will often eat together and advise on the best places. A meal in a cheapish restaurant should cost about 18 soles (US\$6-8 approx) and the best restaurant in town might charge in the region of 60-70 soles. (US\$20-25 approx).



Pisco summit

Health and hygiene

Being ill in Peru can be avoided. Initial contact with salads and street vended food should be resisted. Water should always be regarded with caution and treated (with iodine) if considered necessary. On trek we boil all drinking water and provide facilities for hand washing before all meals. With increased numbers on popular treks, camp hygiene and good judgement is vital. In camp we will use a toilet tent.

Baggage

While trekking, you will only need to carry what you might use that day i.e. rain gear, spare sweater, camera, water etc. However you will need to carry more up and down from the high Pisco camp - we recommend (minimum) 50 litre pack. Elsewhere the majority of your kit will be carried by the burros (donkeys), so you will need a durable trek bag. You can leave some items in the hotel prior to the trek and a lockable bag is recommended if you are leaving valuable items.

Safety

Care must be taken in the streets and shops of Lima. Joe Simpson our occasional celebrity leader in Peru recounts in one of his books 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.

Machu Picchu extension

After your trek in Peru take the opportunity to visit one of the world's great wonders. Ask for our fact sheet with details of 5 or 8 day extensions.



Machu Picchu and Huayna Picchu. Photo Peter Wise

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 and departure from LIMA, and may not be the days you depart from or arrive back home.

- DAY 1 Arrive Lima. Hotel.
- DAY 2 We leave Lima early for the eight hour bus journey to Huaraz. We have considered spending a 'shakedown' day in Lima but at this time of the year the weather is invariably gloomy, grey and overcast and we think it better to head up into the mountains without delay. 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, at a breathless 3050m above sea level is the capital of Ancash province and the trekking centre of the Cordillera Blanca. There is time to relax, recover from the travelling and start getting used to the altitude. We arrange a morning or an afternoon acclimatisation walk beyond the town and up to a Pre-Inca site. A descent through fields finishes at the thermal pools at Monterey! (B)
- DAY 4 An acclimatisation day. We drive through villages up a nearby mountain valley to the roadhead (3850m). Laguna Churup (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 but to climb high and then sleep lower is good for acclimatisation. We return to Huaraz. (B,L,)
- DAY 5 Time to start trekking. The entire range of the northern Cordillera Blanca rears up from the main road as we drive west dominated by the huge bulk of Huascaran, Peru's highest 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 Huascaran.
- Beyond the market town of Caraz we turn off to climb up a winding mountain road through patchwork fields to a high village and campsite. Cashapampa. 2900m (B,L,D)
- DAY 6 The arrieros (mulemen) arrive with the burros early in the morning, we take down the tents and leave after breakfast. From the camp we walk up the narrow Santa Cruz valley. This is the first part of one of the most famous treks in Peru, the Santa Cruz - Llanganuco circuit. As we gain height the valley opens out and more snowy peaks emerge onto the skyline. We camp at the small lake of Ichic cocha. 3800m. 5-6 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 7 Continuing up the Santa Cruz valley to Taullipampa, the peaks of Alpamayo, Quitaraju, and the amazing rock and ice towers of Taulliraju gradually dominate the view. The valley becomes a sea of lupins - bring lots of film! 4200m. 4 hours. (B,L,D)

- DAY 8 We spend 2 nights at the campsite at Taullipampa, either for a rest day, (a chance to acclimatise more slowly) or to take a short diversion up a side valley or scramble up and along a nearby ridge with views towards Alpamayo, best known because of its striking pyramid shape. In Peru it is known simply as 'the most beautiful mountain in the world'. (B,L,D)
- DAY 9 The first high pass is Punta Union (4750m). A short, steep ascent to the pass gives us some of the best views in the range. We have plenty of time to enjoy being there, and we can pick out Chacaraju and Pyramide in addition to many peaks to the south. From the pass we descend into the greener valley of Huaripampa, and arrive at the campsite of Pariac. 3800m. 6 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 10 From Pariac, the trail leads down through cultivated land, to the village of Colcabamba. The rural scenes we pass through provide a welcome contrast to the higher mountain environment in which we have spent the last few days. From Colcabamba the trail begins to climb once again towards the village of Vaqueria. We continue up a lane to our camp in a secluded amphitheatre. 3850m. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 11 Our route follows the valley upwards towards our next pass (Portachuelo de Llanganuco, 4767m) no more than a rocky notch in the skyline. Here we have our first view of Pisco, situated impressively amongst it's neighbours, Huandoy (6395m) and Chacaraju Oeste (6112m). Descent from our windy pass looks improbable but we use the old donkey track adjacent to the mad switchback dirt track road. This brings us into the well-used Quebrada Demanda camping area above Llanganuco. 4000m. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 12 The walk to base camp is easy now we are acclimatised. We may even beat the donkey team there! Pisco can be popular, so expect a few other people to be around. 4600m. 4 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 13 From base camp we need to carry all the gear to camp 1. The walk is entirely on moraine and rocky glacier. For some of the way there is a track, but there is also a fair bit of boulder hopping to be done. You will have to carry your sleeping bag and mat, plus all the clothes you need for the ascent, and of course your ice axe and crampons. Any help with other gear is welcome but not essential. There is a small lake for water and enough flat spots for about 10 tents, so we will fit into as few tents as possible, to save on space and weight! The panorama from here is fabulous; a perfect sunset makes it even better. 5000m. 2-3 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 14 **SUMMIT DAY!** We leave the camp at about 2.a.m., aiming to arrive at the top of Pisco (5752m) for sunrise. The climb is steady and the views of the whole range are superb. We are on snow after half an hour and move together, roped in groups of three or four. The ascent takes 5-7 hours and the descent to Camp 1 takes another 2 hours. We would expect to be back in Camp 1 by 10 or 11 a.m. for a brew and a quick snack. After a break we carry our gear back to base camp, which takes about 1½ hours, and we spend the night there. (B,L,D)



Approaching Pisco Summit

- DAY 15 We descend easily to the road and our waiting vehicle and drive back to the main highway. The drive to the Ishinca valley roadhead at the village of Collon takes about 2 hours. Our walk to Ishinca base camp (4100m), is a steady climb up through a steep sided valley. The rock scenery is magnificent and eventually the gorge opens out into high pasture where we can establish a comfortable base camp. 6 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 16 Rest day. Time to relax and clear heads for the Ishinca ascent. (B,L,D)
- DAY 17 A 3am start! We cross the valley and follow the clear path winding its way to the Ishinca glacier. As we approach the head of the valley and its glacial lake the sun lights up the huge peak of Ranrapalca ahead. From the glacier edge the climb meanders up straightforward snow slopes to the summit of Ishinca (5530m). The route is not difficult but the summit has a steeper final section. A big mountain and great views. 8-10 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 18 Walk out back down the valley, then bus to Huaraz, hot showers and a celebratory night out on the town. (B,L,D)
- DAY 19 The long 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 continue with your own arrangements. (B)

What our clients say:

"Yippee we made it! Wow! Amazing, breathless, sensational views, sunshine. What a day!"

Pisco summit day. Emma Bawtree.

BL 11/09



Sunrise on Chopicalqui from Pisco Summit

EXTENSION: 'PERU PEAKS' TOCLLARAJU ASCENT



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Summit of Tocllaraju

Extension details

Tocllaraju (6034m) is the dominant peak at the head of the Ishinca valley. An ascent by its north west ridge is around Alpine AD grade. The route involves a high glacier camp, 4-5 hours up from the main valley base camp. Next day an early start is needed to cross the glacier and climb a slope past some seracs to reach the NW ridge proper. The final 60-70m beneath the summit is not difficult but with changing snow conditions the state of the bergschrund varies and usually needs to be pitched.

DAY 17 of the 'Treks and Peaks ...' itinerary climbs Ishinca. On Day 18 the group walk out and return to Huaraz. Tocllaraju ascensionists remain at base camp.

DAY 18 Rest day at Ishinca valley base camp. (B,L,D)

DAY 19 We leave mid-morning to make the 4 hour climb to a high camp. There are faint tracks in and out of boulders as we ascend almost 1000m to the snowline. Here we put on crampons and climb up to a flat area on the glacier where we can clear space for our tents, cook a meal and rest. 5200m. (B,L,D)

DAY 20 We leave very early and head across the glacier towards the triangular shaped shadow of Tocllaraju. An intricate route weaves past large seracs and onto the easier slopes of the north west ridge. We hope to be here before first light. The route along the ridge climbs steadily in and out of the ice cliffs. The summit consists of a steep pyramid of snow. To reach it there is an approx 50° snow-ice slope which

requires two pitches and a variable bergschrund at its foot. It is exposed yet exhilarating and a really wild place to be! We descend, first back to the high camp and then to base camp and a waiting meal. 12-14 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 21 A freewheeling, end of trip walk-out back down the valley. A drive back to Huaraz, to hot showers and a celebratory night out on the town. (B,L,)

DAY 22 Return bus ride to Lima. (B,)

DAY 23 Depart Lima or continue with your own arrangements. (B)

Price for Tocllaraju extension

The standard extension involves three additional days to the 'Treks and Climbs' itinerary, but you may want to add a free day in Huaraz on DAY 22.

COST

£360/NZ\$790 per person based on minimum of two persons twin share.

Optional extra free day in Huaraz add £45/NZ\$100pp twin share

Includes: local climbing guides and full support crew; independent transport arrangements back to Huaraz by jeep or microbus; return to Lima on public 'InterCity' type coach; all accommodation. City or airport transfers in Lima are not included.



Tocllaraju (slight cloud) from Ishinca valley camp

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