



From Urubamba to Vilcabamba: Inca Trails To Choquequirao Day by day description

Day 1 CUSCO / HUANCACALLE

Morning departure by vehicle from Cuzco, over a rolling landscape with view of the snow capped peaks. We descend to the Sacred Valley, following the Urubamba river and the main road past the Inca village of Ollantaytambo. From here the road leaves the main valley and winds over the Abra de Málaga (Pass) at 4,170 m. (13,677 ft), descending a hanging valley behind Mt. Veronica. We then begin our slow descent into the cloud – forest past cultivated areas where bananas, avocados, coffee, tea and fruits are grown past a number of villages along the road until we again join the Urubamba River. At the confluence of this river with the Vilcabamba is found the village of Chaullay, a communal center (translates “to fish”) at 1,890 m.a.s.l. (6199.20 ft). After lunch we head into the Vilcabamba watershed past further settlements of cloud-forest farms until arriving at Huancacalle, the road head where we will camp at 2,900 m. (9,512 ft)

Day 2 HUANCACALLE / INCAMACHAY

In the morning we visit the archeological site of Vitcos, located on a hilltop at the confluence of the Vilcabamba and Andenes rivers. The rocky hill has a platform on top where Vitcos is found, it had walls, terracing, warehouses, temples and housing complexes, unfortunately disturbed over time, having had a commanding view of the valley as a strong- hold and look – out point. Ñusta Hispana, originally known as Chukipalta, is a complex of white carved stones which were of religious and ritual importance.

We leave the site and begin our ascent towards Pumachaca, where we have lunch. We continue walking uphill, heading slowly above the tree – line passing small forests of Queñua (an indigenous tree Polylepis) to reach camp at Incamachay below the pass where we camp at 3,500 m / 11,480 ft (Trekking: 7 hours Distance: 10 kms).

Day 3 INCAMACHAY / QUELQAMACHAY

As we leave our camp we arrive at a cirque below the pass. On the right we will find an Inca Trail, its flagstoned path will bring us to this Pass of Choquetacarpo at 4,520 m (14825.60ft.). We begin our descent on this Inca Trail, loosing it in parts and have lunch below the pass. As we enter this hanging valley, it narrows and on the left side we begin to see huge rock spires of 600 – 800 meters in height, reminiscent of the Dolomites. We reach a small pampa, situated below this awesome scenery, near the edge of the cloud – forest and camp at 3,480 m. (11414.40 ft.) a beautiful setting. (Time: 9 hrs. Distance: 17 kms.)



Day 4 QUELCAMACHAY / YANAMA

Continuing our descent we begin to enter cloud – forest, the dense vegetation of trees, lichens, ferns and bromelids is around us. We may see an orchid in bloom if we are lucky. The trail follows an ascending gradient above the valley floor and at the lunch – spot in Chungana (3,600 m. / 11,808 ft) we will get a beautiful view of Mt. Pumasillo (the puma's claw in Quechua), a magnificent peak in the heart of the Cordillera Vilcabamba. From here we start the last leg of our day trek to the village and river of Yanama, above which we camp at 3,530 m (11578.4 ft) (Trek: 7hrs Distance: 9 kms)

Day 5 YANAMA / MINA VICTORIA / MAIZAL

The trail starts climbing steeply towards Mina Victoria, a pre-columbian and colonial mine. On the trail we will get beautiful views of Mt. Pumasillo in the background. Once over the pass at 3,900 m / 12792 ft, we have lunch and begin our descent along a hill called Qoriwayrachina, where recent archaeological explorations have taken place. We continue our descent until reaching Maizal, a balcony with an impressive view of the Yurahmayo and Yanama gorges, as they join and rush towards the Apurimac Canyon. It's a natural viewpoint, looking out to the west with beautiful sunsets where we spend the night in a temperate climate at 2,980 m / 9774.4 ft (Trek: 6hrs Distance: 10kms)

Day 6 MAIZAL / MARAMPATA

Leaving early, since it will be a long day, we descend on the steep trail to the Yurahmayo river crossing it and then following an ascending trail towards Pichiyoz Unu (gushing water in Quechua), an area of terracing on the hillside located behind Choquequirao ruins which was probably cultivated to supply food to the site dwellers. Here we will lunch.

We continue uphill to the Pass of Choquequirao (3,250 m. / 10660 ft.) and begin to enter cloud – forest where we can find Polylepis trees, epiphytes and bromelids, reaching the upper Plaza of the archaeological site. We cross this area and descend to our campsite at Marampata, overlooking the Apurimac Canyon (Time: 9hrs Distance 16kms)

Day 7 CHOQUEQUIRAO

We will spend the whole day exploring the varied archaeological sites located at different points on the hillside overlooking the Apurimac River. We pass the stream of Chunchumayo, the views from here to the other side of the Canyon are spectacular and the restored buildings were areas used for storage, living quarters, a garrison, and the ceremonial sites are impressive. First reports of a visit to this complex are from 1768 with many more later-explorers, scientists and treasure hunters all the way through 1909 when Hiram Birgham also visited the area reportedly his first contact with a lost citadel of the Incas.

We will have time to wander through this extended settlement spending most of the day looking at the different buildings. Return to camp for some free time to relax.



Day 8 MARAMPATA / CHIQUISCA

We begin our descent all the way to the river and have lunch at the bottom. From here cross the Apurimac River heading up to Chiquisca, as we start our ascent to Cachora. (Time 6hrs Distance: 6kms)

Day 9 CHIQUISCA / CACHORA / CUSCO

A last ascent to Capuliyoc and from here it is relatively even until reaching the village of Cachora. Here our vehicle will be waiting to take us back to Cusco, where we arrive in the evening. This main road joins the coast of Peru at Nazca with Cusco. It is a beautiful drive down the Curawasi Valley and up to the Limatambo Pass entering Antapampa before finally reaching our lodging in Cusco.

SERVICES INCLUDED: Transportation by vehicle to start and from the end of trek to your city of departure, two-man tents including sleeping pads, pack animals, kitchen crew and commissary gear with all meals included as well as a bilingual guide on the trek, who will handle the first aid kit.

SERVICES NOT INCLUDED: Meals in the cities, alcoholic beverages, extras, tips, laundry service, additional tours, insurance and airline tickets (where applicable), sleeping bags, hiking boots and other personal gear.