

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS

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COTAHUASI CANYON TREK • PERU 16 DAYS • 15 NIGHTS

This expedition explores the wild, remote region of the Andes mountain range around Cotahuasi in southern Peru. Below Cotahuasi the Cotahuasi river runs through the deepest canyon in the world. Although this canyon has been run by a handful of extreme rafting / kayaking expeditions this is a little trekked area with few organised expeditions. As far as is known, this Pioneer Expedition is the first group trek across the entire length of the canyon.

This challenging expedition encompasses real adventure with the natural wonders and fascinating ancient history of the region. We will trek along wild and rocky trails accessible only by foot, encountering spectacular mountain scenery and picturesque hamlets deep in the canyon. We also visit the world's largest petroglyph field with mysterious figures carved into the rocks, soak in steaming thermal baths and at 3500m above sea level, we shall visit the 'Valley of Volcanoes' with its 80 small inactive cones.



Do Something Extraordinary.....



2009 EXPEDITION DOSSIER

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Trekking the entire length of the **world's deepest canyon**, the remote Cotahuasi. With its spectacular scenery of lofty peaks and rushing rivers
- Beautiful **colonial architecture** of the city of Arequipa
- Spectacular **altiplano and volcanic scenery**

Lima to Lima (land only)

To reserve your place on this trip (without obligation and for up to two weeks) please telephone us on +44 (0)845 0047 801. To book please check availability, complete a booking form and return it to us. You should include a cheque for your deposit of £300/\$600 with your booking form. On receipt of your booking form we will send you a booking acknowledgement, along with your joining instructions and all other information relevant to this trip. If you have any further questions regarding this trip please contact us. You can liaise with the expedition leader regarding all aspects of the trip pre-departure. Clients booked on this trip should make their way to the joining point in Lima, as detailed in the joining instructions.

Do you?

- ✓ Have a passion for the outdoors
- ✓ Want a challenging trek away off the beaten track
- ✓ Want to experience Peru and all its beauty

Traversing the deepest canyon in the world (3354 m - 160m deeper than the nearby Colca Canyon), sometimes crossing the river using harnesses on cable crossings and over rustic but sturdy suspension bridges, will take ten days. Trekking through this impressive gorge a lot of time will be spent in unknown isolation with chances to see ancient civilisation, including evidence of past occupations, amphitheatres and the burial sites of the lost city of Marpa.

The headwaters of the River Cotahuasi have their source in the Cordillera de Huanzo, a remote and very rarely visited part of the Peruvian Andes in the extreme north west of the Department of Arequipa, and discharge some 300km later into the Pacific Ocean as the River Ocoña. Although the Cotahuasi region was declared a Zona Reserva Turistica in 1988 very little was known about the area and even less about the canyon until a kayak / raft expedition first ran it in 1994.

In pre-Colombian times the canyon was a more travelled route; an Inca road ran through most of the length and many sections still remain, as well as agricultural terracing and ruins. This Inca road may well have been based on routes previously built and used by the Huari culture, an important power in the highlands of central and southern Peru from 600-1000AD.

difficulty
comfort
exclusivity



ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrive Lima

Arrive in Lima, rendezvous with expedition leader and transfer to hotel. Lima was founded in 1535 as "City of the Kings" by Francisco Pizarro (Conquistador of the Incas) as his capital. Although earthquakes have destroyed the original city the historic centre contains many impressive colonial buildings from later periods, and the city also has many first class museums, especially dealing with Peru's impressive pre-Colombian history.

Day 2 Fly to Arequipa

An hour's flight takes us to Arequipa (2,300m), Peru's second city, set in a beautiful desert valley dominated by volcanoes. It is also known as "The White City" as much of the city is built from a white volcanic rock known locally as "sillar", giving it a distinctive atmosphere. The historic centre has been declared a UNESCO heritage site and contains many fine colonial buildings and churches. Of particular interest are the Santa Catalina convent (a beautiful "mini-city" shut off from the outside world until the 1970s) and the Andean Sanctuaries Museum (containing frozen Inca human sacrifices discovered on nearby volcanoes by National Geographic expeditions).

Days 3 Drive to Cotahuasi

Leaving early, we set off into the spectacular mountain scenery around Arequipa. Our route initially follows the Pan American highway through the desert, then inland following the Majes river valley (well known for the production of wine and pisco, Peru's national drink) before climbing towards the Andean mountains. We climb steeply to reach the high altiplano passing close to the mighty glacier covered flanks of Coropuna (at 6,425m the highest peak in southern Peru) and Solimana volcanoes. The road reaches around 4750m in the highest section before dropping steeply to the village of Cotahuasi. Despite the bleak and hostile terrain, some interesting high altitude plants and wildlife species can be found in this region: the domestic South American llamas and alpacas are commonly seen grazing and with luck we will also see their beautiful and much rarer wild cousin - the vicuña.

Day 4 In Cotahuasi (2680m)

Cotahuasi is the main centre for exploring the network of valleys and canyons that contain the headwaters of the River Cotahuasi. A short drive takes us to the nearby highland village of Pampamarca and a chance to visit the bizarre rock formations at Huito and the Uskune waterfall. We return via the thermal baths at Luicho, an opportunity to soak and relax before beginning our trek through the canyon! Andean condors are



present in the whole Cotahuasi region and with luck we will be able to spot one of these majestic birds (with a potential wingspan of over 3m!) soaring gracefully on thermals.

climbs before traversing along a narrow trail cut out of the canyon wall in places (not for vertigo sufferers!) to reach the small citrus growing village of Chaupo some 3 hours below Sipia. From Chaupo the trail levels and continues through giant cacti forests before passing below the hamlet of Velinga to our riverside camp at Mayu. A small thermal pool here gives us a chance to relax tired legs.

Day 5 Trek through Cotahuasi Canyon to Mayu (1,800m; 7-8 hours approx)

Below Cotahuasi the river, of the same name, has carved out the deepest canyon in the world. A short drive takes us closer to the start of the canyon at Sipia Bridge where we enter a wild rocky world only accessible by foot or raft/kayak. A short walk brings us to the Sipia waterfall, where the entire river plunges spectacularly over 100m into a narrow fissure. From here the trail

Day 6 Trek through Cotahuasi Canyon to Quechualla (1700m; 6-7 hours)

Below Mayu we continue deeper into the canyon, at times following remains of the original pre-Colombian trail and passing the archaeological site of Huaña, consisting of the remains of storehouses & agricultural terraces that once lined this route

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Day 15 Fly to Lima

We take an early morning flight back to Lima today where our expedition ends.

For those of you wishing to spend a few extra days in Lima, Pioneer are happy to organise hotel accommodation.



in ancient times. Beyond Quechualla we continue to reach the side valley of Uswa, the deepest point of the whole canyon. Quechualla itself is a pretty little hamlet with its streets covered in vines; grapes and wines are grown and produced here in season.

Unlike Machu Picchu, the lost city of Marpa sees few visitors due to its inaccessible location and we can explore the terraced fields, amphitheatres and burial sites (Chulpas) in relative peace.

Note: While our intention is to adhere to the day to day route as printed, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary and night stops may vary from those suggested. The day to day schedule should be taken only as a general guide. We cannot accept responsibility for changing the proposed itinerary or any inaccuracies or errors. A variety of factors, including adverse weather conditions and difficulties with transportation, can lead to enforced changes. The expedition leader will make any changes where necessary.

Days 7 & 8 Trek through Cotahuasi Canyon via Huachuy (3,200m,) to Marpa (approx 1,500m)

From Quechualla the trail climbs for several hours out of the canyon to reach the small highland village of Huachuy, at 3,200m the highest point of the trek.

The next day is the longest and toughest day of our trek (approx 10-12 hours). We continue through the rugged scenery along the canyon's rim to reach an abandoned mining camp on a ridge at Estacion. From here the trail begins a long steep rocky descent back down into the canyon to reach the ruins of Marpa. We camp below the site by the river.

Days 10-13 –Trek through Cotahuasi Canyon to Barrera (5-6 hours per day)

Below Marpa the canyon is hardly known except to a few river runners; the route continues beneath rocky walls, with sections of the original trail and archaeological remains showing that it was once an important route in pre-Colombian times.

On day 12, the rivers Marán and Chachas join the Cotahuasi in quick succession to form the River Ocoña, which continues to the Pacific Ocean ; near the second confluence is the village of Chaucalla (900m). Below here the canyon starts to open out and we have finally reached the Andean foothills and lowlands. We spend the final night of the trek at Barrera.



Day 9 The Lost City of Marpa

Today is a well deserved rest day, where we can explore the ruins of Marpa. These are by far the largest in the canyon; it is possible the site once covered an area similar in size to Machu Picchu.

Probably dating initially from the Huari period, extensive areas of terracing as well as residential areas cover the steep canyon walls on both sides of the river, showing that the ability to plan and build cities on steep mountainsides was not confined to the Incas! We spend a day here to relax and explore this impressive site more thoroughly.

Day 14 Drive from Barrera to Arequipa

In Barrera we meet our transport for a full day's drive following a rough road on down the Ocoña River valley to meet the Pan American highway; which takes us through Peru's rugged desert coastal plain before climbing into the mountains back to Arequipa.



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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Tourist visas are not required for citizens of UK and USA. Visitors are normally given permission to stay for up to 90 days on arrival. Passports should be valid for at least 6 months beyond the intended dates of stay. In case of queries you should consult the Peruvian consular representatives in your country. Note that some flights to Peru transit the USA - you should check latest visa situation with your US Embassy or Consulate.

FLIGHTS

International flights are not included. Internal return flights from Lima to Arequipa and all other surface transportation is included. If you require information regarding airlines and routes please contact us.

VACCINATION AND PROTECTION

Nothing compulsory, though protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis and polio is recommended. You should consult your doctor or travel clinic for up to date advice. Note that malaria, dengue and yellow fever are present in Peru but normally confined to Amazon and jungle regions.

INSURANCE

Adequate travel insurance is mandatory for everyone who participates in a Pioneer expedition. Please bring a copy of your insurance policy and contact numbers to give to your expedition leader in case of illness or accident.

ACCOMMODATION

Where possible we will stay in first class accommodation, though please bear in mind outside the main cities accommodation is likely to be basic and limited, we will stay in the best available. During the trek we will be travelling in remote, rugged terrain and accommodation will be in 2 person tents.

ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION

If you require accommodation either before or after the trip, we can book this for you (subject to availability) provided you notify us at the time of booking. Payment for this should be made to Pioneer before departure.

EXPEDITION TEAM

Maximum group size is 8 plus Pioneer expedition leader, English speaking local guides, local expedition crew, including muleteers, drivers and cooks.

TRANSPORT

We have internal return flights between Lima and Arequipa. Private 4 wheel drives are used for the drive from Arequipa to Cotahuasi, and private transport for our return journey after the trek.

PERSONAL EXPENSES

This is a fully inclusive expedition from days 3 to 18. All entrance fees, guiding, logistics, hotels and most drinks are included. Not included are visas, tips, optional excursions and personal expenses. US dollars and Euros can easily be changed into Peruvian Soles. ATMs are available in both Lima and Arequipa and take most common debit/credit cards. Travellers cheques in US Dollars or Euros can be changed in most towns but involve more bureaucracy than cash. Credit cards can be used in more up market places in major towns.

BAGGAGE

Baggage should be kept to a minimum as for much of the trip it will be carried by mules. A rucksack or army style kit / duffel bag is ideal for this; you will also need a day pack that is large enough to comfortably carry what you will need during the day on the trek (30-45 litre capacity is normally adequate). A small additional lockable kit bag will enable you to leave any spare clothes or luggage you don't need while we are trekking in our hotel in Arequipa.

MEAL PLAN

Whilst driving and trekking in Cotahuasi all meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) are included. Only breakfast is included in Lima and Arequipa. Food will be prepared by our cooks whilst trekking and we will use locally sourced fresh produce where possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

As with all Pioneer expeditions, we are committed to maximising the benefits of our trips to the local community and minimising the negative impact associated with tourism. We employ local agents and staff, not just to benefit the local economy, but also to give you a real sense of Peruvian culture. To greatly reduce our impact on the environment there is a maximum of 8 team members, which helps to minimise the damage associated with large scale tourism.

EXPERIENCE AND FITNESS

Although no special experience is required, it is expected that clients will have an above average level of fitness and some mountain walking experience carrying day packs. Most days on the trek will involve 5-7 hours of walking with a couple of longer tougher days (longest day estimated to be 10-12 hours). Terrain will involve rough, rocky, steep loose paths in sections, with a couple of long ascents and descents; short ascents and descents will be commonplace. One section of the trek on the first day will involve a cliff-side trail not recommended for vertigo sufferers.

ALTITUDE

Note that short periods of the tour will be spent at altitude. The highest altitude reached will be around 4700m briefly during the drive between Arequipa and Cotahuasi, and we will spend one night at around 3500m at Andagua on this route. Most of the trek will be below 2500m, apart from one night spent at Huachuy at approx 3100m.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

Personal Clothing

- Personal Clothing
- Strong well broken in walking boots with ankle support (trails in the canyon will involve some steep sections on rough, loose rocky paths)
- Comfortable walking socks and liner socks
- Sports sandals/lightweight shoes for use in town and around camp
- Lightweight breathable long sleeved tops and trousers for trekking
- Warm top / fleece
- Thermal underwear for a couple of colder nights at altitude
- Lightweight breathable waterproofs
- Sunhat
- Swimming costume / shorts and lightweight towel

Equipment

- Personal first aid kit including blister kit
- Rucksack/kit bag (to be carried by mules on trek)
- Day pack to carry what you need during the day on trek (30-45 litre capacity)
- Lightweight sleeping mattress / thermarest
- Sleeping bag (suggest 2-3 season; with thermal underwear layers for one colder night on trek)
- Torch and spare batteries
- Large (2 litre) water bottle and iodine tablets
- Insect repellent
- Sun block, hat and glasses
- Biodegradable soap
- Binoculars if interested in wildlife
- Trekking poles if preferred

Group Equipment Provided during Trek

- 2 person tents
- Cooking equipment, utensils and food
- Mules and muleteers (including spare mules in case of emergencies)
- Medical kit
- Harnesses for cable crossings in the canyon