

THE CLASSIC SANTA CRUZ – 4D3N

Overview:

The Santa Cruz Trek is one of the most scenic short treks in the White Mountain Range. Starting in Vaquería, this 4-day adventure cross a high mountain pass, glacial valleys, and turquoise lakes, all surrounded by spectacular Andean peaks.

Highlights include breathtaking views of Alpamayo, Taulliraju, Artesonraju, and Quitaraju mountains, as well as crossing the iconic Punta Unión Pass with panoramic views of the entire range. Nights are spent camping in stunning locations along the Santa Cruz Valley.

Perfect for travelers seeking a compact yet unforgettable high-altitude trekking experience in Peru.

Highlights

- Scenic start in Vaquería, crossing the White Mountain Range from east to west
- Spectacular views of Alpamayo, Taulliraju, Artesonraju, and Quitaraju mountains
- Cross the iconic Punta Unión Pass with breathtaking panoramas
- Hike through the stunning Santa Cruz Valley with rivers, meadows, and glaciers
- Camp in beautiful high-altitude locations surrounded by towering peaks
- Experience authentic Andean landscapes and remote mountain scenery

Detailed itinerary:

Day 01: Depart Huaraz for the start of our trek at Vaquería. Hike to Paria Camp

Leaving early in the morning we drive along the Santa Valley passing several villages until we reach present-day Yungay. The road winds slowly up into the gully between the Huascaran massif and the Huandoy three-pronged peak. As we reach the overhanging valley we arrive at the boundary of Huascaran National Park. Llanganuco, as the area is known, has two lakes, Chinancocha and Orconcocha with beautiful turquoise waters. We continue driving to Portachuelo de Llanganuco Pass located at 4707m. (15,442 ft.). Here we have one of the best views to appreciate beautiful mountains such as Huascaran (6,768m. / 22,204ft.), Huandoy (6,395m. / 20,980ft.), Pisco (5,752m. / 18,871ft.), Chacaraju (6,112m. / 20,052ft.), etc. Then we drive down to Vaquería where we start our trek at 3,640m. (11,942ft.).

Breaking our parking place, we trek up the Huaripampa Valley, passing through several small Andean agricultural settlements. Pacing out our day sensibly, we ascend to our camp located in Paria valley at 3,822m. (12,539ft.) and settle to enjoy mountain views of Paria (5,510m. / 18,077ft.) and Piramide (5,885m. / 19,307ft.) looming at the head of the valley.

(L / D)

Trekking distance: 10.6 km (6.6 mi) – Time: 5 hours

Bus ride: 119 km (74 mi) – Time: 5 hours

Day 02: Hike to the Continental Divide Pass, Punta Union and Descend to Taullipampa Camp

As we approach the pass, the majestic Mt. Taulliraju towers above us, its glacier and glacial lake creating a striking contrast with the vibrant Santa Cruz Valley below. From the pass, we are treated to breathtaking views of peaks such as Quitaraju, Artesonraju, and Rinrijirca, alongside the turquoise waters of Ichiccocha and Jatuncocha.

After a well-deserved rest, we begin our descent—this time on the Pacific side, as the pass marks the continental divide between the Amazon and Pacific watersheds. We continue down to Taullipampa, where we set up camp for the night at 4,180m./13,713ft., surrounded by the awe-inspiring grandeur of the White Mountain Range.

(B / L / D)

Trekking distance: 12.4 km (7.7 mi) – Time: 8-9 hours

Day 03: Ascend to the Alpamayo Lookout and Descend into Llamacorrall Camp

Today we continue our trek down the Santa Cruz Valley, passing the Arhuaycocha side valley and enjoying spectacular views of snow-capped peaks, including the iconic Mt. Alpamayo. The landscape gradually changes, with scree slopes rising on either side of the now marshy meadows and boulders scattered from the eroded cliffs above.

We climb to a stunning viewpoint to admire the majestic Alpamayo in all its glory. By the end of the day, the canyon widens, and we reach Llamacorrall, where we set up camp at 3,783m./12,411ft.

(B / L / D)

Trekking distance: 13.8 km (8.5 mi) – Time: 7-8 hours

Day 04: Hike down to Cashapampa village and drive to Huaraz

A steep morning descent brings us to Cashapampa (2,944 m), where we meet our vehicle for the transfer back to Huaraz. We bid farewell to our camp crew as the road winds gently down to the main valley, arriving in Huaraz in the afternoon.

(B / L / D)

Trekking distance: 10 km (6.2 mi) – Time: 4 hours

End of services

B- Breakfast / BL- Box Lunch / L- Lunch / D- Dinner

Included:

- Transportation
- Professional bilingual guide
- Double occupancy tents with Thermarest sleeping pads
- All meals during trek
- Non-alcoholic drinks
- Kitchen and dining tents
- Cook and field staff
- Horses and drivers
- Entrance tickets
- Solar energy lamps
- Eco toilets
- Adequate garbage disposal
- First aid kit and oxygen tank

Not included:

- Personal travel insurance
- Laundry service
- Airline tickets

- Sleeping bags (rent available)
- Personal gear
- Alcoholic beverages
- Additional services
- Tips
- Extras

What to take:

- Regular and long wicking first layer for cold weather, like polyester, nylon, or merino wool
- Short-sleeved shirts or t-shirts, breathable fabrics, like nylon and polyester
- Light-colored long-sleeved shirts or t-shirts
- QuickDry Pants, trekking pants, and shorts
- Insulated long-sleeve jacket (fleece, synthetic, down, merino wool)
- Liner gloves
- Light cap and beany
- Rain jacket (in the rainy season, bring rain pants)
- Breathable sports socks or hiking socks
- Warm socks for nights
- Multifunctional headwear (e.g. Buff)
- Waterproof and breathable hiking boots
- Comfortable and lightweight shoes for campsite
- Sleeping Bag (0°/32° to -15°/ 5°) (rent available)
- Day Pack (preferably with rain cover)
- Trekking Poles (available to rent)
- Waterproof duffle bag
- Sunglasses
- Headlamp
- Microfiber towel
- Sunblock, lip balm, and insect repellent
- Reusable water bottle or vacuum bottle
- Portable Power Bank (to charge lamps, etc)
- Personal First Aid Kit (recommended)

On each trip we carry a medical kit, but we suggest you bring a small personal First-Aid Kit for bruises and blisters. Knee and ankle braces are sometimes useful especially if you suffer from weak knees or ankles. Include any special medication your doctor might suggest for you.