



Trekking in Colca Canyon

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TRIP DATES: 19-24/07/2000

EXCHANGE: 3.48

WEATHER: day - hot (windy in afternoon); night - cold!!

TERRAIN: World's 2nd Deepest Canyon, ie. steep

rate: 5

ROUTE: Arequipa - Chivay s/13 with La Reyna - 3.5 hours (nice bus)

Chivay - Yanque (on foot via Coporaque and Ichupampa in 1 day)

Yanque - Cabanaconde s/4 with a local combi - 2 hours-ish

Cabanaconde - Cruz del Condor s/1 with La Reyna (the first bus company to leave in the morning apart from the 5am combi)

Cruz del Concor - Cabanaconde (on foot via Mirador de Tapay, San Juan de Chuchos, Cosnihua, Malata and the Oasis in 1 day - but using mules for the main part of the climb back up to Cabanaconde at s/30 for a pair)

Cabanaconde - Chivay s/3 with La Reyna

Chivay - Arequipa s/13 with La Reyna

HOTELS:

Chivay - Hospedaje La Finca on main street s/15 for room with bathroom and warm water (nice, clean, new)

Trekking guide - Remi (his wife works at Casa de Lucila in Chivay and they both live in Yanque) s/25 per day

Coporaque - lunch at the house next to the Casa del Turista in the main plaza s/1.5 for a delicious, filling 2 course menu with refresco

Yanque - Hostal Don Juan s/10 (at discount from s/15) for room with bathroom (nice, clean)

Yanque - breakfast/lunch/dinner menus around s/2.5 at restaurant in plaza, but only during set hours

Cabanaconde - Hostal Cañon del Colca on main street s/12 (at discount from s/15) for bed in shared room with bathroom (nice, clean)

Cabanaconde - one of the restaurants in the plaza dinner menu s/3

Trekking guide from Hostal Valle del Fuego - Henry s/20 per day plus I paid all his food and accomodation on the 2 day trip

San Juan de Chuchos - Roy's place s/5 for bed (food was a rip off - s/4 for dinner which consisted of literally nothing more than rice, potato and an egg)

Cabanaconde - Hostal Valle del Fuego dinner menu s/7

Chivay - Casa de Lucila s/25 for room with bathroom and warm water (nice, clean, very cosy) although I had been told the night before I could get it for s/15

ESSENTIALS: sun hat and sun block for days, woolly hat and gloves (and sleeping bag) for nights, water purification tablets and some supplies bought in Chivay or Cabanaconde (if trekking over the other side of the canyon from Cabanaconde), torch (and candle) can be very useful, PLENTY of small notes and change, decent walking shoes/boots, the usual loo paper

COMMENTS: When I got to CHivay in the evening, I had a terrible altitude headache, so just had lots of mate de coca and went to bed. After that I was fine in the Canyon.

The one day trek Chivay-Coporaque-Ichupampa-Yanque was a very pleasant day. I'm not a mega-fit person at all and I enjoyed the walk because it's not very much up and down, you're in the beautiful countryside and in these tiny villages with no other tourists. This part of the canyon is not very deep. My guide Remi was the most polite Peruvian I have ever met.

I had planned to stay overnight at the Casa del Turista in the bakery at Ichupampa, but when we arrived the owner was out at her farm. So we waited nearly 2 hours for her to come back, only for her not to be able to find the key to the tourist room. So she gave us free fresh bread rolls to say sorry and we quickly (partly in the dark) trekked over to Yanque to stay the night. There's a Casa del Turista there too, but the owner was also away so I found another hostel. The following morning I went back down (30 mins down, 40 mins up at leisurely pace) to the Yanque bridge to bath in the hot springs there for s/2.

In Cabanaconde I didn't like the rooms at Hostal Valle del Fuego, so I found a much better deal elsewhere. However I went to them for trekking advice having decided on the spur of the moment that I wanted to do some more trekking over to the other side of the Canyon. I spoke to a guide Alex who said that my idea was perfectly feasible (to go to see the condors on the first bus at 7.30am and then trek over to San Juan for lunch before staying overnight in Cosnihua and then the following day trek to the Oasis for lunch with the final ascent that afternoon). However when I turned up the following morning he seemed to have forgotten about our deal and said he couldn't guide me himself after all and rushed around dragging some young lad out of the shower (I think) to throw him on the bus. Then at the last stop before exiting Cabanaconde itself, Alex appeared with yet another teenager (Henry) who swapped over for my guide.

So we set off to see the condors (stunning and very graceful). And I explained the trek plan to Henry who agreed with it but said that we should descend from the Mirador de Tapay (which I had been told was dangerously steep and narrow, but he insisted was fine) rather than go back further towards Cabanaconde to take the main path. So we set off and the descent was scarily (for me anyway) steep and narrow and I hated this part. Then as time passed and it became apparent that we wouldn't make it to San Juan for lunch, I got out the snacks I'd bought for the walk which I obviously had to share with my guide, who had brought literally nothing (no food, no water) with him. The sun was beating down and it wasn't the most fun in the world, not having had a proper lunch at all. If I had only been told, I would have brought rations from Cabanaconde.

Finally we reached the bridge across the river at the bottom and stopped for a long break. Henry persuaded me that it would be better to stay overnight in San Juan at Roy's place (rather than carry on to Cosnihua to stay at Mauricio's) because it was cheaper,

nicer and better food at Roy's. I was so tired, hungry and thirsty that I agreed (although looking back he obviously got commission from Roy). The place was fine, but only Roy Junior was there, who cooked one of the worst meals I've had in Peru, but I was SO hungry I ate it all. Water cost s/5 for 1.5 litres. The breakfast consisted of 2 stale bread rolls, 1 more egg and a tomato for another s/2.5. Once again, if I had only been told, I would have brought rations from Cabanaconde. And a couple of tourists I had met had raved about the food they got at Cosnihua.

Despite making me get up early for to start off at 7am, my guide disappeared with Roy Junior for ages and we finally left at 8:30am. Henry had injured his knee, so I gave him my emergency bandage to help him along. We made it to the Oasis at 12:15am. I had been told there was a better pool further along there, but Henry wouldn't let me go over to find it, because he was only authorised (ie. getting commission!!) for the first site. So we ate a s/8 menu (RIP OFF) and Henry persuaded me to hire mules for myself and him for the majority of the climb, since I was now tired and fed up (and had no snack rations to eat at this pricey Oasis) and he had his bad knee.

Once back in Cabanaconde at the Valle del Fuego, I was so relieved to be back and OK that I didn't have the energy to complain, although had Alex been there I would have had words over his lack of info and advice for the trek.

The scenery was stunning and that made up for some of the down points, but I would shop around a lot more next time. I think I was worried because I was trying to organise a trekking guide in the evening for the following day, so I took the first without question, but that's perfectly normal, so don't be rushed.

I actually preferred Chivay to Cabanaconde, especially because I was there on Monday and Thursday (market days and very bustling).