



# Central Highlands

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## Why Go?

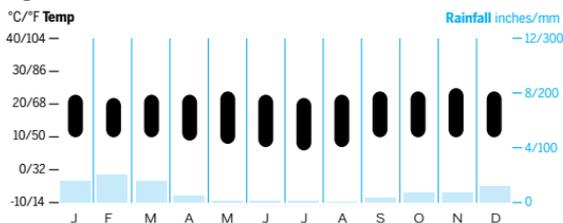
If it's breathtaking ancient ruins or immersion in uninterrupted wilderness that you crave during your Peruvian voyage, listen up. The rocky, remote central highlands can match the country's better-known destinations for these things and more: with the almost absolute absence of other travelers.

This sector of the Andes is Peru at its most Peruvian: at its zenith from Easter to July for the greatest of its myriad fiestas. Travel here is not for the faint-hearted. But adventure-spirited souls will discover better insights into local life than are possible elsewhere: bonding with locals on bumpy buses, perhaps, or hiking into high hills to little-known Inca palaces.

Life in this starkly beautiful region is lived largely off the land: donkeys ply roads more than cars and bright indigenous dress predominates in communities secreting Peru's best handicrafts. The region's rearing, lake-studded mountains, it often seems, shield the central highlands from the 21st century.

## When to Go

### Ayacucho



**Jan** Hot but rain-prone summer weather as Huancayo celebrates New Year with particularly quirky *Año Nuevo* festivities.

**Mar/Apr** Peru's biggest and best Easter party unfolds during Ayacucho's *Semana Santa*.

**Jul & Aug** Dry weather with chilly, star-heavy nights conducive to toddies and thermal bath relaxation in Huancavelica.

## Central Highlands Highlights

- 1 Savoring the taste of by-gone farming lifestyles with a tranquil stay at an age-old hacienda in **Tantamayo**
- 2 Poring over 25,000 colonial-era books in the convent of **Santa Rosa de Ocopa** (p277) at Concepción
- 3 Arriving in the highlands in spectacular style via the world's second-highest railway to **Huancayo** (p277)
- 4 Hunting for handicrafts in the villages of the **Manitaro valley** (p284) around Huancayo
- 5 Exploring the churches and bathing in the thermal baths of forgotten, colonial **Huancavelica** (p286)

