



Central Highlands

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ La Choza de Omar (p274)
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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Villa Jennifer (p280)
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- ➔ Via Via (p303)

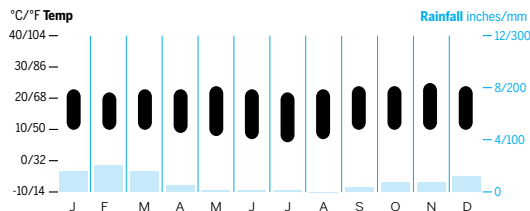
Why Go?

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-visited 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, rain-prone summer weather as Huancayo celebrates New Year with quirky festivities.

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

Jul & Aug Dry weather with chilly, starry nights conducive to toddlers and thermal baths.

Central Highlands Highlights

- 1 Hiking out to the isolated northern Inca and pre-Inca ruins near **Canta** (p274), **La Unión** (p279) or **Tantamayo** (p279).
- 2 Savoring the taste of by-gone farming lifestyles with a stay at an age-old hacienda in **Tarma** (p281).
- 3 Poring over 25,000 colonial-era books in the convent of **Santa Rosa de Ocopa** (p287) at Concepción.
- 4 Taking to the tracks on the world's second-highest railway to **Huancayo** (p287).
- 5 Hunting for handicrafts in the villages of the **Rio Mantaro Valley** (p285) around Huancayo.

