



Northern Highlands

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ La Patarashca (p436)
- ➔ La Olla de Barro (p431)
- ➔ La Casa de Seizo (p430)
- ➔ El Tejado (p419)
- ➔ El Batán del Tayta (p420)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Posada del Purhuay (p410)
- ➔ Gocta Andes Lodge (p424)
- ➔ Kentitambo (p428)
- ➔ Chirapa Manta (p434)
- ➔ Pumarinri Amazon Lodge (p435)

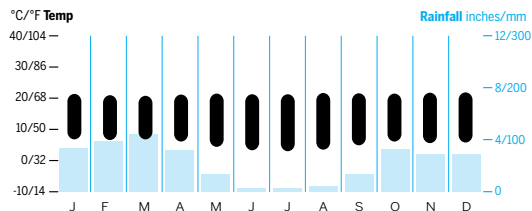
Why Go?

Vast tracts of unexplored jungle and mist-shrouded mountain ranges guard the secrets of the northern highlands like a suspicious custodian. Here, Andean peaks and a blanket of luxuriant forests stretch from the coast all the way to the deepest Amazonian jungles. Interspersed with the relics of Inca kings and the jungle-encrusted ruins of cloud-forest-dwelling warriors, connections to these outposts are just emerging from their infancy.

Cajamarca's cobbled streets testify to the beginning of the end of the once-powerful Inca empire, and remnants of the work of these famed Andean masons still remain. The hazy forests of Chachapoyas have only recently revealed their archaeological bounty: the staggering stone fortress of Kuélap, which clings for dear life to a craggy limestone peak. At the jungle gateway of Tarapoto, the Amazon waits patiently on the periphery, as it has for centuries, endowed with a cornucopia of wildlife and exquisite good looks.

When to Go

Cajamarca



Jan–Apr Rain-soaked but vibrantly lush and full of life, with waterfalls in full, gushing glory.

Feb & Mar Let the rowdy mayhem commence: Carnaval is on in Cajamarca.

Jun–Oct The rains – and the landslides – are a thing of the past. Enjoy the sunshine.

Cajamarca

② 076 / POP 246,500 / ELEV 2750M

The most important town in the northern highlands, Cajamarca is a dainty but strong-willed colonial metropolis, cradled in a languid valley and stonewalled by brawny mountains in every direction. Descending into the vale by road, Cajamarca's mushroom field of red-tile-roofed abodes surely confesses a secret desire to cling to its village roots. Fertile farmland carpets the entire valley and Cajamarca's streets belong as much to the wide-brimmed-hat-wielding *campesinos* (peasants) bundled in brightly colored scarves, as the young city slickers who frequent the boutique restaurants and bars.

In the colonial center, majestic churches border the capacious Plaza de Armas. From

here, once-decadent baroque mansions spread out along the narrow streets, many enclosing elegant hotels and fine restaurants.

Things move slowly here. The controversial Yanacocha gold mine brought new money, highly paid engineers and a heaping dose of unruly discontent to the town. But with the mine scaling back production and its successor in limbo, Cajamarca is shifting down a gear and once again turning to the traditional pursuits of making cheese and yogurt, while also investing in the nascent tourism industry.

History

In about 1460, the Incas conquered the local Cajamarca populace and Cajamarca evolved



Northern Highlands Highlights

- ① Scrambling through **Kuélap** (p424), an immense stone citadel high in the cloud forest.
- ② Getting within a hairbreadth of the jungle at **Tarapoto** (p431) without leaving the comfort of the paved highway.
- ③ Taking a high-adrenaline dip under 771m of falling water at the beautiful **Catarata de Gocta** (p424).
- ④ Getting close-up looks at recently discovered mummies and the marvelous spatuletail hummingbird near **Leimebamba** (p426).
- ⑤ Wallowing a few days away in the underrated colonial ambience of **Cajamarca** (p405).
- ⑥ Wandering through magnificent ruins atop a windswept plateau at **Marchuamachuco** (p415).
- ⑦ Taking the bus ride of a lifetime on the cliff-teetering road from **Cajamarca to Chachapoyas** (p413).
- ⑧ Having a raucous night out sampling root-soaked jungle elixirs in **Chachapoyas** (p420) or **Tarapoto** (p436).