Ayacucho:

**Place to visit and celebration dates**

**Where?**

**In the city of Ayacucho:**

- Colonial churches. There are 33 churches and each one possesses an extremely ornate altars. The following are the stand-out: the Cathedral (1612), Church of the Company of Jesus (1677), Church of Saint Francis of Assisi (1562), Church and Convent of Saint Claire (1568), Church of Saint Teresa (1640), Church and Convent of Saint Dominic (1544), and the Church of Our Lady of Mercy (1547).

- Colonial casonas (mansions). Main traits of these buildings are Main is the oldest in the city, Church of Our Lady of Mercy (1688); Church and Convent of Saint Claire (1568), Church of Saint Francis of Assisi (1562), Church and Convent of Saint Claire (1568), Church of Saint Teresa (1640), Church and Convent of Saint Dominic (1544), and the Church of Our Lady of Mercy (1547).

- Wari archeological complex. It is one of the largest urban centers from ancient Peru, belonging to the Wari culture, which flourished between the 6th and 11th centuries A.D.

- Pampa Garasás National Reserve. A vast plain with rolling hills surrounded by valleys and ravines. Apart from being the best natural refuge for one of the most beautiful Andean animals, the vicuña, it is also the habitat of other native animals, like the Andean fox, the taruca (a species of Andean deer), and a large variety of birds. You can enter the reserve directly from the city of Nasca (14 km).

- Church of Saint Christopher, date back to the city’s founding, 1540. And though in recent years modern restaurants have appeared on the cobbled streets of downtown Ayacucho, it is still the magnificence of the old mansions, complementing the beauty of the religious architecture, which captures the attention of visitors.

- Temple of the Sun and Moon and exhibition of typical dishes accompanied by regional music. You can also sample many regional dishes at specialty-erected stalls.

- Ayacucho Carnival. February. The celebration takes place in the different provinces of the department. For three days, festivities and colorful parades of people dressed in traditional costumes fill the streets, accompanied by regional music. You can also sample many regional dishes at specialty-erected stalls.

- Water festival or Yaku Raymi. August. People celebrate this festival in the district of Andamarca, province of Lucanus, by cleansing the canals with pagapas-ríutas (in which they give thanks to the Pachamama or Mother Earth) and to the Andean gods. The high point of the festival is the scissors dancers performances.

**When?**

**Prickly pear and Cochineal International Fair.**

- **January.** Fair and exhibition of typical dishes made with the prickly pear (an Andean fruit), in the district of Ayapunco, province of Huamanga. Live music and cock fights are organized during this event.

- **March or April.** Moveable. The Catholic people of Ayacucho show their faith in their own special way during Holy Week. Day after day, huge crowds of faithful participate in processions as these move through streets that are covered with decorative carpets that people fashion with flower petals; it is their way of remembering the Passion of Christ.

**AYACUCHO 2,746 ft**

“Visit Ayacucho, walk through its churches and bring back a souvenir made from the gifted hands of its artisans.”

Christened Ayacucho by the Liberator Simón Bolívar, almost all its residents insist on calling the city by its original name, Huamanga. It is a friendly, peaceful city, where one can search for God in churches as plentiful as the beads on a rosary, chat in the open air of sunny patios and satisfy their hunger pangs with chapitas, traditional bread that looks like pita bread.

The main square here is the only one in Peru completely surrounded by stone arcades, and some of its landmarks, like the Church of Saint Christopher, date back to the city’s founding, 1540. And though in recent years modern restaurants have appeared on the cobbled streets of downtown Ayacucho, it is still the magnificence of the old mansions, complementing the beauty of the religious architecture, which captures the attention of visitors.

In the nearby Historic Sanctuary of Pampa de Ayacucho (Ayacucho Battlefield), the battle that sealed South American independence from Spain was fought. And, just steps away is the town of Quinua, dotted with white houses and sleepy streets that give out calm to the soul as one can watch expert potters perpetuate traditions that begun centuries before with the Wari culture.

Ayacucho is a land of peace and of hope for a better future.

**Essentials**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>WHEN?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Prickly pear and Cochineal International Fair</td>
<td>January</td>
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<td>Chaccu (Vicuña shearing ceremony)</td>
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**AYACUCHO**

**¿Cómo llegar?**

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**Conversion**

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<th>From Cusco</th>
<th>From Trujillo</th>
<th>From Chiclayo</th>
<th>From Huancayo</th>
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**From Cusco:**

- 453 km by road (5 h)
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**From Trujillo:**

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**From Huancayo:**

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**From Nazca:**

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**From Ayacucho:**

- 2,746 ft

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Ayacucho is rightfully called the handicraft capital city of Peru due to the variety of crafts its artisans make, such as colorful hand-made retablos, beautiful alabaster carvings, excellent leather articles and even animal horns with pastoral scenes carved on them.

**Recommended for:**

- **History aficionados**, who will enjoy visiting the Pampa de Ayacucho, site of the battle where South American independence from Spain was sealed, back in 1824.
- **Handicraft collectors**, who should definitely go to the neighborhood of Santa Ana.
- **Archeology buffs**, who cannot afford missing out on the Vilcashuamán site.
- **Nature lovers**, who will thoroughly enjoy their visit to see the cluster of puyas at Vishcongo.

**What to buy?**

The craft most associated with Ayacucho is its famous retablos (type of portable shrine) in which artisans depict scenes filled with local customs and religious images. In terms of fabrics, weavers and knitters use techniques that have been passed down from master to apprentice for generations, like naturally dyeing the threads used in carpets and shawls. Other familiar souvenirs you can pick up in Ayacucho are carved Huamanga stones (alabaster), and last by not least, any of the art works done in silver filigree.

**What to eat?**

Although there is no lack of international and traditional Peruvian Creole food, you will mostly find restaurants offering local Ayacucho dishes. Regional cuisine is characterized by the use of plenty of pork, vegetables and Andean grains. Its most well known dish is puca picante, a stew of deep fried pork, seasoned with peanut sauce, beets, red chili peppers and annatto. When you sit down to order an appetizer, ask for the qapchi, a salad made from new potatoes (somewhat starchier than normal), chunks of fresh cheese, diced onions and yellow chili peppers, and the soup should be patache (wheat and bacon, mainly). If it is a jam you crave at breakfast for your bread, then ask for the sauco (elderberry).

**Routes & Times**

- **1 day**
  - City of Ayacucho historic downtown, churches, mansions and the neighborhood of Santa Ana.
- **1 day**
  - Wari archeological complex, Pampa de Ayacucho and the town of Quinua.
- **1 day**
  - Puyas at the Vishcongo archeological site, Lake Pomacocha and Vilcashuamán archeological complex.
- **1 day**
  - Pikimachay Cave, Huanta Valley and Lauricocha.

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**Legend**

- Department borderline
- Capital city
- Asphalted road
- Non-asphalted road
- Port
- Main offices
- Tourist information and assistance

3 dias (Minimum recommended length of stay)