

Cycling Across Peru...Details for the 2019 Tour

Pampamarca, Peru. Elevation: 14,000 feet.

Population: 100. Temperature: 28F degrees, Heat: none.

It takes a strong person to roll over in bed when covered with three heavy wool horse blankets. That's what we will learn when we spend the night at the Pampamarca city hall. They have four bunk beds with extra mattresses on the floor. The building is used as a winter shelter for the local people living in stone huts higher up the mountain. For our group this will be an upgrade



from the downtown hotel that doesn't have an indoor bathroom. We will be cozy and during past tours this was one of many memorable nights (and favorite) during our bike tour across Peru.

Two weeks earlier we will start cycling from the jungle city of Puerto Maldonado located on the Rio Madre de Dios (Mother of God River) near the far southeast corner of Peru near Brazil



and Bolivia. We will ride 1,200 kilometers across Peru in 11 cycling days to the desert city of Nasca located near the Pacific Ocean. Along the way we will cross more than a dozen of mountain passes with elevations of 11,000 to 15,000 feet. Our average elevation during the middle eight days of the tour will be 12,000 feet.

We will follow the National Trans South America Highway which was built about 50 years ago. This road has to be one of the best designed and impressive highway projects in the world. The road crosses numerous mountain ranges and 5,000 foot deep valleys and is either going up or down with very few flat sections.



It is possible to be on the top of one mountain overlooking a valley and see the next mountain in the distance. The line of sight might be 20 miles but the cycling distance is 50 miles. The road transverses down into the valley on a spaghetti bowl of hairpin turns so sharp that the road seems to overlap many times. One section has 40 hairpin turns of 15 mph during eight miles. Most of the roads have three foot shoulders and less than ten cars per hour. Except for the busy traffic for five miles in and out of the city of Cuzco most of the roads have excellent cycling conditions.

Our group will have about ten riders from the United States, and several members from the Peru National Cycling Team. These cyclists will ride with our group and be able to help us on the road. We also have three Peruvian crew members who will drive our two support vehicles and transport our luggage to the next hotel, set up snack stops and arrange a restaurant lunch in the middle of the day. All of our new Peruvian friends are from different regions of the country. They speak English and will be able to offer their interesting perspective about cultural and political views in Peru. Getting to know them and learning about Peru will be one of the benefits of this tour across their country.



A common question asked by the riders during our tour was "How does riding across Peru compare to riding the Northern Transcontinental across the United States". Since many of our past riders have done both tours, there was a common agreement that each tour was about equal as far as physical



intensity. Riding 110 kilometers in Peru was equal to cycling 110 miles in the United States. The extremely high elevations in Peru made the 8% to 10% mountain grades challenging. Each day in Peru averages 8,000 feet of climbing. The fast downhills are balanced by many long three hour climbs. The weirdness factor of traveling in Peru also added to the challenge of each day. Even with good support and eating in restaurants, the days are full, which makes riding a basic 110 kilometer day feel like 110 miles.

The culture and conditions in Peru are as diverse as the terrain. Our hotels will range from basic rooms with cot type beds to first rate tourist hotels with air conditioning and swimming pools. Some roadside restaurants will prepare all their meals on a simple one burner propane stove and other restaurants have professional chefs making elaborate tasty dishes of the best quality.



The differences between the jungle villages and the highland lifestyles will change as fast as the mountainous terrain. In the jungle the people wore the lightest weight clothing but in the highlands everyone wore layers of heavy wool sweaters. Particularly the women from each village, who's colorful hats are different for each region.

For our next tour the riders have the option to use bikes that were donated from riders in the United States. We reconditioned these bikes with lower gears for the mountain grades. Most of the shift levers were converted to 9 speed bar end levers that are trouble free in the remote areas of Peru. After the tour we will donate these bikes as prizes for the races we sponsor in Lima. Many of the bikes have classic steel racing frames from the 1990's. Lon will be riding a 1977



Schwinn Super LeTour which rides great. Lon is looking forward to using it again on this tour. If you want to use one of these donated bikes it will be shipped to you six weeks before the tour so you can add your own pedals and saddle. You are responsible for bringing this donated bike or your personal bike to Peru.

One of the highlights of this tour will be the two days we stay over in the city of Cusco. We will take the three hour train ride to the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu which is a World Heritage Site. We will travel with an official English speaking guide who will be our escort during our visit. That night we will stay near the ruins at a nice hotel in the Village of Aguas



Cliente. The next day we return to Cusco in time to visit the cathedrals and sights of the city. The Machu Picchu Tour is included in the tour cost and includes trains tickets, guides, entry fees, hotels and bus shuttles. It is a classic tour and destination for thousands of tourists each year and worth doing while you are in Peru.

If you decide not to go to Macho Picchu and stay in Cusco you will have plenty of things to see and keep busy. There is a local guided tour of the city and longer bus tour that goes to the ruins surrounding Cusco. For riders who want to stay closer to the hotel there are still plenty of sights within walking distance of our downtown hotel. Either way having two rest days in Cusco is nice for the group



after five challenging riding days. The first days of the tour we were leaving the jungle region that had more vegetation. We still have six more cycling days to reach Nasca. As we continue riding further west the climate becomes drier as we approach the desert.

For 2019 we are adding an extra day to the tour to visit Nasca and Paracas. The city of Nasca is famous for the "Nasca Lines" which were drawn in the desert. Many of the outlines are of spiders, monkeys and other shapes that are bigger than four football fields. Their origins



are still not known, but they could be over 1,000 years old. After our bike tour ends in Nasca you have the option the next morning to take a small airplane tour over the Nasca Lines. This airplane ride costs an additional \$90 per person but it allows you to view another classic tourist destination in Peru. There are also dune buggy rides and sand boarding trips offered that visit the ancient sites and ruins in the area.

In the afternoon we will depart Nasca and make a three hour bus ride to the oceanside resort village of Paracas. This village is famous for inventing the popular "Pisco Sour" drink. There are many upscale beachside restaurants where we can have a final dinner together. Our bicycles will be sent in a truck back to Lima and waiting for us at our hotel the next day.



The following morning we will take our final four hour bus ride back to Lima. We will arrive in early afternoon in time for riders that are departing home in the evening to repack and go to dinner before going to the airport. Riders who are staying longer in Lima or going to the bike races the following weekend will be able to relax in the upscale area of Mira Flores (these extra days are on your own).

Even though the roads were great, not many cyclists ride across Peru on this route. Our group will be a spectacle for the local people who are not used to seeing a bicycle. Because of the small hotels our group size and crew is limited to about 16 people.



If you like riding in the mountains, and you have a good sense of adventure, you would appreciate riding across Peru on this epic tour.

