

morning, we were thrilled with the views of the Bondasca peaks behind us and of the Sciora peaks on our right. At 9am we started to climb. To describe the climb I think I cannot do better than translate Paul Nigg's description in his book *Bergell* (Bregaglia).

'NW-Ridge—very beautiful ridge-climb, marvellous view into the valley and over to the ridges of the Roda Valle della Neve and of the Gallo, excellent rock, Grade III, 4 hours from the Sciora Hut.

'From there up to the col between the Forcelette-Tower group and the Cacciabella N-peak. From col upwards across rather loose blocks to the foot of an easily recognisable crack closely on the right of the ridge. Follow the crack upwards on to the ridge. Then follows a piece of most beautiful, very exposed ridge climbing. The next pitch of the ridge has to be climbed by getting up a short overhanging bit of rock and then following the line of 2 converging slabs a little left of the ridge. Then from the ridge a little to the right and up between boulders and again back on the ridge. The uppermost pitch of the ridge is easy on the right and offers interesting climbing.'

The actual climb took us 2 hours and 50 minutes. It was interesting for us to see on the way up, on our left, the Gallo which we had climbed the previous year. On the summit of Cacciabella we ate our lunch enjoying the views both into the Albigna and the Bondasca valleys.

The descent started with a short vertical pitch. It looked harder than it was; one always found a good stance but, of course, having learned rock-climbing in the Lake District descending steep rock takes me longer than the uphill climb. Below the steep pitch a rather easy ridge took us to a snow covered gully, which the guide decided to use. Whilst he secured us we glissaded down the length of the rope. Having slid down about 200m last summer in Zermatt without any intention of doing so, at least not head first, I did not now feel quite happy with this procedure. I ought to have had more confidence. The guide never slipped, though I often sat down in the snow losing my balance owing to the sudden pull of the rope. For me this part of the descent was rather tiring and I was glad when the gully opened and the slope became wider and less steep. The following glissade without rope was pure pleasure. However, the long walk across the boulders to the hut was very tiring indeed. We could see the hut but it did not seem to get any nearer. I was very tired when we arrived and decided to spend another night at the hut, while Stuart decided to walk down to the car.

## The Cordillera Blanca of Peru as a national park

Evelio Echevarría

The Cordillera Blanca, one of the greatest mountain ranges in the world, has already been for 5 years a Peruvian national park. This means that a number of developments have taken place in this area and that it has now become extremely accessible to visitors. The new national park came into being in 1975 with the official name of 'Parque Nacional Huascarán' (after the range's and Peru's highest peak). The park owes its inception to Peru's foremost mountaineer, César Morales

Arnao who, already in 1956, had conceived the idea of creating in his beloved district of Ancash a giant national park that would encompass all of Peru's greatest range. He received ample support from the house representative Augusto Guzmán and afterwards several prominent citizens from Ancash promoted the project, which was however not to be approved by the Peruvian Government until July 1975.

In the official decree inaugurating the park, the government ordered the erection of landmarks and benchmarks at strategic points and fixed the limits of the preserve.<sup>1</sup> While this immense and rugged tract of peaks and glaciers does not have its limits properly marked in the terrain, it is a safe rule to say that the park itself starts at any place where the contour lines of maps show an elevation of 3500m (see summary-maps). The park thus encompasses a surface of some 340,000 hectares (a hectare equals 100 ares and an are, almost 2.5 acres). It contains almost 30 peaks between 6000m and the 6768m of Huascarán (fourth highest peak in South America, after Aconcagua, Ojos del Salado and Nevado de Pissis).

In the same year the park was inaugurated, 2 young Americans residing in Ancash, Michael Rourke and Curry Slaymaker, were hired to demarcate the park. To them fell the onerous task of staking out limit markings and building trails. By the time these 2 young men fell to their death while attempting a high peak in 1976, they had already done nearly all the initial work that Peruvian authorities wanted.

As a wilderness area, the Parque Nacional Huascarán is uneven in the nature of attractions it can offer. The flora is plentiful but the fauna is not. Insects are numerous and can become bothersome at certain hours in the base-camp areas. Few other forms of animal life are seen. The range is supposedly populated by skunks (*zorritos*), vizcachas, wildcats, mountain lions (*pumas*), small horned deers (*venados*), vicuñas and a few herds of llamas (the last, in the S end of the range only). Birds are represented by grey-brown partridges, geese, ducks and condors.

The flora is very attractive, particularly in zones over 3000m. Main plants are the blue lupins and some yellow rosettes growing by streams. The range also has several kinds of trees and also a giant plant, the famous *cuncush* (*Puya Raimondii*), adorned with thousands of small flowers blooming from a single spike. It grows in the S end of the Cordillera Blanca, as well as in the Cordillera Huallanca (a few km farther S) and in the highlands of central Bolivia.

## Mountaineering

Much has already been said about this range in books and journals (see summary-bibliography). The following information attempts to survey briefly recent developments of interest to mountaineers.

**Guide Books.** We are fortunate in having an excellent guide recently published. The Alpine Club of Canada and the American Alpine Club have jointly issued John Ricker's *Yuraq Janka* (1978). The book covers efficiently and in ample detail practically everything visiting mountaineers need to know. The author has also shown in the text of his guide a unique appreciation of the Peruvian mountain world, which he visited in a number of expeditions both large and small and, quite often, alone. One cannot read his book without experiencing the feeling that this

<sup>1</sup> Juan Velasco Alvarado (President of Peru), 'Decreto Supremo de Creación del Parque Nacional Huascarán'. *Revista Peruana de Andinismo y Glaciología*, nr. 11 (1974-75), pp. 125-130.

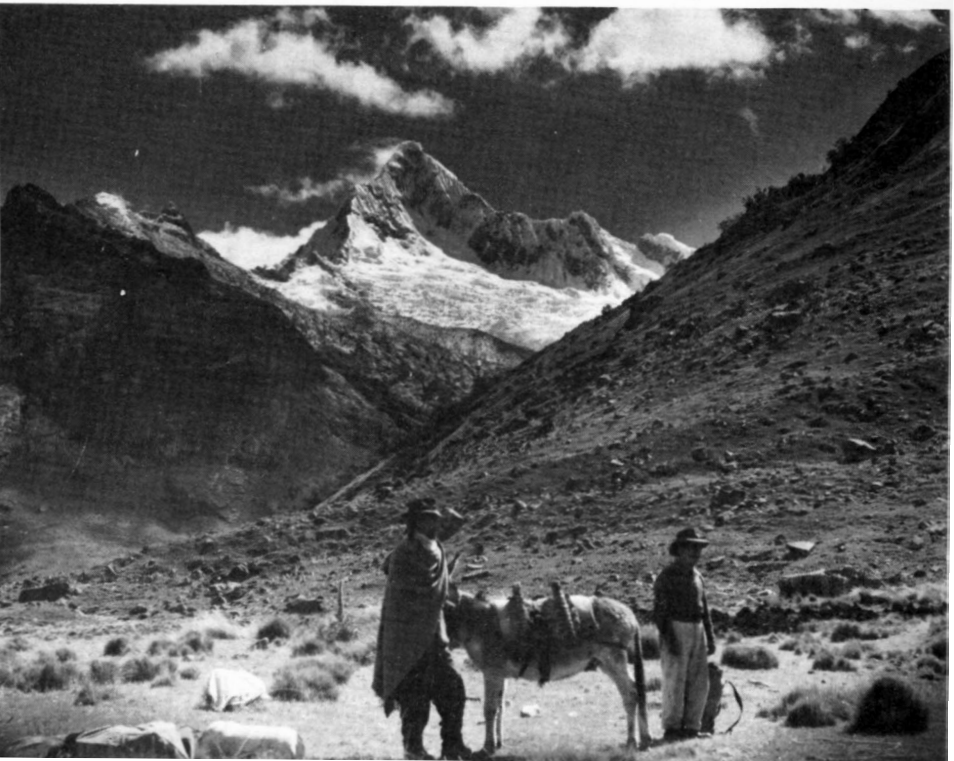


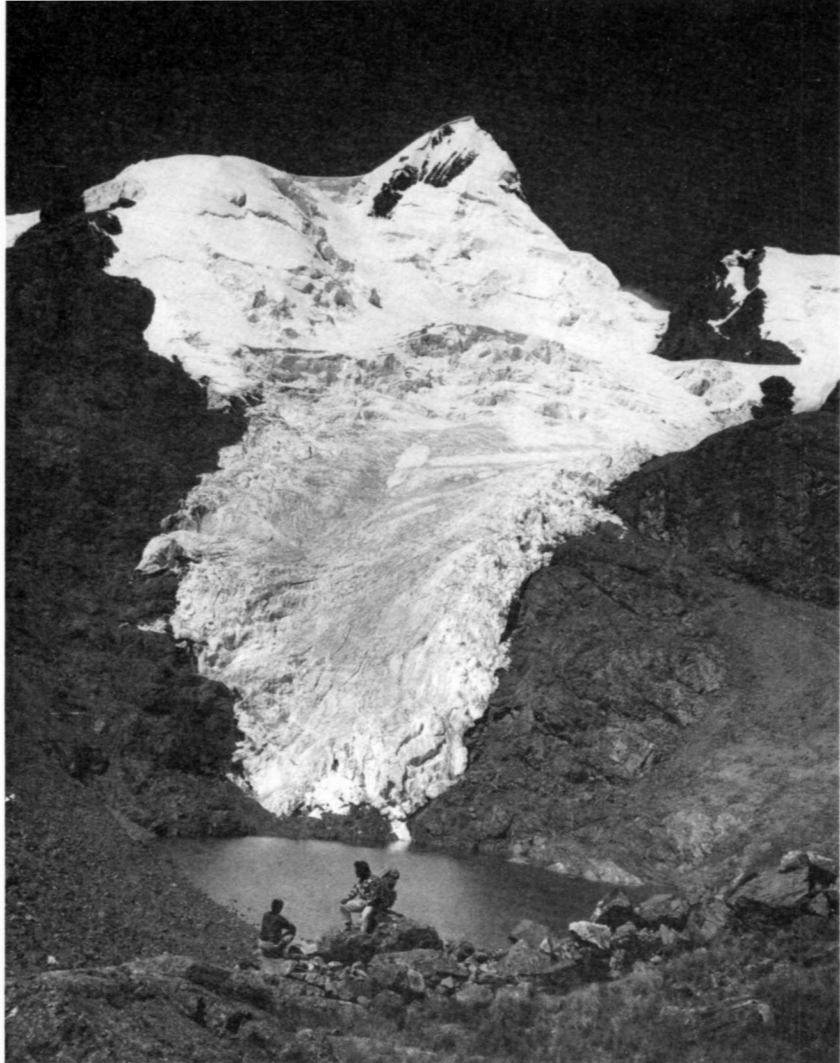
86 Taulliraju (Photo: H. Adams Carter)



87 The summit of Milpocraju looking over to Cayesh (Photo: R. Fear)

88 Quitaraju (This and next photo: H. Adams Carter)





89 Yahuaraju

could well be the only really good guidebook ever written for any of the highest mountain ranges of the world.

A small guide, useful in details for the valley hiker but in general duplicating Ricker's work, was published by the *Lima Times* (also in English). This booklet is to be part one of a series of 3 covering the valleys of the Cordillera Blanca.

**Climbing and camping.** All details about climbing, hiking and camping can be found in Ricker's guide or in mountaineering journals. Generally, it can be said that enterprises of all kinds are possible in the Cordillera Blanca of Peru. A recent development has been the solo technical climb, brilliantly represented in the 1978 exploits of the Frenchman N. Jaeger.

Some valleys of very easy access, particularly those that offer some ascents for *le jet et la montagne* type of tourists, have become overcrowded in the dry season (mid-June to end of August). Climbs of this type are Nevado Pisco (ca 5800m) in the

Yanganuco valley and the Nevados Urus (ca 5500m) in the Ishinca valley. This heavy concentration of people in some areas has caused unnecessary environmental damage, which is certainly a discredit to the countries such visitors represent. Curiously, these people come from countries already with a well-established tradition in national parks and nature preservation and should know better. As a result, the Peruvian authorities will inevitably enforce regulations and impose fees which in the long run will only bring harm to everyone.

Still another bad aspect brought about by heavy penetration to some valleys in this range has been theft, occasionally perpetrated in climbing base-camps. Local Indians are usually blamed for this, but whenever a culprit has been found it has been one of *los hipies* that is, young backpackers, characteristic (and easy to spot at a distance) for their red or orange backpacks. What these delinquents seek usually is expensive down sleeping bags. Indians know only too well that, if apprehended for stealing such items, they would be subject to terrible punishment by the local PIP (police). Thus, as a solution, if a camp guard is not available, it is advisable to carry on a climb all sleeping bags and then hide them along the way in a convenient place.

**Tourism** Tourism proper in this region is not as vigorous as in other parts of Peru. However, there are hotels and *hostelerías* (inns, hostel type) in every fairly important town along the Santa valley (towns of Huaraz, Monterrey, Yungay and Carás). From the archaeological viewpoint, the area belonged to the Chavín culture and the ruins still to be found in lower sections of the valleys are what would attract the actual tourist most. The most important tourist attraction had been the site of Chavín de Huántar, but in the last few years it has been displaced by the recently much promoted Huilcahuayín ('palace of the chieftain'), much closer to Huaraz than the former and said to be much more important than any other site within the area of the Cordillera Blanca. A round trip to Huilcahuayín, with other interesting places also visited *en route*, represents a total of some 55km, from Huaraz, capital of the Ancash department (province) and the natural starting point for all expeditions.

**Access** Three years ago the Peruvian government inaugurated an excellent paved road running NE from Lima and up the Fortaleza valley to Huaraz (pop 33,000), which lies on the W slopes of the ice peaks. The route is now serviced by 3 bus lines as well as by fleets of lorries and even jeeps, all based in Lima. Besides, a number of smaller buses cover several times a day the road between Huaraz and the smaller towns of the N Santa valley, where Huaraz lies. There is also a bi-weekly service of small planes from Lima to Huaraz.

Thus, access to the Cordillera Blanca, which a few years ago required 1½ days of rough driving, is now a matter of a 9-hour ride in a powerful Volvo bus built in Peru. But at the same time the national government, in its desire for finding ways of communication between the isolated agricultural areas E of the range and Lima, has been opening at great cost some roads that now reach high passes on the divide. One of these roads already descends eastward. These roads, rough but not really dangerous, offer often an easy and direct access to the base of very high peaks (see summary-roads).

**Research** Mountaineers interested in carrying out some scientific research in the Cordillera Blanca area will like to learn that the Peruvian government is receptive

to projects that could in the near future render some service to the inhabitants of the department of Ancash. An American institution, Colorado State University, sustains some fish hatcheries located at the S end of the range, near Conococha (lake). French glaciologists have helped to reduce the dangers of dammed lakes. Of less immediate usefulness, nomenclature research would be a field of interest to mountaineers. Place names found on most maps, books and journals were collected by the Kinzl expeditions (1932, 1936 and 1939) and are the same as those used by Ricker in his guide. But mountaineers who may approach locals (in Spanish or in the regional Quechua dialect) will find that quite often such names are unknown to Peruvians. Better in nomenclature, if perhaps not in topographical detail, are in my opinion the maps issued by the Instituto Geográfico Militar of Peru. An effort should be made to reconcile nomenclature locally used with that known to mountaineers. Many fascinating names will then surface, since nowhere in the world can place names compete in beauty with those originated in the old Incadom. Another form of research could be the collection of local folklore. A good knowledge of Spanish or Quechua would be necessary.

The following table summarizes basic or useful information. For further details, the extensive bibliography contained in the publications listed can be consulted. Ricker's *Yuraq Janka* alone contains 201 entries:

It is not improper to make from the pages of this widely read journal a special appeal to anybody planning to visit the Parque Nacional Huascarán. The Cordillera Blanca belonged to the realm of the Incas, a true mountain civilization if ever there was one. The Inca people knew how to interpret the spirit of their mountains by giving them names that well reveal a sense of admiration and beauty. If we approach everybody and everything existing within the park with a similar attitude of respect, not only will we be able to hand it down intact from one generation to another, but we will also express that way our gratitude to the Peruvian people of today, for having so generously opened their beautiful ranges to the mountaineering world.

## Summary

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#### Pictorial:

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*Climbing* (selection):  
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 Weinzierl, Wolfgang, 'The Munich Andean Expedition,' *A.A.J.* 1970, 32–7.

*Guidebooks:*

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Ricker, John, *Yuraq Janka* (Seattle, Alpine Club of Canada and American Alpine Club, 1979). Includes 3 maps of Cordillera Blanca and one of Cordillera Rosco or Conchucos, to the north, scale 1:100,000, and b & w photos and panoramic pictures. Available at US \$11.50 from publishers.

*Maps:*

1:200,000 (1950), by H. Kinzl and E. Schneider, included in pocket of their book *Cordillera Blanca* (see above).

1:100,000 (1935), by D. und Oe. A. V., Northern part, and 1:100,000 (1942), by D. und Oe. A. V., Southern part, available from Oe. A. V., Gilmstrasse 6-IV, Innsbrück, Austria, US \$5 each.

1:100,000 (1971-3), by Instituto Geográfico Militar del Perú, hojas (sheets) Carhuás, Corongo, Chiquián, Huaraz, Huari and Recuay. Available from the Institute, Sección Ventas (sales dept.), Avenida Aramburú 1198, Limatambo, Lima, Perú.

1:100,000 (1977), by John Ricker, included in his book *Yuraq Janka* (see above).

1:300,000 (1954?), including the Cordillera Huayhuash, to the south, by Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research. Available from the Foundation, Binzstrasse 17, 8045 Zürich, Switzerland.

*Guide services:*

César Morales Arnao (Hernando de Soto 250, Monterrico, Lima, Perú), offers advice, porters and climbing guides; guarantees first ascents. Foremost mountaineer in Peru and editor of *Revista Peruana de Andinismo*.

René Valencia (Avenida Centenario 608, Huaraz, Perú), offers porters and guided tours.

Ancash Tours and Andino Tours, both companies based in Huaraz, offer guided tours and arrange motor transportation for tourists.

*Pack and saddle animals:*

Quite difficult to obtain, particularly for larger parties. Guide services (see above) can obtain saddle horses and donkeys. Allow several days if no previous notice is given.

*Climbing (brief statistics):*

Highest unclimbed peaks: three peaks over 5800m around Nevado Chinchey; unnamed peak, 5775m, in Aguja Nevada group; Culliraju, 5600m, in Santa Cruz group.

Main unclimbed walls (according to César Morales Arnao):

- West face of Huascarán Sur (variants), 6768m
- W face of Nevado Huantsán, 6395m
- NE ridge of Huascarán Norte, 6654m
- E ridge of Huandoy Grande, 6395m
- NW face of Ranrapalca, 6162m
- E ridge of Huandoy Sur, 6160m
- W face of Nevado Ulta, 5875m

*Access:*

Lima-Huaraz, several bus lines (recommended: Expreso Ancash, Rodríguez y Cía., etc). For transportation to Huaraz and back to Lima, hotels, restaurants, visas and advice for tourists, see *South American Handbook*, latest edition.

*Roads into the Cordillera Blanca:*

Gravel roads, all starting from Huaraz:

- 1) To Lluca lake, 4300m, access to peaks of Ranrapalca group.
- 2) Yanganuco lakes, 4150m, access to Chacaraju, Pisco, Chopicalqui, Huascarán Norte. Road descends to E slopes of range. Two lorries go up twice a week and return to Yungay on Thursdays and Sundays.
- 3) Carás, to lake Parón, access to peaks of Aguja Nevada, Carás and Pisco (N side) groups.
- 4) Conococha (lake to Tucominas), access to peaks in S end of range.
- 5) To Catac, Pachacoto and Yanashallash pass (4800m) and Huanzalá mines. Access to peaks in Huayac and Tuco groups.
- 6) Huaraz to Pomabamba (E side of range), Lake Sajuna, and N side of Nevado Alpamayo.

*Supplies:*

Food and medicines (see Ricker's guide, pp. 14-25). Climbing equipment is not available in Peru.