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Nevado Contrahierbas East Face



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An expedition to explore and climb new routes in some less frequented areas of the Cordillera Blanca.

Abstract

At the beginning of June Anthony Barton arrived in Huaraz and along with John Pearson and Xabier Arbulo undertook several trips into the Cordillera Blanca.

The Cordillera Blanca still has a lot to offer climbers in search of new routes, the eastern side of the range being particularly attractive in this respect. Our main objective was to fully explore the potential of the Contrahierbas Massif and make an ascent of the main peaks (6036mts) east face.

Access to this part of the Cordillera Blanca is relatively straightforward with a daily bus service to Yanama the jumping off point for any expedition planning an ascent of Nevado Contrahierbas by either its east face or western slopes.

The weather in the Cordillera Blanca is normally extremely stable unless you happen to be visiting the mountains in an El Nino year which can affect the climate and climbing conditions considerably however the weather this year was the best I had experienced since I started going to the region in 2002.

After acclimatising with a successful ascent of Nevado Raria (5576mts) we turned our attention to Nevado Bayoraju, after an unsuccessful attempt on that peak we made our first visit to the Contrahierbas Massif which resulted in the first ascent of the southeast face of Nevado Cajavilca III. A further visit reached 5650mts on the east face of Nevado Contrahierbas.

In addition to this I also made an exploratory trek into Quebrada Camchas to complete my exploration of the Contrahierbas massif, a task I had started in 2004.

Report written by Anthony Barton.

The compiler of this report and the members of the expedition agree that all or part of it may be copied for the purpose of private research.

For further information contact:

Anthony Barton,
26 Inverlochy Court,
Inverlochy,
Fort William,
Inverness-shire,
Scotland,
PH336XE.

Tel: 01397708854.

Email: bartony800@yahoo.com

Report written in October 2007.

Expedition Members

The expedition was comprised of the following members and was sponsored by both the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council.

Anthony Barton, electrician.

John Pearson, resident of Huaraz.

Xabier Arbulo Ugarte Buru, Mechanic.

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Introduction

This season was my sixth spent in Peru and this expedition had me along with my climbing partners returning to an area I first visited in 2004. In that year I trekked from Quebrada Ulta over Punta Yanayagu and down the Ichic Ulta and onwards to Yanama. It was however the next part of that trek which showed the true potential of the Contrahierbas Massif and it also hinted at how accessible these peaks could be, there being a mine nestled below Nevado Cajavilca and sharing the same name.

My research showed no evidence that anyone had accessed the glacial basin sitting below the east face of Nevado Contrahierbas, a continuous wall of rock and ice some 4km long bounds the northwest side of this basin. Although picturesque the opposite side of the basin is somewhat inaccessible and the main summit of Nevado Garhuanga and its north face are not so appealing. The back of the basin would offer a short easy climb but really the focus of any expedition has to be the wall mentioned above.

I met up with John Pearson after a short period of acclimatisation, John who lives in Huaraz had the benefit of already being acclimatised however we thought it prudent to warm up on an easy climb to begin with and we found ourselves heading out to the mountains for the first time on the 27th of June.

All in all I along with my climbing partners made five forays into the mountains in order to try and achieve those objectives detailed in the application submitted to the Mount Everest Foundation. I believe we gave it our best shot and barring an accident would have succeeded in making the first ascent of one of the few virgin faces left on a 6000mtr peak in the Cordillera Blanca. We did however complete one new route and the Contrahierbas Massif was thoroughly explored.

Welcome to Peru

Arrival:

Upon arrival you will find yourself at Jorge Chaves international airport, which is located on the outskirts of Lima. Immigration and customs is usually a formality however you should make sure that they write the correct number of days in your passport. As a British citizen you are entitled to 90 days however sometimes they write 60 or even 30 over your entry stamp. If you exceed what is written in your passport you may encounter problems applying for an extension or be required to pay a fine when you pass through immigration on the way out of the country. It will cost you \$1 per extra day payable in either US dollars or Peruvian soles.

Finally make sure you use a registered taxi to take you into the centre of Lima, ask to see his ID card. You should pay around \$10 to Miraflores or Lima.

Money:

Cash dollars and euros can be changed on the street (beware of forged notes and poor exchange rates), in casa de cambios and in banks. Make sure all your \$ bills are in perfect condition, any torn or well used notes or notes with writing on will almost certainly be refused. There are a lot of forgeries on the streets so ask a local as to the best way to check your money. They counterfeit every note and coin and I was amazed to find myself in possession of a fake 50 centavo coin (9 pence) at one time during my stay.

As of writing your £ is worth around 6 soles 15 centavos.

Accommodation:

You can pay anything from 5 soles a night upwards for a room, in some small towns you would find it difficult to get a room worth any more than 5 soles however in major towns and cities there is a wide range on offer.

Generally if you are looking for a clean hotel with a hot shower you should expect to pay around 30 to 40 soles for a single, a little more and cable TV may be available! Expect prices to be higher in major cities and in the more exclusive districts of Lima such as Miraflores. If you want to pay a little more there are bargains to be had and I found an excellent hotel in Miraflores for 60 soles.

Food & Cooking:

As you would imagine restaurants serving most types of food can be found in Lima however in smaller towns expect the standard set menus or fried chicken. A meal can be had for as little as 2 soles however a 2 sole set menu could give you more than just a full stomach so be warned. Lunch or almuerzo served between 12 and 2pm is the main meal of the day and a set menu of three or four courses is the norm. Dinner or cena is a lighter affair normally consisting of a couple of courses. Choosing a set menu is by far the most economical form of dining out and nearly all restaurants offer a range of set menu choices.

As for mountain supplies there are some excellent shops and markets in Huaraz and this would offer more of a choice than the markets in smaller towns and villages. Most villages have shops and it is always possible to find the basics but for a good choice I would recommend a visit to the market in Huaraz before heading out to the mountains.

I use a combination of stoves, generally an MSR XGK II with petrol or benzina and a gas burning hanging stove on the mountain. It is possible to buy gas in Huaraz at several shops and agencies, in Huaraz you should expect to pay around 20 soles for the standard sized canister.

I would also consider taking some freeze dried meals and I would recommend the Reiter meals which can be bulked out with a bit of potato powder. They really come in handy for high camps or bivi's. Something else I took this time around was a selection of Shwartz packet sauces which proved to be excellent.

Getting about:

In Lima it is best to use registered taxis between districts and should cost around 8 to 12 soles depending on which district you are travelling to and from and at what time of day, expect to pay 3 to 5 soles for trips within the same district. There are numerous bus companies who travel to Huaraz and you will find details of the bus companies I have found to offer an excellent service in the appendix. Travelling to Huaraz can be an extremely comfortable experience if you take the bus cama, this service comes complete with hostess, movies, food and the all important fully reclining seat. Less expensive buses exist to the above mentioned destination however when a bus cama costs around 50 soles it seem silly not to take the opportunity to travel in total comfort. Day buses usually leave around noon or 1pm and night buses leave around 11pm and these times are the same in either direction. Expect to be on the bus 8hrs on the way up and as little as 7hrs on the way down! There is a baggage limit of 20kg but most of this time this weight limit is not enforced. Once in Huaraz 2 soles will get you to your hotel.

Although there are a few agencies running a service to Yanama you will again find details of the agency we travelled with in the appendix. Buses leave around 6:30 am and the journey lasts around 5 hours, good value at 15 soles with unlimited baggage however the service is basic. Returning to Huaraz can be a little more difficult due to the fact that none of the buses originate in Yanama. If however you cannot find a seat on either of the buses which pass through Yanama mid morning there are several micros departing from the Plaza around midday. These micros only go as far as Yungay but numerous micros and buses pass through Yungay en route to Huaraz.

It is possible to get a micro to just below the mine and this can be arranged the night before in Yanama expect to pay around 80soles for the 1 1/2hr journey, this is a rough road and it is too much for a taxi irrespective of what the locals may tell you!. There is very little transportation on this road so you must arrange to be picked up if you want to avoid the long walk out.

Safety:

Finally a note on safety, I believe Peru to be a relatively safe place and attacks on mountaineers are rare however your belongings are constantly at risk. Never leave your personal effects unguarded. Even on the premier bus services your hand luggage

is at risk from thieves, I prefer putting everything into my checked baggage. I have never had any trouble on the cheaper services but I always make sure my baggage is secure and leave it to the last minute before taking my seat. Try to avoid having too much kit strapped to the outside of your pack. Better still wrap it in a large sack which can be bought from the market for a few soles, it will also protect it from the weather and dust.

Once in camp there is the dilemma of leaving base camp unattended, there is always the possibility of theft. In the area covered by this report access is via mining trails and these trails are much frequented by the miners even as far as the glacier edge, we did leave our camp unattended and experienced no problems although on other trips out with the Cordillera Blanca I have had problems with theft.

Should you decide not to leave your camp unguarded there is always a possibility of hiring a local too look after your camp while you are in the mountains around 20 soles a day plus food would probably cover it.

Further information can be found in the appendix at the end of this report.

Nevado Raria (27 June to 29 June)

After some consideration we decided on Nevado Raria (5576mts) mainly due to the fact that it was an area that John had not visited before and I having trekked there the year before knew that it would be an ideal place to get acclimatised.

The starting point for the trek to base camp happens to be on one of the most well travelled roads in the area, numerous buses make their way to Pastoruri daily and it was with one of these buses that we made our way to the start of the trek. The only drawback to travelling on a tour bus is that there are several stops before you eventually get to your destination. Although we left quite early, 9am, we did not arrive until 12:30pm however this was enough time to get to our proposed base camp near to Laguna Raria.

The intention was to climb the day after hiking in to base camp unfortunately the trek in proved to be very hard work, fatigue and a sore head put paid to our original plan. We tossed around the idea of climbing the following evening and decided to give it a shot should my headache dissipate. Base camp was at an altitude of approximately 4600mts and having already spent a night at 4250mts I thought an improvement in my condition likely.

After a leisurely day in camp and with me feeling much better we finally departed camp for the mountain at 4:30pm, the idea being to make the edge of the glacier by nightfall. There was no trail of any kind, not even a cairn however the route was obvious and apart from several short sections the way to the glacier edge was relatively straightforward.

Access onto the glacier was simple and indeed the route in general was all rather easy, the glacier as far as the col between the main peak and point 5504 was perfect and it was only when we started to climb Nevado Rarias southern slopes that conditions underfoot deteriorated. The conditions though were reasonable and although sections of deep snow slowed the pace at times we seemed to be making good progress, we were however suffering the cold, along with the wind the temperature had plummeted making the climbing a little unpleasant at times.

After what seemed an age we arrived at the summit some 7 hours after leaving camp, the moon providing an eerie view over the neighbouring peaks, unfortunately it was far too cold to linger and we were soon on our way down arriving back in camp by 2am.

We awoke late and breaking camp seemed to take an age, with little sleep the previous night we were finding it hard to get motivated for the hike out to the road. We finally put our packs on our backs at 10am and began the leisurely descent to the road and hopefully transport back to Huaraz.

4 hours after leaving our camp site we found ourselves sat at the side of the road, although there were a great many vehicles most were either full or would not stop and we had to wait several hours before we managed to get a ride.

Nevado Raria west side



Nevado Bayoraju south face



And so there ended our first foray into the mountains, all in all the perfect acclimatisation, no surprises and an excellent route not too demanding, easy of access, minimal objective danger and perhaps best of all we didn't see a single person!

Nevado Bayoraju (4 July to 7 July)

Nevado Bayoraju (5460mts) was the first objective detailed in our grant application, a route which I had tried before. I had trekked into Quebrada Ruripaccha in 2005 and as soon as I saw Nevado Bayoraju I realised I would be back. I didn't think it would be the same season. I returned with Tim Riley and after climbing Nevado Paccharaju (5744mts) we attempted to climb Nevado Bayoraju making it as far as the glacier edge before calling it a day, I vowed to return.

Having hiked up this quebrada twice before I was well aware of how long and steep a climb it was and although there are numerous farmers working in this quebrada very few of them live up there and there is no guarantee of finding animals.

The day before our departure John and I travelled to Vicos to arrange for two donkeys to take our packs from the gate at the entrance to Quebrada Honda as far as base camp just below Laguna Paccharuri.

We had arranged to meet our arriero at 10am and so left Huaraz at 8:30am on the 4th of July, it is 40 minutes to Marcará in a taxi and then another 50 minutes to the gate the cost being 20 and 50 soles respectively. Having passed our arriero not far from the gate we had a little time to relax before starting the hike. It was not long before our arriero arrived, the donkeys loaded and we were on our way.

The hike up to base camp at 4400mts is simply stunning and positively tranquil, we didn't see a soul and after 3 ¼ hours we arrived at the pampa which sits just below Laguna Paccharuri. The weather was perfect so we were treated to a perfect view of our objective (see picture).

A leisurely start the following morning following a faint trail led us to a perfect camp site just below a ridge leading to the moraine proper. It had only taken us 1 ¼ hours to reach our high camp at 4800mts so we decided to hike up to the glacier edge with our climbing gear and stash it at the edge of the glacier.

We awoke at 3:15am the following morning and left an hour later, 50 minutes after that we were at the glacier edge thankful for the cairns Tim and I had built 2 years earlier. The glacier traverse turned out to be rather devious and exposed in places with several climbs and descents some of them quite steep. When we finally arrived at the foot of the face it had taken us 4 ½ hours with deep snow in places slowing the pace considerably.

Our intended route was to be the central gully and I knew that access to this gully was barred by rock slabs so it was crucial that there be enough ice on those slabs to facilitate entry into the gully proper. As it turned out the slabs were indeed covered in ice but it was both thin and detached, added to that there was no possibility of protection and after dislodging some large plates of ice we decided retreat was our

only option. Neither of us fancied teetering up a thin plate of hollow unprotected 70 degree ice some 30 metres in length.

It took quite a while to descend and we arrived much too late to descend further than our high camp that afternoon. We had managed to get to approximately 5150mts and from what we could see of the route above the impasse, it all looked rather interesting. It is worth noting that the original route of ascent is no longer possible the glacier being too broken. It would be possible to continue in the same line as we took and join the original route which looked fairly straightforward and I know it is also possible to climb Nevado Bayoraju fairly simply from the other side by its northern slopes.

We packed up and descended to the gate without incident and we didn't have to wait too long before an ore truck arrived and we hitched a lift to Vicos, we splashed out on a taxi and arrived back in Huaraz at 3:30pm our second foray into the mountains over.

Contrahierbas massif (14 July to 21 July)

This was the first of two trips to the Contrahierbas Massif and was very different to the second. We went with the intention of spending up to 10 days on the mountain looking to attempt two climbs, this of course necessitated the hiring of porters to get all our kit and food to the edge of the glacier.

After a 4 hour bus ride we arrived in Yanama at 11am and after checking into the hostel and grabbing a bite to eat we went in search of porters and transportation to the Cajavilca mine. We soon found our porters, in a shop of all places and they also helped find us our transportation.

We left Yanama the following morning at 6:30am and an hour later we arrived not quite at the mine but close enough and at 4200mts we were relatively high. It was a rough road and we were glad we had found a micro to take us rather than a taxi, the porters had secured for us a very good price a mere 60 soles.

As we put our packs on the clouds began to roll in and the mountains were soon obscured. As we approached the mine we were greeted by the guardian who seemed adamant that we should not pass and suggested an alternative approach. I had already trekked into the quebrada he was suggesting and knew this was not an option. However we had by now entered the national park and he did not have the right to refuse us access to the mountains, as it happens he was worried that we were spies and as soon we proved our real intentions he was happy for us to continue on our way.

There was a small but obvious trail and we soon made it to the edge of the glacier at 4700mts without incident, we had been hiking for just 2 ½ hours and this proves just how accessible these peaks really are. By now it had begun to snow and after putting up the tent we decided to have lunch, after the porters had left with the agreed price of 40 soles each we went to have a closer look at the glacier, access looked straightforward and we returned to camp to wait for a break in the weather. The clouds finally started to disperse as night fell and we were treated to our first view of the mountains. We left the following morning at 8:30am with the intention of setting up our camp in the glacial basin at the foot of the east face of Nevado Contrahierbas.

Getting onto the glacier was easy enough and after crossing a large plateau at 4850mts we arrived at an impasse, the glacier dropped away to our left and the only route seemed to climb 45 to 50 degree slopes to our right. We decided to dump the packs and go and have a look, we roped up and after three pitches of moderately steep snow the angle eased off and we traversed to the ridge coming down from Nevado Cajavilca I. We could see the upper basin but again steep ground barred access, it was however nowhere near as steep as before. We debated the pros and cons of a camp in the basin and decided a much more sensible location for our high camp would be the plateau. We had the luxury of two tents which gave us a great many options so we collected our packs and returned to the plateau and put up the Bibler before returning to moraine camp. It was now too late to make another carry with the rest of our kit so we remained in camp, a couple of hours later it was snowing.

The 17th was much the same as the day before and we were soon setting up our main tent and thinking that the southeast face of Nevado Cajavilca I would make a good warm up especially as the foot of the face was just 5 minutes from camp. During the morning I had began to feel unwell and by the end of the day was suffering mild stomach cramps, not a good sign. We set the alarm for 3am and turned in early just as it began to hail soon after that the thunder started and then snow began to fall.

We awoke at 3am as planned and with a clear sky we began to get ready, I had not eaten much the previous night and my stomach problem had not improved but I thought I might as will give it a go. We left camp at 4:30am and made good progress up the initial slopes, John in front breaking trail for most of the way. We arrived at the first obstacle just as day began to break. A narrow gully snaked up and right of the rocky outcrop we were belayed below and two pitches of 55-60 degree snow brought us to a belay on an ice ridge, ahead of us was a uniform snow slope leading to another gully which in turn led to the final snow slopes. We moved together as far as the foot of the upper gully were two more pitches of 50 to 55 degree snow with a short section of 70 degree ice led to the ridge and short walk to the summit. It was now 11am and the clouds had begun to roll in and so we missed out on the view.

The descent was uneventful, a mixture of abseils and down climbing, we were back in camp by 3:45pm, all in all a very nice route and not too long at 550mts. We decided in the end to give the route a grade of AD+. The weather was almost identical to the day before with another thunderstorm and more snow.

After a good nights sleep we awoke to a clear day and set about drying our kit, I was getting a little worried as my condition had not improved and I was finding it very difficult to eat, adrenaline had kicked in during the climb but in camp I was feeling extremely fatigued, I prayed for some improvement.

We awoke early and decided to try and make it into the upper glacial basin this would also allow me to gauge my fitness. We left camp at 8am and it was not long before I realised that I was in no shape to attempt our main objective but we made our way to the ridge and one 60mt abseil got us to easy ground. We left the rope in place and continued up the glacier which proved to be no more than a pleasant hike. We stopped to admire the view, the summit was already obscured but we did have a great view of the lower face and although it was not without risk it seemed possible. We agreed that it would have to be climbed mostly at night and a descent of the mountains easy

Cajavilca III SE face



Route to upper glacial basin



western slopes would be more sensible than trying to reverse our route of ascent. A direct descent was impossible due to the amount of traversing involved, most of it above a 400mt vertical wall of rock.

I guess our decision was made up for us, it was not possible to climb with all our kit and given my lack of energy it seemed going down was the right thing to do. We returned to camp and began to pack up, we vowed to return.

We left camp at 1pm and began the long descent the packs were excruciatingly heavy which necessitated numerous stops especially for me. The 150mt climb up to the pass was desperate and the final descent to Yanama seemed never ending and we finally arrived at 7pm, unfortunately the 2 buses that pass through town at midnight heading for Huaraz were full and it was not until the following afternoon we managed to secure transportation to first Yungay then Huaraz.

All in all an eventful trip with a new route, a recce of the upper basin and more importantly a plan for our return trip.

Contrahierbas massif (12 August to 16 August)

It was some time before I got another opportunity to return to the Contrahierbas Massif, John had decided not to go back and so I found myself without a climbing partner. I was fortunate that in the place that I was staying there were other climbers and one of them Xabier had been forced to remain in Huaraz due to a stomach problem whilst his friends went to Nevado Alpamayo. Having recovered he was desperate to get back into the mountains and liked my plan which was a lightweight traverse of Nevado Contrahierbas.

We took the same bus as I had taken with John almost a month before and after arriving in Yanama we soon found a vehicle to take us to the mine however we had to pay a little more this time but 80 soles was still a bargain. We arranged to be picked up at 6am.

The weather was perfect and we made great progress and we were soon at the edge of the glacier, after a breather we climbed up the short ice slope which allows access to the glacier proper. Conditions on the glacier were excellent and it was not long before we were descending into the upper glacial basin. We arrived at our campsite after 7 ½ hours, we were some way from the foot of the face but our location allowed us the perfect view and an opportunity to study it in some detail.

It had been had been a fairly tough day to reach high camp at 5100mts a climb of 900mts so we decided to have an easy day. We got up rather late and after breakfast we set off for the foot of the face, it took about an hour, it was a great feeling knowing that we were the first people ever to explore this glacial basin. Having laid tracks to the foot of the face we returned to the tent and tried to pick a line, the weather was perfect and conditions looked superb, we decided to get up at midnight. The first two thirds of the route are threatened by both seracs and rock fall hence the early start.

The alarm went off at midnight and we began to prepare breakfast and we were soon on our way an hour after waking up. An hour later we arrived at the foot of the face and began to gear up. Initially we followed a steep left to right snow ramp through the lower rock band, to save time we moved together using snow stakes and ice screws for protection. We were soon at the top of the left to right traverse and it was time to swap over the lead and Xabier led off in the direction of a small gully which seemed to offer a route through the next band of rocks. Xabier belayed at the base of an ice wall having used up all the snow stakes, we were fortunate that conditions were excellent and the terrain straightforward enough that we could continue moving together. Not long after leaving the belay I crossed an ice ridge and began a leftwards traverse, this rising traverse leads to easier and safer climbing but having run out of snow stakes halfway across this traverse it was time once again time to hand over the lead to Xabier. The next section involved crossing some enormous runnels, having negotiated these features Xabier belayed below and right of the gully that would lead us to the final summit slopes. Xabier was not happy with his belay so I stopped short put in a solid anchor and he led off again across the gully stopping two thirds of the way across. After putting in a stake he removed his pack however before he was able to clip it in to his anchor he was hit by a falling rock which caused him to drop it.

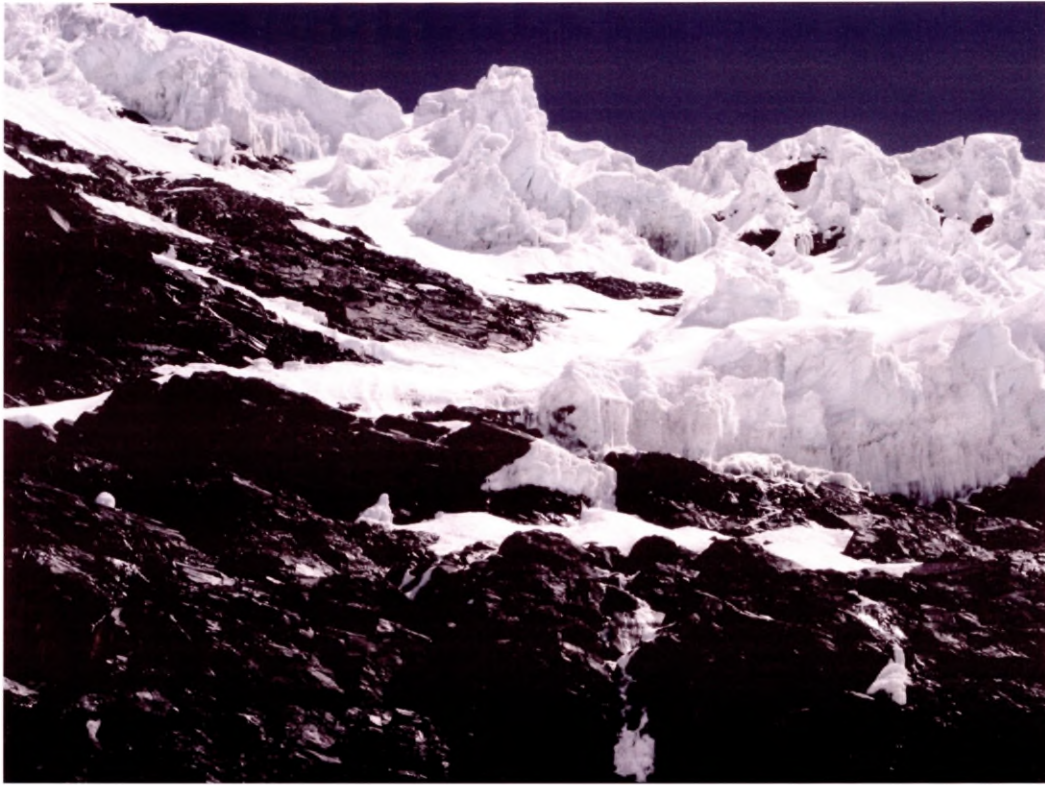
This was disastrous, up until that point we had been drinking my water and so we were down to less than half a litre, unfortunately the pan was also in Xabier's sack. We had watched the pack disappear over the rock wall that we had been traversing over and being vertical and 400mts in height I was convinced that his pack was now laying in the glacial basin below. The summit seemed tantalisingly close, the rest of the route looked straightforward and objectively safe and it was both extremely disappointing and worrying that we had to retrace our steps.

Fortunately Xabier was unhurt so physically descending the route would not be a problem however the sun had been on the face for an hour and the rocks and ice had begun to fall and our only hope was that the cloud which was rolling in would have an effect. For the moment we could not go up or down and we were contemplating sitting out the day under a small ice feature near to my belay, it would be a long day seeing as it was only 8am.

By the time Xabier had arrived at my belay the clouds had obscured the sun and within half an hour the rocks and ice had all but stopped falling, we quickly made the decision to descend. It was impossible to abseil so we down climbed our entire route of ascent and after 3hrs we were back on the glacier exhausted but safe, to prove how lucky we had been the sun reappeared and a short time later we were again listening to the sound of falling rock and ice.

We had spotted Xabier's pack as we walked away from the foot of the face and after a short break Xabier went to retrieve it, with the pack being open as it fell there was not much left in it fortunately his sleeping bag was still inside. With no water we were soon on our way, the climb back out of the basin was hard work but it was not long before we were off the glacier and enjoying a cool drink. Ahead of us though was a very long hike indeed, a hike I had done a month earlier and I was not looking forward to repeating it, at least the packs were lighter this time! We finally arrived in Yanama at 8pm the owner of the hostel we were staying in told us that there had been an earthquake just two hours before!

Nevado Contrahierbas E face



Nevado Contrahierbas from HC



Neither of us had felt anything on our way down and as we ate dinner we watched the news in disbelief the earthquake had registered 7.7 on the Richter scale and the coastal town of Pisco was devastated with many people killed.

We arose to yet another beautiful day and breakfast was followed by a short walk to the Plaza to wait for the midday micro to Huaraz. Again we had to change micros in Yungay and we arrived in Huaraz at 6:30pm.

All in all it was an eventful trip, but for the loss of Xabiers rucksack I have no doubts that we would have made it to the summit and completed the traverse of Nevado Contrahierbas. We had reached 5650mts and we were probably two thirds of the way up the route, it was just not our day. The main thing is Xabier was not injured and we managed to get down without incident.

Quebrada Camchas trek (19 August to 23 August)

In 2004 I trekked around the Contrahierbas Massif and explored Quebrada Garhuanga, what I found was not too encouraging. It would seem access to the summits of Nevado Garhuanga(5540mts) and Nevado Camchas(5180mts) was anything but easy from this side. I later found out that the main summit of this peak had been climbed only once by a local guide who lived in the nearby town of Chacas.

From high camp below the east face of Nevado Contrahierbas we had an excellent view of the above mentioned peaks, Nevado Garhuanga was a little threatened and Nevado Camchas which looked beautiful seemed inaccessible from this side however I thought that it may be possible to make an attempt from the other side. I had neglected to explore Quebrada Camchas in 2004 and so it seemed only right that I have a look.

I left Huaraz at 6:30am on the 19th of August in the direction of what is possibly one of the most exciting roads in Peru perhaps South America. The road snakes its way up to Punta Olympica (4890mts) before dropping down to Chacas the starting point of my trip into Quebrada Camchas.

It is approximately 5 hours from Huaraz to Chacas and so I arrived too late to leave that day and so it was the following morning that I left Chacas. Initially I had to descend to the foot of the valley before beginning the climb into the quebrada proper. I passed through the village of Pampush and noted the possibility of transportation from Chacas. After talking to a local farmer I opted to follow the right hand side of the quebrada. At first the trail was ok but after a couple of hours I decided to cross the river and try the opposite side of the quebrada. I soon found myself on a very good trail and indeed this trail led all the way to the very top of the quebrada and my camp site.

From my camp I could see a possible route to the moraine but it was by no means straightforward and I would have to wait until the following morning before exploring the upper reaches of Quebrada Camchas. It had been a tough day ascending 900mts with full pack including my climbing gear.

Nevado Camchas from the NW



Nevado Camchas from the SE



Conclusion

I had known about the potential of the Contrahierbas Massif since I trekked around these peaks in 2004, I guess its unpopularity is partly due to the mountains remoteness and the fact that the only recorded routes are of moderate difficulty. The area that our expedition concentrated on is not visible from any other mountain in the range indeed the only place you can see what is hidden at the top of Quebrada Ruricocha is from the quebrada itself.

On the whole the trip went well and but for an unfortunate piece of bad luck we would have succeeded in our main objective. We did however manage to fully explore all the peaks detailed in our application and successfully complete one new route.

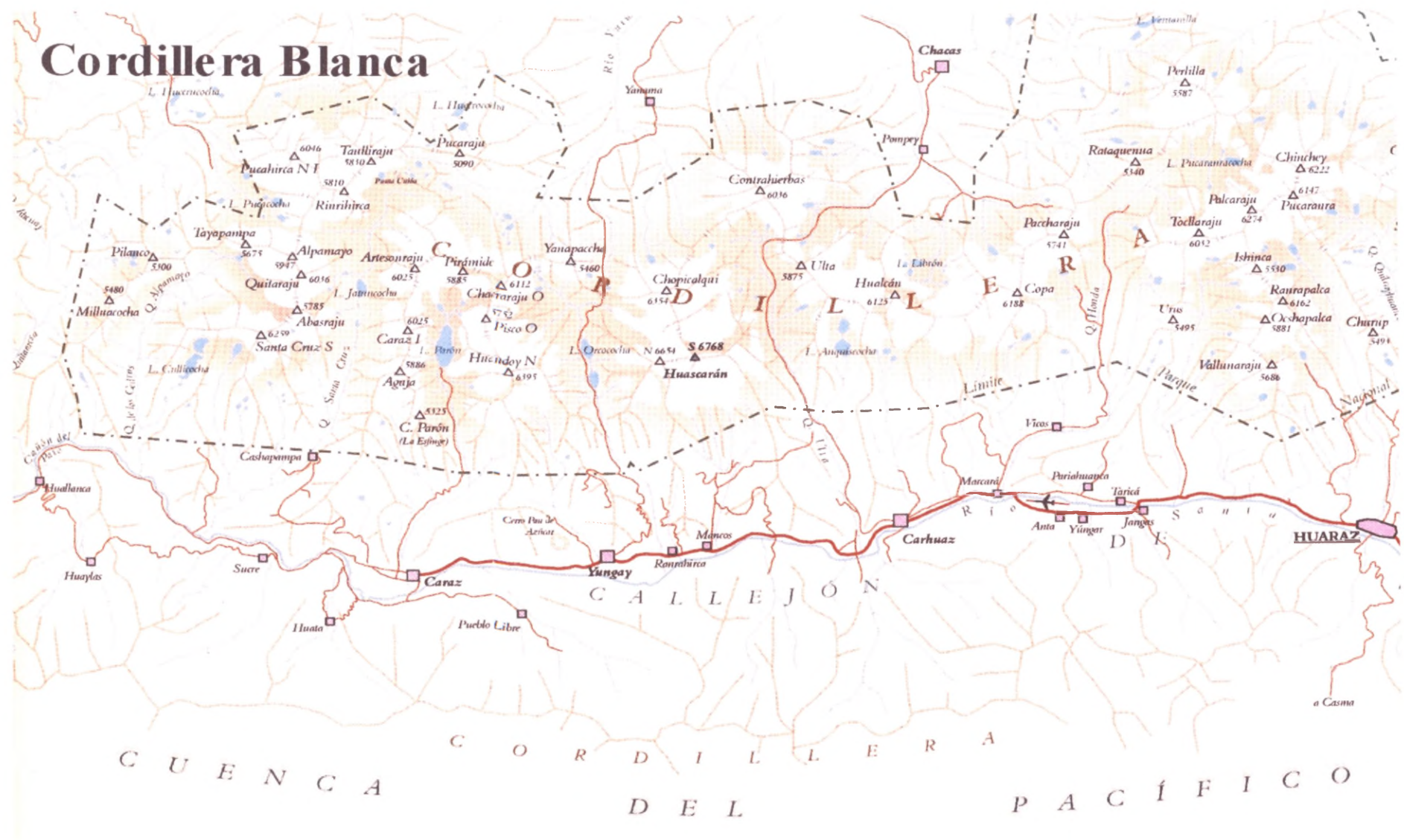
In reality all of the peaks in this massif are easily accessible, a 4 hour bus ride gets you to Yanama where there are several basic hostals and restaurants. A vehicle from Yanama will drop you at an altitude of 4200mts a mere 2 ½ hours from the glacier. Nevado Cajavilca III would be great for the purposes of acclimatisation and there are still new route possibilities on all of the peaks accessed by this route.

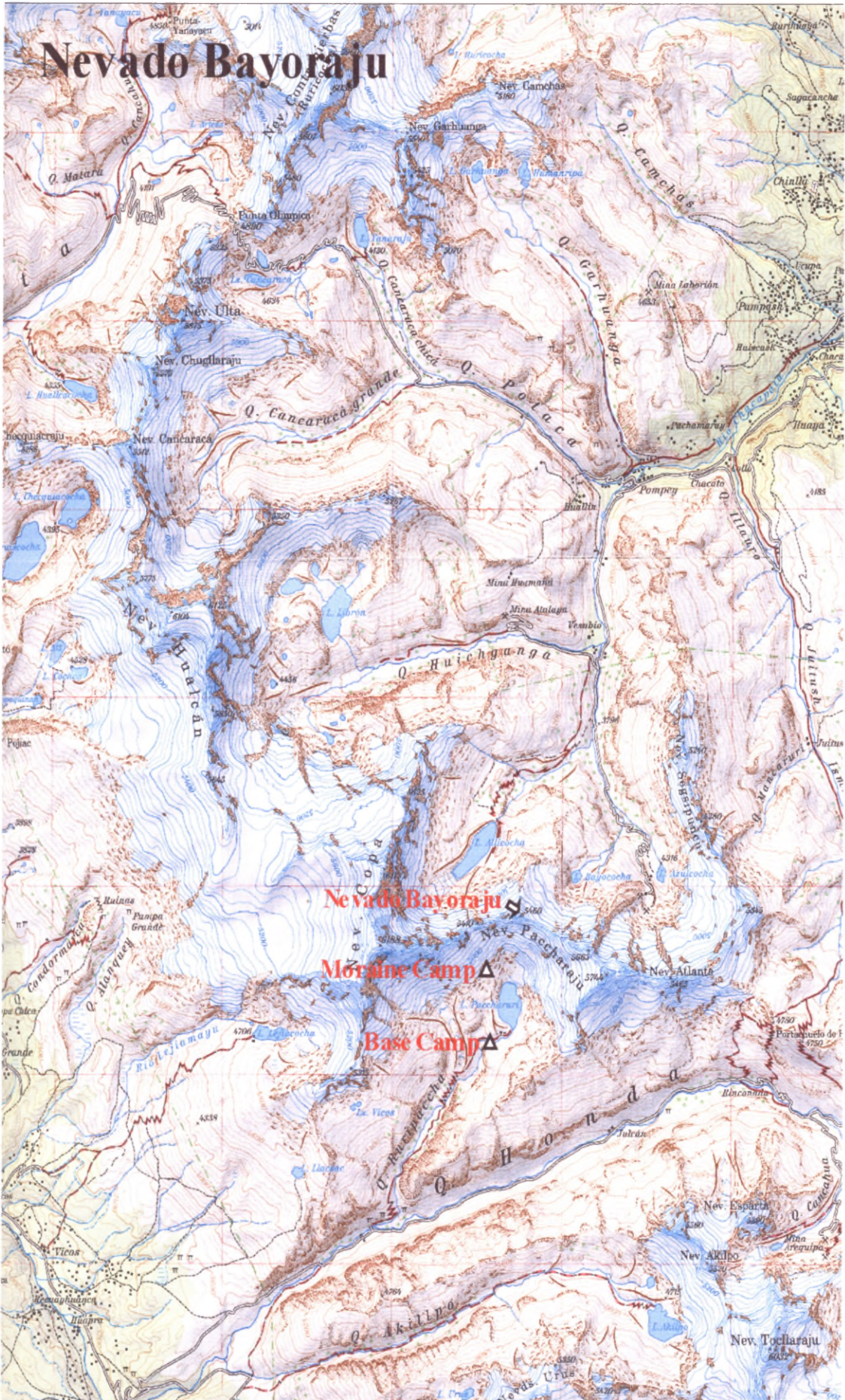
Another route gives access to two more mountains which are part of this massif namely Nevados Garhuanga and Camchas. It is possible to get to these peaks from the road to Chacas. Quebrada Garhuanga which I explored in 2004 can be accessed from Pompey and the beautiful Quebrada Camchas which I visited this year from Chacas. Again there is the possibility of new routes from this side and Nevado Camchas from the quebrada of the same name would be a straightforward ascent.

It is also worth mentioning Quebrada Ruripaccha and Nevado Bayoraju, this is a beautiful little peak and a worthwhile objective especially considering it is also possible to climb Nevado Paccharaju from the same base camp. This is a gorgeous quebrada rarely visited and fairly easy of access.

Appendices

Cordillera Blanca





Itinerary

Nevado Raria Trip:

- Day 01** 27 June: Trek to Base Camp.
- Day 02** 28 June: Climb Nevado Raria.
- Day 03** 29 June: Trek out & return to Huaraz.

Nevado Bayoraju Trip:

- Day 04** 4 July: Trek to Base Camp.
- Day 05** 5 July: Trek to High Camp.
- Day 06** 6 July: Attempt Nevado Bayoraju.
- Day 07** 7 July: Trek out & return to Huaraz.

Contrahierbas Massif first trip:

- Day 08** 14 July: Bus to Yanama.
- Day 09** 15 July: Trek to Moraine Camp.
- Day 10** 16 July: Establish High Camp.
- Day 11** 17 July: Trek to High Camp.
- Day 12** 18 July: Climb Nevado Cajavilca III.
- Day 13** 19 July: Rest day.
- Day 14** 20 July: Trek out & return to Yanama.
- Day 15** 21 July: Bus to Huaraz.

Contrahierbas Massif second trip:

- Day 16** 12 August: Bus to Yanama.
- Day 17** 13 August: Trek to High camp.
- Day 18** 14 August: Recce route to face.
- Day 19** 15 August: Attempt Nevado Contrahierbas.
- Day 20** 16 August: Bus to Huaraz.

Quebrada Camchas Trek:

- Day 21** 19 August: Bus to Chacas.
- Day 22** 20 August: Trek to Base Camp.
- Day 23** 21 August: Recce route to glacier.
- Day 24** 22 August: Trek out & return to Chacas.
- Day 25** 23 August: Bus to Huaraz.

Nevado Cajavilca III

SE Face

550mts AD+



Nevado Contrahierbas
E Face
800mts



Budget

Transportation: £105

Arriero's & Porters: £15

Food: £173

Accommodation: £97

Misc items: £117

Flights: £720

Insurance: £565

TOTAL EXPENDITURE - £1792

Useful addresses and information

Below you will find a list of services that we found both excellent and of good value, Huaraz has an excellent choice of restaurants, bars and club's. It seems superfluous to go into detail regarding restaurants etc as you will have no difficulty in finding a restaurant meeting both your budget and choice of menu. In regards to the other towns we passed through, there was little in the way to be recommended as most places we ate were on a par with each other. Internet facilities can be found in most towns however there is no internet access in Yanama.

Maps:

The areas discussed in this report are covered by the Alpenvereinskarte maps sheets 0/3a Cordillera Blanca North and 0/3b Cordillera Blanca South. These are excellent maps although they still contain the odd inaccuracy.

For Peruvian IGN maps:

Instituto Geografico Nacional – Avenida A. Aramburu 1190-1198, Lima 34.

Open Monday to Friday 8am to 5:30pm.

It is worth mentioning that most of the IGN maps are fairly inaccurate, they are produced from very old aerial surveys and they have never been updated. Expect to find roads, mines, dams and many other structures which will not be shown on your map. Place names can be a problem, lakes, mountains and towns can all be incorrectly named.

Information:

La Casa de Guías – Parque Ginebra 28G, Huaraz.

Gear repairs and manufacture:

Yuraq Janka – Pasaje Agutin Loli 465, Soledad, Huaraz.

Transportation:

For Huaraz, Julio Cesar – Jose Galves 562, La Victoria, Lima.

For Yanama & Chacas, Renzo (Ancash) – Raymondi 871, Huaraz.

Hotels:

Hotel Maria Luisa – Pasaje Tello 241, Miraflores, Lima.

Albergue Churup – Jr Amadeo Figueroa 1257, La Soledad, Huaraz.

Food:

There are several small supermarkets in Huaraz two on the main street Luzuriaga and there is also a large indoor market on Raymondi.

Websites:

www.climbingperu.com

Acknowledgements

No expedition relies solely on the efforts of its members and with this in mind the Contrahierbas 2006 Expedition would like to thank the following organizations.

First of all we would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation for supporting our expedition and along with them the British Mountaineering Council who also contributed.