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Choquequirao Hiking Guide

3 days alone to the Inca ruins above Peru's Apurímac canyon

2027 season edition · updated September 2026

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Welcome

In May 2019 I flew to Peru with one goal: to hike to Choquequirao and make a film about it. Choquequirao is an Inca site high on a ridge above the Apurímac canyon, often called the sister city of Machu Picchu. There's no road to it. You walk down one side of the canyon, cross the river and climb the other side, then come back the same way. I did it alone in three days, from the Capuliyoc trailhead above the village of Cachora, about 30 miles with a tent.



My tent on the afternoon of Day 1.

Why not Machu Picchu? Machu Picchu has been done. This is kind of the new Machu Picchu, and that's why I did it. I saw maybe 20 or 25 people on the whole three-day hike, and the ruins were basically empty, which was amazing compared to my experiences at Machu Picchu.

What's inside

- Straight answers to the questions people ask about this trek
- When to go, the park's tickets, hours and rules, and its 2026 closures
- Getting from Cusco to Cachora and the trailhead, the way I did it
- All three days: my notes, the trail, where to get off, a map with an elevation profile, and links to that day in my film
- A slower four or five day plan, the campsites and food on the way, what I paid and the gear for this route (what I carried and filmed with)
- Weather and safety, one page of things to check before you go, and a printable trip sheet

How to use it offline

Save this PDF to your phone's Files or Books app before you leave home. Load the GPX files and download offline maps while you still have Wi-Fi in Cusco. I used offline maps on the trail: with the map downloaded you can see elevation, distances and campsites in airplane mode. Each day starts on a new page. The film links need a connection; everything else works offline.

When I say "I," it's my own trip. Tickets, rules and bus fares change, so they're dated, and the checks are collected on one page: Before you go, check these.

At a glance

QUICK FACTS

Distance	29.3 miles (47.2 km) of walking over 3 days, out and back
Climbing	about 12,460 ft (3,800 m) up and the same down
Days	3 walking days, 2 nights in my tent. Most people take 4 or 5
Start and finish	Capuliyoc, at the end of the road 11 km (7 mi) above Cachora
High point	10,052 ft (3,064 m), at the top of the ruins, Day 2
Low point	4,852 ft (1,479 m), the bridge over the Río Apurímac at Playa Rosalina
When	The dry season, about May to September. I walked May 25 to 27, 2019
Difficulty	Steep: two big climbs in the heat each way, on a clear mule trail. My Day 2 was one of the toughest things I've ever done
Base	Cusco, about 3 hours by road from Cachora
Ticket (2026)	S/60 general, S/30 students, valid for one day
Trip	Solo, no guide, no mules

DAY	ROUTE	MILES (KM)	UP / DOWN (FT)	SLEEP
1	Capuliyoc to Santa Rosa Alta	9.1 (14.7)	3,008 / 5,239	Santa Rosa Alta campsite
2	Santa Rosa Alta to Choquequirao, then back down to Playa Rosalina	13.5 (21.7)	4,169 / 6,579	Playa Rosalina campsite
3	Playa Rosalina to Capuliyoc	6.7 (10.8)	5,282 / 713	Cachora

The numbers come from my own GPS recordings, smoothed the same way for every day. In 2019 I wrote that I hiked over 30 miles with 13,500 ft of elevation change; my GPS says 29.3 miles, and apps count climbing differently (AllTrails shows about 13,600 ft of climbing for my three days).



The Apurímac canyon from the trail below Capuliyoc, Day 1.





My three days: down from Capuliyoc to the Apurímac, up to Choquequirao and back the same way. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

Straight answers

How many days do I need? Three or four days is what's usually recommended for the whole out and back, and I did it in two and a half. Unless you're fast and used to big climbs, plan four days on the trail, and five if you want a slow morning at the ruins. See Other ways to do it.

How hard is it? It's a steep mule trail, easy to follow, but the climbs are brutal. You drop about 1,430 m (4,700 ft) from Capuliyoc to the river, climb about 1,580 m (5,180 ft) from the river to the ruins, and then do both again in reverse. My Day 2, when I went up to the ruins and all the way back down to the river, was one of the toughest things I've ever done. I don't recommend anyone do that.

Is it open? Usually, but not always. The park was closed to all visitors from February 1, 2026 after rainy-season damage to the trail, and the Cachora route reopened on April 15, 2026. It also closed in early 2023 and in March 2025. Check the Ministry of Culture's notices before you book. See The park.

Do I need a guide or a permit? No guide was required on my trip, and I found no official rule requiring one in 2026. You need an entry ticket for the park. I signed in and paid at the little booth at Capuliyoc.

Can I buy food and water on the way? In 2019, yes: you could buy food at the campsites, there was Gatorade waiting at every campsite, and Marampata, the village below the ruins, had hot food. Carry small bills and coins. I still carried my own food. See Campsites, food and water.

Where do I sleep? At the campsites along the trail. You can't camp inside the archaeological site itself. I slept at Santa Rosa Alta and Playa Rosalina, and I'd recommend at least one night at Marampata.

Is it hot? The canyon side you walk down from Capuliyoc is very dry and desert-like because of the direct sun, and I was sweating on the way down. Start the climbs early, while you're in the shade.

What about bugs? I ended up with dozens of mosquito bites all over my legs and arms. Even when it's hot, wear pants and long sleeves whenever you can.

Can I do it alone? I did. There were only four other people signed in the morning I started, and I saw about 20 to 25 people in three days. Say hi to everyone. There's no phone signal to count on, so leave your plan with someone at home.

Can I go on to Machu Picchu? There's a longer trek from Choquequirao to Machu Picchu via Yanama, but I didn't do it. In March 2026 the Ministry of Culture said its Río Blanco section was not passable, and I found no notice since saying it has reopened. See Other ways to do it.



Snow peaks above the canyon, seen from the trail on Day 1.

When to go

The dry season. Plan on May to September. The rains start around September and the worst of them is January to March, when landslides damage the trail: the park closed from February 1, 2026 until the Cachora route reopened on April 15, 2026, and it closed in early 2023 and March 2025 too. Peru's weather service expects an El Niño in 2026 and 2027 with generally below-normal rain in the southern Andes, which doesn't rule out damage. Avoid January to April.

What I got. I walked May 25 to 27, 2019, at the start of the dry season. The days were sunny and hot on the dry canyon side. In May the sun set about 6 p.m. Going to bed at 7 meant sleeping for 11 hours and waking with the dawn. It seems crazy, but after a day like that your body doesn't mind, so embrace the rest.

Heat and shade. The canyon floor is low, about 1,480 m (4,850 ft), and the slopes above it get the full sun. On the climbs, start early: on the morning of Day 2 I had cool air and shade from the clouds and the trees for most of the way up, and on Day 3 I ran out of water on the last climb in the heat.

The park: tickets, hours and rules

Choquequirao is managed by Peru's Ministry of Culture through its office in Cusco (the Dirección Desconcentrada de Cultura Cusco). The official name of the park is the Parque Arqueológico de Vilcabamba (Choquequirao).

Ticket (2026). S/60 general; S/30 for university and technical students with a valid card; S/25 for children 3 to 17; half price for people 60 and over, teachers and people with disabilities. There's no separate rate for foreigners. The ticket is valid for one day. In September 2026 the Ministry's online ticket site sold only Machu Picchu, Kuélap and Sipán, not Choquequirao, so plan to pay at the park. Bring cash in soles.

What I did. I signed in and paid at a little booth at the Capuliyoc trailhead on May 25, 2019. My receipt says S/60, valid for one day. At the ruins, a single attendant ripped my ticket and hassled me about my tripod.

Hours. The site is open 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. (2026).

The rules (Ministry of Culture, 2026):

- No food inside the site. Eat before you go in.
- Don't climb on or paint the walls.
- No camping inside the site. Camp at the campsites.
- No animals inside the site. Mules and horses use the trail, but not the ruins.
- No drones without written permission from the Ministry's Cusco office.
- No alcohol or drugs.

The Playa Rosalina bridge. When the park reopened in April 2025 after a rockslide damaged it, the Ministry allowed at most 6 people and 2 pack animals on the bridge at a time. Follow any sign there.

Closures. The trail is closed some years in the rainy season. The Ministry posts notices on gob.pe (search "Choquequirao"). As of September 29, 2026, the last notice was the reopening of the Capuliyoc to Cachora route from April 15, 2026.



A passage between Inca walls inside Choquequirao, Day 2.

Getting there

What I did. I flew to Cusco on May 22, 2019 and spent a couple of days there getting supplies. The airline lost my luggage. I left my computer and everything I didn't need at my hostel in Cusco. On May 24 I took a 4 p.m. Ferkaxi bus from Cusco toward Abancay (S/20) and got off at the Ramal de Cachora, the turnoff for Cachora. There was a little drama getting to the trailhead with the bus. From the turnoff I hired a taxi to Cachora (about $10).



Casa Nostra, where I stayed in Cachora, the morning I started.

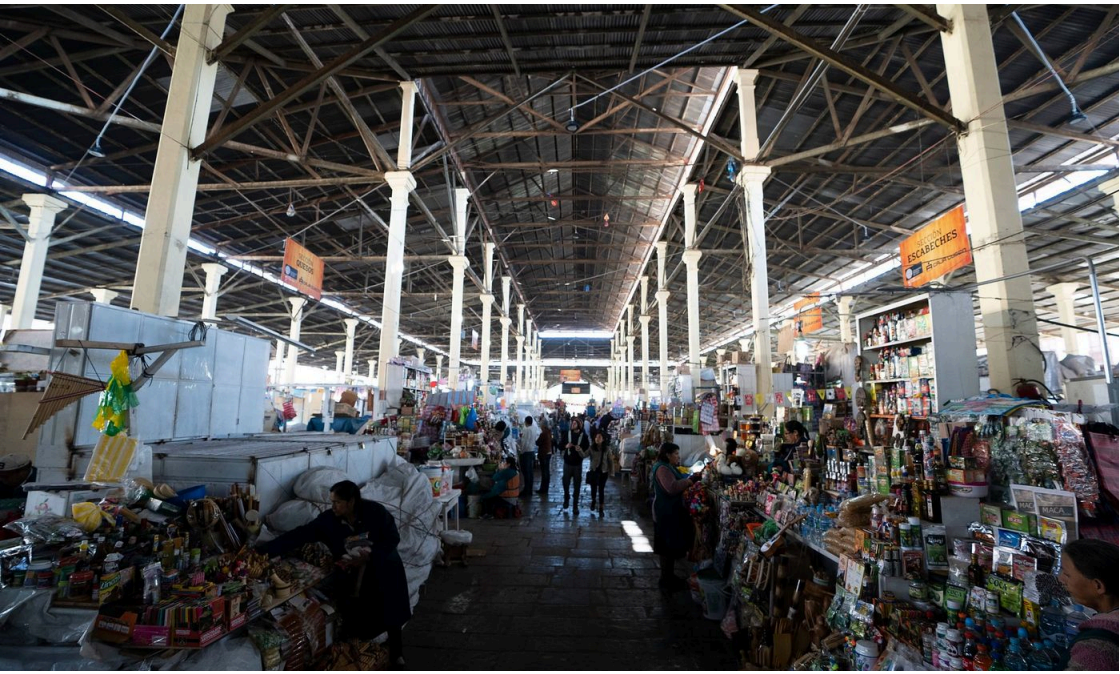
I stayed at a lovely hotel called Casa Nostra, just outside the town, with great food, for about $11 with breakfast included. In the morning I took a taxi to the trailhead at the Capuliyoc viewpoint (another $10), signed in at the booth and paid my ticket. The roads were no joke: they drive like crazy, they just gun it down these roads.

The route today.

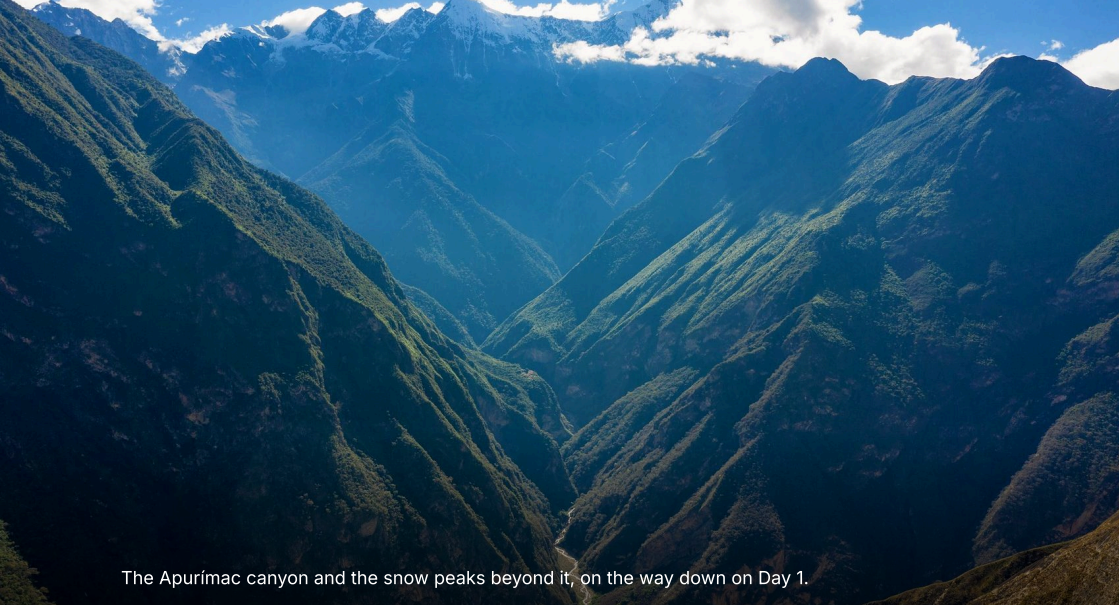
1. **Cusco to the Cachora turnoff.** Buses to Abancay leave from Cusco's bus terminal and pass the turnoff near the Saywite ruins. By road it's about 3 hours from Cusco to Cachora. Ask for the Ramal de Cachora or the Saywite turnoff when you board.
2. **The turnoff to Cachora.** 16 km of road. I hired a taxi at the turnoff.
3. **Cachora to Capuliyoc.** About 11 km of road to the trailhead. Take a taxi, or walk it: that adds about 11 km and a climb to your first day.

Bus companies and fares change and weren't on any official site I could check; the fares above are what I paid in 2019.

Cusco. Cusco is at about 3,400 m (11,150 ft), much higher than anything on this trek. Give yourself a couple of days there before you start.



The San Pedro market in Cusco, the day before I left for Cachora.



The Apurímac canyon and the snow peaks beyond it, on the way down on Day 1.

DAY 1

Capuliyoc to Santa Rosa Alta

DISTANCE	CLIMBING	DESCENT	TIME I TOOK
9.1 mi (14.7 km)	**3,008 ft** (917 m)	**5,239 ft** (1,597 m)	**5.8 hours** (8:41 a.m. to 2:29 p.m.)

HIGH POINT

9,547 ft (2,910 m), at the Capuliyoc viewpoint

LOW POINT

4,852 ft (1,479 m), the bridge at Playa Rosalina, mile 6.5

CAMPSITES ON THE WAY

Cocamasana (mile 3.3), Chiquisca (mile 5.2), Playa Rosalina (mile 6.5), Santa Rosa Baja (mile 8.5), Santa Rosa Alta (mile 9.1)

SLEEP

Santa Rosa Alta campsite

FOOD AND WATER

Campsites sold food and drinks in 2019. Fill up at every campsite

My day

This was the start of my Choquequirao trek. When I signed in at the booth, I saw that there were only four other people who'd left that morning. Not many people on this trail, which is a good thing.

It was all downhill to the river, and I was already sweating. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to go up it. It's pretty, though. From high above you can see the bridge way down there, where you cross the Apurímac.



Looking down the Apurímac canyon on the way down, Day 1.

On the way down I passed a campsite with about half a dozen people, a lot of food and a lot of stuff. It was fancy. It wasn't even half the day done, so I kept going: from the bridge, it's all uphill. I just needed to make it to the campsite before dark. I was very tired when I finally made it to Santa Rosa Alta, and I was dead. That night's specialty was an evening coffee I'd been given in Guatemala. That's not bad at all.

The trail

From the road end, the path passes the Capuliyoc viewpoint (mile 0.2), your first look down into the canyon, then zigzags down the dry, open side of the canyon: little shade, lots of sun. Cocamasana (mile 3.3, 2,254 m on my GPS) and Chiquisca (mile 5.2, 1,838 m) are campsites on the way down. Below Chiquisca the path drops to Playa Rosalina, a campsite by the bridge over the Río Apurímac at 1,485 m (4,870 ft), the lowest point of the trek, at mile 6.5.

Across the bridge the climb starts at once: about 735 m (2,410 ft) in the next 2.6 miles, past Santa Rosa Baja (mile 8.5) to Santa Rosa Alta (mile 9.1, 2,220 m). It's steep and exposed to the afternoon sun.

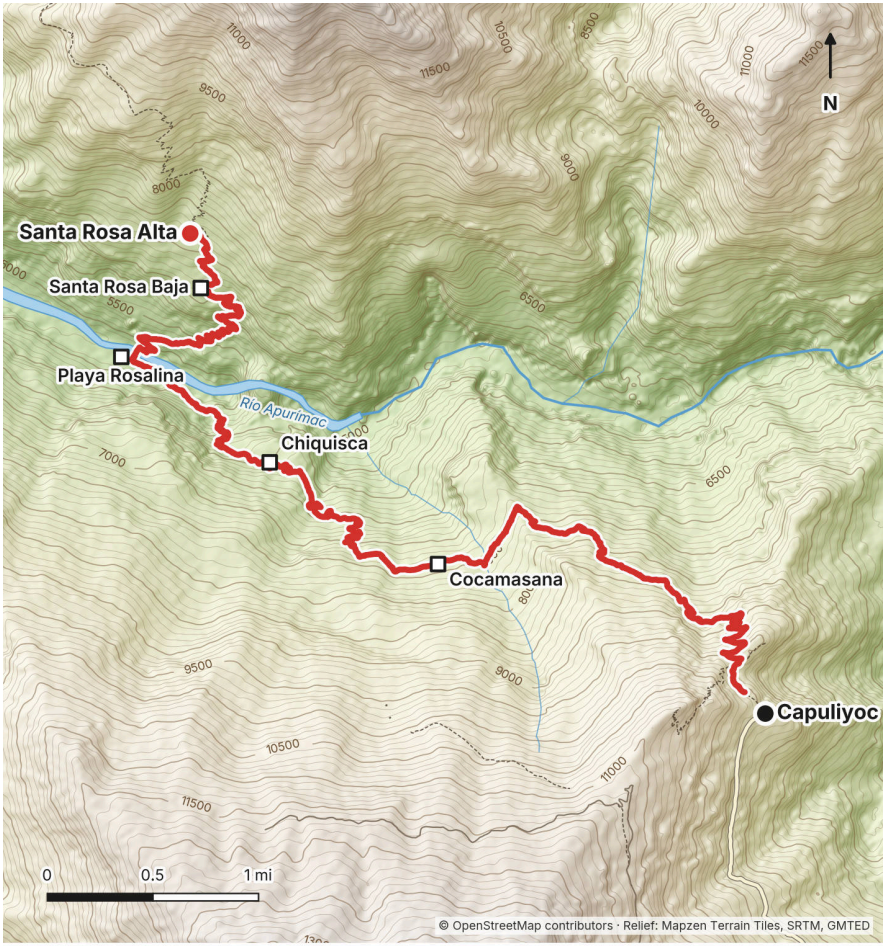
Where to stop. To take things slow and easy, I recommend camping at Playa Rosalina for the first night, and starting the climb early the next morning. If you push the first day, you can make it up to Marampata for lunch on Day 2. See Other ways to do it.

If you need to get off

Turn around and walk back up to Capuliyoc: the only way out is the way you came. The campsites have people on them in the season. The longest and hottest part of the walk out is the last few miles to Capuliyoc.

Watch this day

Film, Day 1





Day 1 map and elevation profile. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.



The terraces of Choquequirao from above, Day 2.

DAY 2

Santa Rosa Alta to Choquequirao and back to Playa Rosalina

DISTANCE	CLIMBING	DESCENT	TIME I TOOK
13.5 mi (21.7 km)	**4,169 ft** (1,271 m)	**6,579 ft** (2,005 m)	**11.4 hours** (6:56 a.m. to 6:20 p.m.)

HIGH POINT

10,052 ft (3,064 m), at the top of the ruins

ON THE WAY

Marampata (mile 1.9), the campsite below the ruins where I left my pack (mile 4.3), the main plaza (mile 5.3), the llama terraces (mile 6.3)

SLEEP

Playa Rosalina campsite, back down at the river

FOOD AND WATER

Marampata had hot food in 2019. No food allowed inside the site

My day

This one is all uphill for a long time. I went really slow while I had the nice cool morning air and shade from the clouds, all the way up to the village. When I saw buildings and a campsite I knew I was getting close to the top, and that was quick. The village is Marampata: an adorable mountainside village with plenty of places to rest and farm animals to say hello to. I started to think it would probably be the best campsite.



Above the trail from Marampata toward Choquequirao, Day 2.

From Marampata it was uphill just a little bit, but pretty much smooth sailing to the campsite below the ruins, where I dropped my stuff and went up to the ruins. It's a pretty gradual and easy ascent. I followed the signs that say Plaza Principal and eventually reached the terraces. There were a few people at the top, a little party, and they were very nice. I took my time exploring, then went down to see the llama terraces. It's quite the descent, so be prepared for that.



Me on an Inca stairway near the ruins, Day 2.

Then I headed back to my pack to get some water. I still had some sunlight, so I grabbed a bite to eat and started back down to the river. By the time I could hear the river I was just spent. I was so happy to be there: solid, flat, smooth ground. I don't recommend anyone do that. Honestly, it was one of the toughest things I've ever done. I was tired, but I had to get my tent up. A white and orange cat came into my tent that night and we formed a bond.

The trail

From Santa Rosa Alta the path keeps climbing in switchbacks, mostly in trees and shade in the morning, to Marampata at mile 1.9 (about 2,900 m, 9,500 ft on my GPS): about 680 m (2,230 ft) of climbing. Marampata has several campsites and places to eat. From there the path contours around the hillside, with a small climb and descent, to the campsite below the ruins at mile 4.3 (about 2,840 m).

From the campsite I walked up to the main plaza at mile 5.3, about 3,050 m (10,010 ft). My GPS shows about 1 mile of wandering around the terraces and buildings, and my highest point, 3,064 m, at the top of the site. The llama terraces, with their white stone llamas set into the walls, are a steep walk down from the main site: I reached them at mile 6.3. My recording paused a few times at the ruins, most of all between the llama terraces and the campsite: almost a mile in all wasn't recorded, so the true day was a little longer than my 13.5 miles.

Bring snacks and plenty of water if you leave your big pack at the campsite, but remember that food isn't allowed inside the site. The site is open 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.



The canyon on the way back down from Marampata, Day 2.

The way back is the way you came: back past Marampata (mile 9.2), then down about 1,410 m (4,630 ft) past Santa Rosa Alta and Santa Rosa Baja to Playa Rosalina (mile 13.5). It took me about 2 hours 45 minutes from Marampata to the river, and I got there after sunset.

Split it. This is two days' walking in one. Stay at Marampata or the campsite below the ruins, see the ruins in the morning, and go down in the afternoon.

If you need to get off

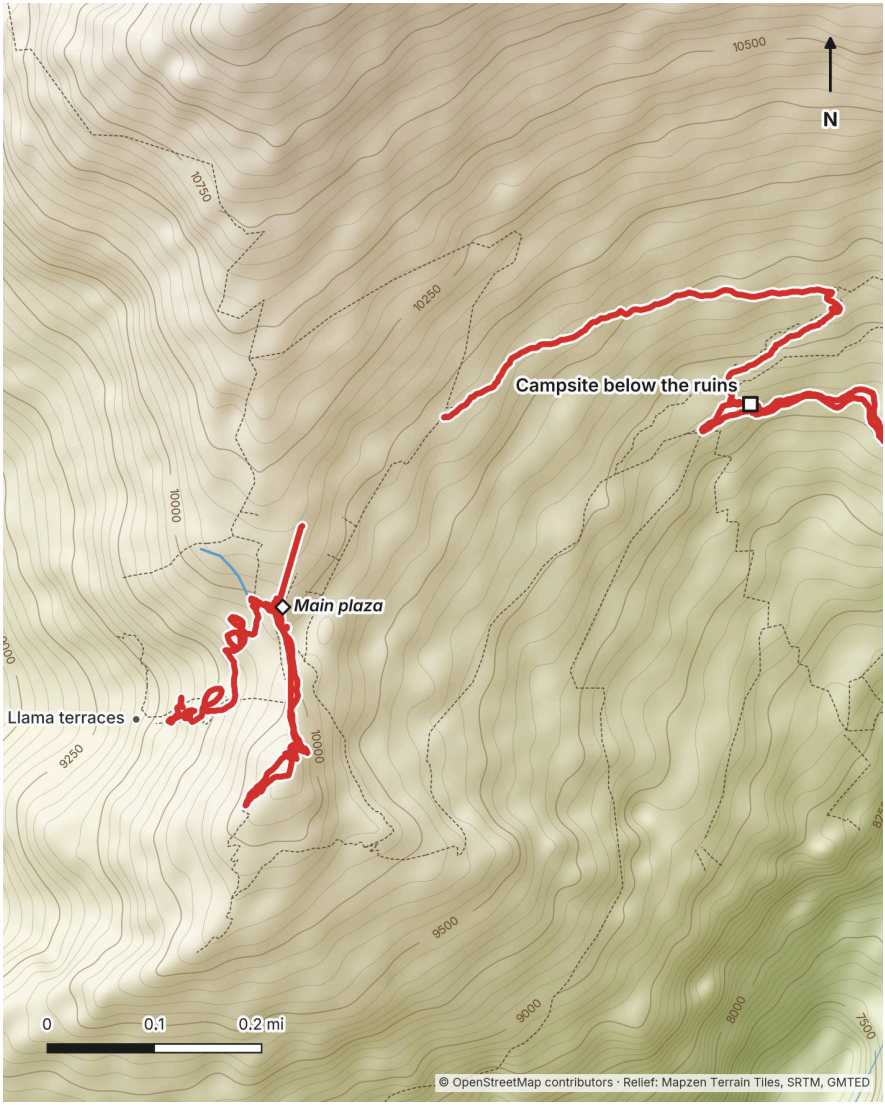
Marampata is the place to stop and rest: it has campsites, food and people. From anywhere on this day, the only way out is back down to the river and up to Capuliyoc.



Clouds on the ridge above Marampata, the morning of Day 2.

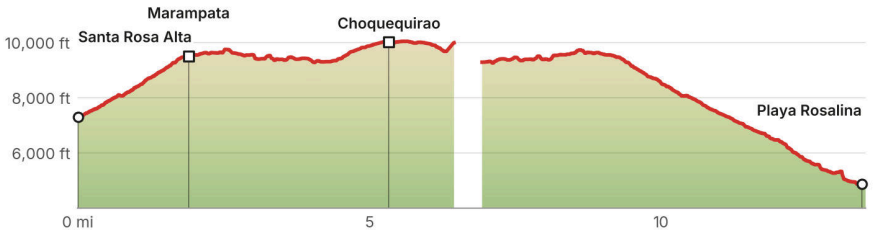
Watch this day

Film, Day 2 · Almost to the ruins

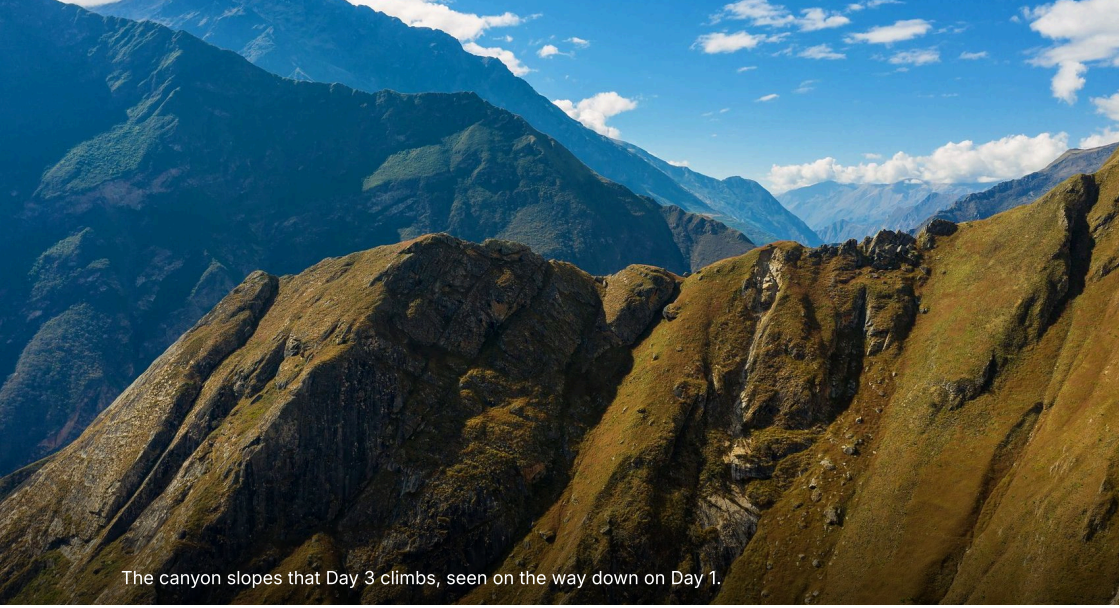


Close-up of Day 2 at the ruins: the campsite below the ruins, the main plaza and the llama terraces. The gaps are where my recording paused. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.





Day 2 map and elevation profile. The break in the profile is where my recording paused at the ruins. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.



The canyon slopes that Day 3 climbs, seen on the way down on Day 1.

DAY 3

Contents

Playa Rosalina to Capuliyoc

DISTANCE	CLIMBING	DESCENT	TIME I TOOK
6.7 mi (10.8 km)	**5,282 ft** (1,610 m)	**713 ft** (217 m)	**5.4 hours** (7:52 a.m. to 1:18 p.m.)

HIGH POINT

9,557 ft (2,913 m), near the road end at Capuliyoc

SLEEP

Cachora

ON THE WAY

Chiquisca (mile 1.4), Cocamasana (mile 3.2), the Capuliyoc viewpoint (mile 6.4)

FOOD AND WATER

Chiquisca and Cocamasana are the last campsites. Fill up before the last climb

My day

Good morning: the cat was back in my tent. I started the climb planning to take it very slow. The rest of the day was going to be me complaining a ton, and I knew it.



The cat at Playa Rosalina, the morning of Day 3.

I heard running water on the way up. Near the top I could see the end up there, but I took a break in the shade first. I was out of water, 100% out of water. The dog I'd seen on the way down was still lying there when I got back. I reached the Capuliyoc trailhead just after 1 p.m. and went back down to Cachora for the night.

The trail

This is Day 1 in reverse, and the biggest single climb of the trek: about 1,430 m (4,700 ft) from the bridge to Capuliyoc in 6.4 miles, most of it on the dry, sunny side of the canyon. Chiquisca (mile 1.4) and Cocamasana (mile 3.2) are the last campsites and the last places to fill up, so fill every bottle there. Start as early as you can: by late morning the upper slopes are in full sun.



The path on the dry side of the canyon, the same path Day 3 climbs (photo from Day 1).

If you need to get off

There's nowhere else to go: keep climbing, slowly. Rest at Chiquisca or Cocamasana, or camp there and finish in the morning.

Watch this day

Film, Day 3





Day 3 map and elevation profile. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

Getting home

What I did. From Capuliyoc I went back down to Cachora, and the next morning I had my coffee there with a view of the valley. It took me about a day or two to get back to Cusco. I'd booked about a week in Peru for the trip: three days hiking, and the rest of the time I enjoyed Cusco and edited the film.



The valley below Cachora, the morning after the trek.

The way back today. Taxi from Capuliyoc to Cachora (11 km), then a taxi or colectivo to the Cachora turnoff on the Cusco to Abancay road, and a bus back to Cusco (about 3 hours by road from Cachora). Arrange the taxi from Capuliyoc before you set off, or ask at the campsite at the road end. Leave a spare day before any flight: the canyon days can take longer than planned.

Other ways to do it

I walked the three days in this guide. These are other ways to use it, and I didn't do them.

A slower version (4 days)

My line, split the way I'd recommend it in 2019: a first night at the river, a night at Marampata, and the ruins without a big pack. Distances from my GPS.

1. Capuliyoc down to Playa Rosalina (6.5 mi, 1,430 m down). Camp by the river
2. Playa Rosalina up to Marampata (4.5 mi, about 1,410 m up), in the morning shade. Camp at Marampata for the views and the hot village food
3. Marampata to the ruins and back (about 7.5 mi on my GPS, a little more with the stretch my recording missed), then on down to Santa Rosa or Playa Rosalina if you have the energy, or a second night at Marampata
4. Out to Capuliyoc (6.7 mi from Playa Rosalina, more from higher up), starting at first light

A fifth day gives you a whole morning at the ruins, or a rest day. Peru's tourism board suggests hiring local muleteers (arrieros) to carry your gear; I carried mine.

If you're short on time

My three days worked, but my Day 2 was far too long. If you only have three days, camp at Marampata on the first night (11 mi and about 1,600 m of climbing from Capuliyoc, a very big day) or at the campsite below the ruins, see the ruins early on Day 2, and go down to Chiquisca or Playa Rosalina that afternoon.

Choquequirao to Machu Picchu

A longer trek continues from Choquequirao over the mountains via Yanama toward Machu Picchu, and there's a Huancacalle route from Vilcabamba. I didn't do either. In March 2026 the Ministry of Culture said the Río Blanco section of the route beyond Choquequirao was not passable, and I found no later notice reopening it. In December 2025 the La Convención provincial government opened a new path from Abra San Juan, near Yanama, to Choquequirao. The US State Department's advisory for Peru puts the VRAEM area, which it says includes Vilcabamba, at Level 4 (do not travel) in 2026. Check both before you plan anything beyond Choquequirao.



Across the canyon from the trail on Day 1.

Campsites, food and water

Where I slept

NIGHT	WHERE
May 24	Casa Nostra hotel, Cachora (about $11 with breakfast)
May 25	My tent at Santa Rosa Alta campsite, 2,220 m (7,280 ft)
May 26	My tent at Playa Rosalina campsite, by the river, 1,485 m (4,870 ft)
May 27	Cachora

Campsites on the route

From OpenStreetMap, each within about 50 m of my track. Heights are from my GPS. Miles are from Capuliyoc along my Day 1 and Day 2.

CAMPSITE	MILE	HEIGHT
Capuliyoc (road end)	0	2,881 m (9,450 ft)
Cocamasana	3.3	2,254 m (7,390 ft)
Chiquisca	5.2	1,838 m (6,030 ft)
Playa Rosalina (the bridge)	6.5	1,485 m (4,870 ft)
Santa Rosa Baja	8.5	2,060 m (6,760 ft)
Santa Rosa Alta	9.1	2,220 m (7,280 ft)
Marampata (village, several campsites)	11.0	about 2,900 m (9,500 ft)
Campsite below the ruins	13.4	about 2,840 m (9,320 ft)

The Ministry of Culture names Capuliyoc, Cocamasana, Chiquisca, Playa Rosalina and Marampata in its notices; it doesn't publish a list of campsites or their services, so what's on offer can change.

What I found in 2019. You pass campsites with hot food, drinks and plenty of dogs to pet. There was Gatorade waiting for me at every campsite, so I probably wouldn't have packed as much water and Gatorade. Marampata is where I'd camp at least one night, for the views and the hot village food.

Water

Fill up at every campsite, and carry enough for the long climbs between them. I carried a water filter and a hydration bladder, and I still ran out of water completely on the last climb. Treat or filter everything you don't buy sealed.

Food

You can buy food at the campsites or pack your own. I packed my own and bought it in Cusco. What I recommended in 2019: ramen noodles, oatmeal, rice, tuna, olive oil, cheddar cheese, beef jerky, dried mangos, lentils, fresh fruit, coca leaves and coffee.

One thing I will never do again: chicken ramen with tuna. I thought protein on protein would be good. It was disgusting.



Food for the trek, bought in Cusco the day before I left.

What I paid

My records for this trip are some receipts and what I wrote in the film's description in 2019.

ITEM	WHAT I PAID IN 2019
Bus, Cusco toward Abancay, to the Cachora turnoff (Ferkaxi, May 24)	S/20 (receipt)
Taxi, the turnoff to Cachora	About $10
Casa Nostra hotel, Cachora, with breakfast	About $11 a night
Taxi, Cachora to Capuliyoc	About $10
Choquequirao ticket (May 25, valid one day)	S/60 (receipt)
Food from Cusco, and drinks on the trail	Not in my records
Flights to Cusco	Not in my records

In 2019 I wrote that the entire cost of the trip can be less than S/500, not counting flights. Make sure you have small bills and coins while hiking.

For your budget (2026). The ticket is still S/60 (S/30 for students). Bus fares, taxis, campsites and food on the trail are cash in soles; I couldn't check 2026 prices for them on any official site.

Gear for this route

What this trek needs

- Sun protection: a hat, sunscreen and long sleeves; the canyon slopes are exposed
- Bug protection: long pants and sleeves, and repellent
- Enough bottles for 2 to 3 liters between campsites on the big climbs, and a filter
- A tent, sleeping bag and mat (or a mule and muleteer to carry them)
- Cash in soles in small notes, for the ticket, campsites and food
- Offline maps with the GPX files, a power bank, and a headlamp

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I carried everything myself on this trek, with no mule. Here's what I packed in 2019, what I'd take now, and what I filmed with.

What I carried in 2019

From my film's description and my talk about the trip that July. I left my computer and everything else at my hostel in Cusco.

- **Pack:** a 45-liter pack
- **Water:** CamelBak bladder (Amazon)
- **Tent:** REI Passage tent. Similar: NEMO Hornet Elite OSMO 1P (Amazon).
- **Sleeping bag:** my sleeping bag (Amazon)
- **Sleeping mat:** WellaX Ultralight Air Sleeping Pad (Amazon)
- **Water filter:** my water filter (Amazon)
- **Stove:** Jetboil Flash (Amazon)
- **Spoon:** TOAKS Titanium Long Handle Spoon (Amazon)
- **Clothes:** pants and long sleeves. It was hot, but I'd wear them for the mosquitoes.

What I'd take now

My current kit for a self-carried trek in the canyon: heat, sun, mosquitoes and long climbs.

- **Pack:** Hyperlite Mountain Gear Southwest 2400 (Hyperlite). Big enough for a tent, sleeping bag and mat if you don't hire a mule.
- **Sun hoodie:** PATH Projects Pyrenees T19 Hoodie (PATH Projects). Long sleeves for the sun and the bugs: the canyon slopes are exposed.
- **Pants:** PATH Projects Killam PX Pant (PATH Projects). Long pants for the mosquitoes.
- **Hat:** PATH Projects Muir Cap 2.0 (PATH Projects)
- **Water filter:** Katadyn BeFree AC · 1L (Amazon). Carry 2 to 3 liters between campsites on the big climbs.
- **Tent:** NEMO Hornet Elite OSMO 1P (Amazon)
- **Quilt:** Hyperlite Mountain Gear 20° Quilt (Hyperlite)
- **Sleeping pad:** Therm-a-Rest NeoAir XLite NXT (Amazon)
- **Stove:** Jetboil Stash (Amazon)
- **Headlamp:** Nitecore NU20 Classic (Amazon)
- **Power bank:** Nitecore NB20000 (Amazon). There's nowhere to charge on the trail.
- **Navigation:** AllTrails+ (AllTrails, 30% off). Import my GPX files and download them offline in Cusco. Offline maps need the paid plan.
- **Phone data:** Airalo eSIM (Airalo, $3 off). Data in Cusco and on the way. Don't count on signal in the canyon.

Filming kit

What I filmed this trip with in 2019. My setup is smaller now (below). No drones at the site without written permission: see The park: tickets, hours and rules.

- **Camera:** Sony a7 III (Amazon). Plus SD cards and extra batteries: there's nowhere to charge on the trail.
- **Lens:** Sony FE 16-35mm f/2.8 GM (Amazon)
- **Mic:** Rode VideoMic Pro+. Similar: Rode VideoMic NTG (Amazon).

- **Tripod:** Peak Design Travel Tripod. Similar: SmallRig Carbon Fiber Tripod (Amazon).
- **Drone:** DJI Mavic 2 Pro. No longer made.

What I film with now

Since September 2026 I film with a smaller setup: the Pocket 4 and the Mic 3 on the trail, and the Mini 5 Pro in the air.

- **Camera:** DJI Osmo Pocket 4 (Amazon)
- **Mic:** DJI Mic 3 · 1 TX + 1 RX (Amazon). It pairs with the Pocket 4.
- **Drone:** DJI Mini 5 Pro (Amazon)

Weather and safety

Emergency numbers (2026). Police 105, fire service 116. The SAMU ambulance number 106 isn't listed for Cusco or Apurímac. iPerú, the government's tourist information service, answers on WhatsApp at 944 492 314; it isn't an emergency line. Don't count on phone signal in the canyon; a satellite messenger is the real backup.

Leave a plan with someone at home and at your hotel in Cusco or Cachora, with your dates.

The US advisory (2026). The US State Department rates Peru Level 2 (exercise increased caution). It puts the VRAEM area, which it says includes Vilcabamba, at Level 4. It doesn't mention Cachora or Choquequirao, but it matters if you plan the longer routes through Vilcabamba.

Altitude. The trek itself is lower than Cusco: 1,480 to 3,060 m (4,850 to 10,050 ft). Cusco, at about 3,400 m, is where you'll feel the altitude. A couple of days there before the trek helps.

Where to be careful:

- The heat on the dry canyon side (Days 1 and 3): start early, carry more water than you think
- The climbs out of the canyon: go slow, rest in the shade
- The Playa Rosalina bridge: follow the limit on people and animals
- Mules on the trail: step to the uphill side and let them pass
- Landslides in the rainy season: the reason the trail closes
- Inside the site: steep terraces and stairs, especially down to the llama terraces

Going solo. I hiked alone and saw only a few people each day, mostly at the campsites. If you go alone, be conservative about water and heat, and camp early rather than push on in the dark.

Using the GPX files

My own GPS recordings from May 25 to 27, 2019, with all timestamps removed.

FILE	WHAT IT IS
choquequirao-day-1.gpx	Day 1: Capuliyoc to Santa Rosa Alta
choquequirao-day-2.gpx	Day 2: Santa Rosa Alta to Choquequirao and back to Playa Rosalina
choquequirao-day-3.gpx	Day 3: Playa Rosalina to Capuliyoc
choquequirao-full-route.gpx	All three days, with waypoints for the trailhead, the campsites, where I left my pack below the ruins, the main plaza and the llama terraces

AllTrails. On a computer, sign in at alltrails.com, create a new map and use Import. It then shows up in the app on your phone. Offline maps need a paid plan.

Gaia GPS. Open the file from Files, email or AirDrop and choose Gaia GPS, or use Import on gaiagps.com. Download the map area offline.

Garmin. In Garmin Connect on the web, go to Training, Courses, Import. Save it as a course and send it to your watch.

Organic Maps (free). Download the offline map for Peru, then open the GPX file and choose Organic Maps. It works fully offline.

Before you leave, download offline maps for the whole canyon, turn on airplane mode, and check that each day and your location show up.

Before you go, check these

These change every year. Everything else in this guide stays the same.

The park

- That the Cachora route is open: the Ministry of Culture's notices on gob.pe (search "Choquequirao"), especially from January to April
- The ticket price and where it's sold (in 2026: S/60, at the park, not online)
- The site's hours (7 a.m. to 4 p.m. in 2026) and rules
- If you're thinking of going on to Machu Picchu: whether the Río Blanco section has reopened, and the US advisory for Vilcabamba

Getting there

- Bus times from Cusco toward Abancay, and a taxi from the Cachora turnoff
- A taxi back from Capuliyoc, with a spare day before your flight home

Prices, conditions and your stuff

- Cash in soles in small notes
- The forecast, and whether the rains have started early or late
- Offline maps and GPX files on your phone, a filter, sun and bug protection, enough bottles

One-page trip sheet

DAY	MI (KM)	FROM, TO	SLEEP	NOTES
0		Cusco, bus to the Cachora turnoff, taxi to Cachora	Cachora	Food and cash from Cusco
1	9.1 (14.7)	Capuliyoc to Santa Rosa Alta	Santa Rosa Alta	Ticket at Capuliyoc. 1,430 m down, then up
2	13.5 (21.7)	Santa Rosa Alta to Choquequirao, back to Playa Rosalina	Playa Rosalina	Marampata, ruins 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., no food in the site
3	6.7 (10.8)	Playa Rosalina to Capuliyoc	Cachora	1,430 m up. Fill up at Chiquisca
Total	**29.3 (47.2)**			**About 12,460 ft up**

Slower plan: Playa Rosalina, Marampata, the ruins and back to Marampata or lower, then out (4 or 5 days).

Campsites: Capuliyoc · Cocamasana · Chiquisca · Playa Rosalina · Santa Rosa Baja · Santa Rosa Alta · Marampata · below the ruins

Ticket (2026): S/60, students S/30, valid one day. Site open 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rules: no food in the site · no camping in the site · don't climb the walls · no drones without permission

Emergency: police 105 · fire 116 · iPerú WhatsApp 944 492 314

About this guide

Choquequirao Hiking Guide: 3 days alone to the Inca ruins above Peru's Apurímac canyon, by Kraig Adams. 2027 season edition, updated September 2026.

I hiked to Choquequirao alone from May 25 to 27, 2019, and made a film about it: Hiking Alone in Peru. That July I gave a talk about the trip at the B&H store in New York: Choquequirao Trek, Live at B&H. Everything in first person comes from that trip, the film and its original description, the talk, my GPS recordings, my photos and my receipts. Park, ticket, transport and safety facts were checked in September 2026, and anything that changes yearly is dated.

Updates and contact. If something has changed, or you spot a mistake, email me at kraig@kraigadams.com.

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Safety. Hiking to Choquequirao has real risks: heat, steep climbs, landslides, rivers, and no road or reliable signal far from help. This guide describes my trip and what I found, not current conditions. Trails, rules, prices and timetables change. Check the Ministry's notices and the weather, and turn back when conditions aren't right. You're responsible for your own safety.

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Credits. Photos are mine, from my trip. GPX files are my own recordings. Maps © OpenStreetMap contributors, openstreetmap.org/copyright (ODbL). Relief: Mapzen Terrain Tiles, from SRTM and GMTED. Park rules and ticket prices from Peru's Ministry of Culture.