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## Puquio: a glamping retreat in Peru's Colca Canyon

Key Notes | Boutique hotel group Andean's latest venture features lavish tents on the rim of the deepest canyon in the Americas

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Mark Johanson NOVEMBER 8 2024

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**What's the buzz?** The Peruvian company Andean has spent the past decade opening a series of design-driven boutique hotels in Lima, Arequipa and on the southern shore of Lake Titicaca. Its latest outpost, Puquio, lies amid 7th-century terraces on the edge of Colca Canyon, the deepest in the Americas. A hamlet of safari-style tents and adobe villas, it evokes the age of Andean exploration, when academic-adventurers such as Hiram Bingham searched for the "lost cities" of the Inca. The first high-end property to launch at Colca Canyon since 2008, this all-inclusive "camp" is a big deal for the area.

**Location, location, location** At about 3,400 metres above sea level, Puquio is set along a lower rim of the canyon, with the Rio Colca below it and mountains beyond rising to more than 5,000 metres. Around the hotel, the terraced fields grow 10 types of corn, 12 kinds of quinoa and 42 distinct potato varieties.



Puquio's safari-style tents in Colca Canyon

Hikes lead to ruins built by the pre-Inca Kollawa culture, including ancient villages, cliff-hugging tombs and hilltop citadels so little explored that during my visit I never once saw another tourist.

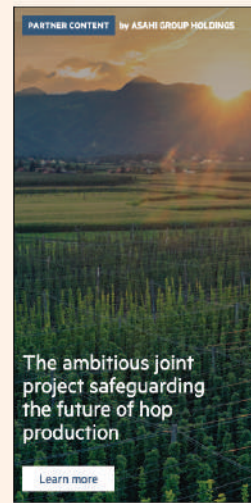
**Checking in** The adventure really begins in Arequipa, Peru's second-largest city and a Unesco World Heritage Site with baroque Spanish-colonial buildings built from white volcanic stones. I, like most guests, spent one night here acclimatising to the altitude at Puqio's sister property, Cirqa, a converted 16th-century monastery. Then, it was off with a guide and driver via a high-altitude mountain pass, followed by a long descent to the Colca Canyon and the small village of Yanque.



Puqio, nearby, bills itself as “Peru's first tented camp,” yet only half of the eight rooms are actually under canvas, reached via boardwalks that snake away from the central lobby-bar-restaurant. The tents (called *carpas*) were closer together than I would have wished, though each had wide views over the canyon, as well as the Sabancaya volcano, which belched ash into the air every hour.

Four other rooms (called *pircas*) are inside two villas with adobe walls and exposed wooden beams. All have vintage furnishings, antique Peruvian rugs and wood-burning stoves, which are handy in the evenings given the altitude. The *carpas* have the added bonus of outdoor bathtubs — great, I learnt, for indulgent stargazing. Designer Claudio Beltrán offers plenty of nods to adventuring with canvas camp chairs on the decks, hand-drawn canyon maps on each desk, and tin mugs for afternoon tea.

**What to do?** Puqio is an adventure lodge at heart, so you're not meant to spend daylight hours loitering around. Instead, I planned adventures with my guide and driver (included in the rate) to places like Mirador Cruz del Cóndor, a nearby lookout where dozens of the world's largest raptors surf thermals out of the canyon at daybreak.



An encounter with llamas on a hike from Puqio



Watching condors surf thermals at the Mirador Cruz del Cóndor

On other days, we visited nearby villages and markets and hiked to archaeological sites, including the remarkably intact stone village of Uyo Uyo, which dates back to about 1300.

**What about the food?** Wood-fired stoves and flickering candles gave the dining room heat and light, while the canyon-facing window wall was perfectly aligned for fiery sunsets. Chairs were covered in sheepskins and cow pelts warmed the stone floors, adding to the rustic charm of the place, which shined through in the food, too.

Chef Roli Jara Antaurco cooked most meals over a fire, preparing dishes in cast-iron skillets, including slow-cooked lamb shank so tender it melted off the bone. The five-course dinners, meant for sharing among couples (alongside Chilean and Argentine wines), changed daily and had themes such as “Andean lake fish” or “a homage to quinoa”.

A printed menu would have been nice to make sense of it all, but, as Antaurco explained: “This is a hotel where we want the guest to feel like they can interact with us.” In other words, *ask questions*.



An outdoor hot tub looking over the surrounding terraced fields.



Menus draw inspiration from local produce and traditional cooking techniques.



One of the 'pirca' rooms, in an adobe villa.

One day the team even staged a *pachamanca* feast — typically done by an entire Andean village — for lunch, burying colourful endemic potatoes and regional meats in an earth oven heated by hot volcanic stones.

**Other guests?** There's little interaction with other guests beyond happy hour and dinner, when everyone returns from their excursions. I saw a mix of dressed-down professionals from Arequipa, as well as athletic Europeans (Americans, I'm told, tend to stick to Machu Picchu).

**The damage** Double rooms officially start at \$1,122 per night — which, by any measure, is steep for a tent in South America. But all meals, drinks, guided daily excursions, round-trip transfers from Arequipa, and even daily laundry service (handy for that dusty hiking gear), are included in the rate.

**Elevator pitch** Indiana Jones goes glamping.

*Mark Johanson was a guest of Puqio ([puqio.pe](http://puqio.pe))*

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[doc martin](#) 2 DAYS AGO

Arequipa

Id say this was my favorite city in Peru, yes beautiful, don't know if it was unesco then. got there by bus from lake Titicaca (great bus ride not to be missed) . didn't get to the canyon I should have, but spent some time in cordera blanca (which I could have missed), then northern Peru, that's when I realized great surfing there. Now big, then a last minute cruise of galapagos

Peru is a really great country to visit, clearly it's gotten more popular as they have a "food scene"

staying on the lake on floating matt is cool

of course the Inca trail

IDK if the ability to do some stuff last minute exists anymore

do they still have all the old VW bugs in Arequipa? I guess they lasted for ever in that dry climate?

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[CremeBrulle](#) 1 DAYS AGO (Edited)

Colca Canyon is a beautiful part of Peru and lacked top tier hotels so this looks ideal. The area gets very chilly at night though so glad the tents are heated. I'd definitely recommend more than a couple of days in Arequipa to acclimatise though, especially if you're trekking at that altitude.

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