New Geographies of Tourism in Peru: Nature-based Tourism and Conservation in the Cordillera Huayhuash

Jeffrey Bury

Department of Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, USA

Online Publication Date: 01 August 2008

To cite this Article: Bury, Jeffrey (2008) 'New Geographies of Tourism in Peru: Nature-based Tourism and Conservation in the Cordillera Huayhuash', Tourism Geographies, 10:3, 312 — 333

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/14616680802236311

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616680802236311

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
New Geographies of Tourism in Peru: Nature-based Tourism and Conservation in the Cordillera Huayhuash

JEFFREY BURY
Department of Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, USA

ABSTRACT: This research examines new tourism networks, conservation, and social and economic changes in Peru. In doing so, the article illustrates how current political and economic change, global tourism, and new forms of conservation are contributing to new geographies of tourism in the country. Through a case study of the Cordillera Huayhuash, the article evaluates the nature of recent increases in tourism in the region, the ways in which these new tourist-related activities are interfacing with new conservation areas, and how they are contributing to local environmental, economic, and political change. Based on a mix-methods qualitative approach, the article’s major findings illustrate the magnitude and composition of recent increases in tourism to the Cordillera Huayhuash and the economic and social impacts of these activities on communities and households in the region. The article concludes with a set of questions for further geographical research concerned with the ways in which tourism is related to these changes in the Andes.

KEY WORDS: Tourism, conservation, Peru, Cordillera Huayhuash

Introduction

In the past decade tourism has rapidly become Peru’s second largest industry. Since the early 1990s, new tourist networks have been forged throughout the country as sweeping neoliberal reforms transformed the economic and political geography of the country. A key element of these reforms has been the promotion of tourism as a new national industry. Since then, tourist visits have increased dramatically. For example, more than one million people visited the country’s many ecological and cultural wonders in 2005 (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo 2006). While the large majority of tourists seek to experience the cultural heritage of the country in and around Cuzco, new flows of visitors are increasingly engaging in nature-based activities in the mountainous areas of the Central Andes, the Amazonian Basin and...
the jungle/highlands interface. In addition, tourists are increasingly travelling to new national conservation areas that have been recently created throughout the country. This article explores the interrelationships between Peru’s new political economy, increasing inbound tourism in the country and new national conservation efforts.

The rationale and goals of this research are to evaluate the ways in which these new flows of tourism are spreading throughout the country to new places, to contribute to recent literature concerned with new tourism geographies in Peru and to understand how tourism is interfacing with and impacting local households and communities. In addition, this research is also concerned with new economic, political and environmental relationships that are being forged between new conservation activities, development and Peru’s new tourism industry.

In order to address these issues, the article proceeds in the following fashion. The first section explores the theoretical context in which the investigation is embedded by briefly exploring geographical enquiry and debates related to tourism in Latin America and Peru, the evolution of new conservation models in the region and the impacts of nature-based tourism on local communities. The article then turns its attention to current trends in tourism and conservation in Peru and illustrates the ways in which economic change, tourism and conservation are shifting in the country. Subsequent sections explore the physical and human contexts of the Cordillera Huayhuash, historical patterns of tourism in the area, the research methods utilized in the study, and new nature-based tourism activities in the area. The next section of the paper evaluates the ways in which new tourists are increasingly impacting local communities and households through an examination of household livelihoods, the provision of services, and the influence of supra-communal tourist companies in the region. The final section of the paper concludes with a set of questions for further research for investigators concerned with new tourism geographies in Peru.

Recent Research on Geographies of Tourism and Conservation

As global tourism networks have been extended into remote areas of Latin America over the course of the past several decades, geographical research has increasingly begun to examine the ways in which economic and political restructuring and conservation have been affected by these new tourist inflows. In Peru, recent geographical research has examined the evolution of conservation concerns and tourism activities. For example, authors have examined the nature of changes taking place in tourism, household land resource management activities, wildlife conservation and forest preservation in the Amazonian region (Staver et al. 1994; Cracraft 1997; Yu et al. 1997; Bodmer and Lozano 2001). In addition, Young (1997) has also focused on the sustainable use of wildlife and the historical movement of people in the Central Andes. However, little research has been conducted that analyses new economic and environmental relationships between tourists and conservation, particularly since both have spread into new areas since the end of the country’s decade-long civil war in the
J. Bury

early 1990s. Prior to this, many places where tourists are travelling today were either too difficult to access and control at the national level or too dangerous to pass through safely. This research seeks to broaden this discussion by focusing on new tourist flows into the Cordillera Huayhuash region of the Central Andes, an area where rebel groups were well organized and largely in control of social and political affairs. In doing so, it provides basic data on new tourist networks that are being forged in the country and the ways in which tourists are engaging with Peruvian landscapes and people.

Another element of recent research in Latin America focuses on the relationship between economic and political restructuring and new conservation agendas. Peru, like many other countries in the region, has recently implemented a variety of economic and political reforms intended to open the country to global economic trade and commerce. In addition, a new conservation agenda influenced by processes of privatization and decentralization is transforming the system of national protected areas and the control and management of natural resources. These shifts have given rise to a host of new protected areas intended to draw international tourists into the country as well as new types of protected areas that are based on private property and local management. Several of these new areas have emerged in the Cordillera Huayhuash region of the country. However, little attention has been directed towards how these new conservation areas are being integrated into new tourist networks in the country. This research seeks to address these concerns through an examination of new conservation activities and tourist flows in the Cordillera Huayhuash. In doing so, it seeks to broaden recent discussions concerned with how conservation and tourism are affected by national development strategies (e.g. Zimmerer and Young 1998; Byers 2000; Desforges 2000). It also seeks to contribute new insights into important political, social and economic factors in the Central Andes that mediate the relationship between conservation and tourism.

Finally, this research is concerned particularly with the ways in which tourist-related activities affect local change. While the economic, social and ecological impacts of tourism on local communities have emerged recently as a central theme in tourism studies (e.g. Scheyvens 1999; Farell and Marion 2002; Young 2001), relatively little research has examined these issues in the context of Peru. Recent work by Mitchell and Eagles (2001) illustrates, through a comparative study of one community near the Cordillera Huayhuash, Chiquian and Taquile Island in the Lake Titicaca area, the degree to which these new tourism flows integrate local communities into the tourism sector. However, researchers have not examined these questions for the rest of the region.

In order to build upon and extend these research efforts, this research critically examines the most recent impacts of tourism activities on local communities and households in the Cordillera Huayhuash. This is particularly significant because of the recent central placement of the region at the forefront of new debates over conservation in the country, the recent increase of tourist flows into the area, the environmental impacts of new tourists in the high mountain watersheds, and the increasing concerns
of local communities over these environmental changes. In doing so, this research seeks to extend recent debates concerned with the impacts of tourism into the Central Andes.

Tourism and Conservation in Peru

International tourism to Peru has increased rapidly over the course of the past decade due both to significant political and economic change in Peru in the early 1990s and significant increases in global tourism. From a low of just over 200,000 visitors in 1992, tourist inflows to Peru increased to more than 1.5 million people in 2005 and are projected to continue to grow in coming years (INEI 2005). While international tourism to Peru accounts only for one percent of global tourist flows, it has become an important source of foreign exchange and economic development for the country (MINCETUR 2005). In economic terms, tourist-related activities have become the second-most important sector in the Peruvian economy (WTO 2005). In 2004, international tourism generated more than $US1 billion in receipts (INEI 2005).

Flows of tourists to Peru increased rapidly during the mid-1990s and have continued to increase steadily except for a slight decline in visitors during 2001 and 2002 (Figure 1). The factors behind such rapid increases in tourist flows since the early 1990s can be attributed to social, political and economic changes at both international and national scales of analysis. Internationally, the ascendance of the global tourism industry to the largest sector in the global economy, huge increases in tourists from developed countries seeking new experiences across the landscapes and cultures of South America, and increasing concerns related to political instability and insecurity associated with travel to destinations outside of the Western Hemisphere, have all led to a rapid increase in flows of inbound tourists to Peru from Latin American, European and North American destinations.

Nationally, several important shifts in political, economic and social affairs have also encouraged both increases in flows of tourists from North America and Europe and new flows of tourists from Latin America. Most importantly, hostilities related to the country’s decade-long civil war, in which thousands of Peruvians perished, almost disappeared after the early 1990s. The driving force behind the cessation of open conflict throughout the country was largely the capture of key insurgent leaders by President Alberto Fujimori’s government, which came to power in 1990. Subsequently, large areas of the country became more accessible and safer for the passage of tourists.

The opening up of Peru’s landscapes to new tourists was also accompanied by a breaking down of the central government’s control and management of national economic activity, including a highly centralized tourist management and promotion infrastructure. During the early 1990s, President Alberto Fujimori’s administration adopted a wide variety of new economic measures intent on opening the country
to foreign investment, trade and exports, as well as deregulating and decentralizing prices, currency exchange rates and economic activity. Since then, Peru has become one of the most open and liberal economies, not only in Latin America, but in the world (IMF 2001).

Before 1990, the tourism sector was dominated and run by a network of state institutions that managed and directed activities and promoted tourism. By the end of the 1990s, the presence of the state had been virtually eliminated through both massive reductions in state tourism institutions and the privatization of tourist promotion activities. The neoliberalization of state tourism institutions under Fujimori is treated in detail by Desforges (2000), who provides a history of tourism management in the country and outlines key elements in the transition and ‘rolling back’ of state in the tourism sector.

Since 2000, the neoliberal transformation of the tourism sector has deepened. In terms of tourism promotion and management, state institutions have begun to collaborate with international aid agencies and tourism operators to promote and

develop new tourism infrastructure and co-ordinate national activities. For example, in late 1999, with the help of the French Technical Cooperation Fund and the new National Tourism Chamber of Commerce, a new Program for Integrated Development of Tourism (PRODITUR) was generated by the Ministry of Tourism (previously known as MINTINCI and now labelled MINCETUR). In addition, a new project to strengthen the relationship between tourism and traditional arts and crafts was begun in 2001 and new international collaborative projects were begun to improve the tourism sector in the Andean Community. Finally, in 2005, a new and wide-ranging national plan, initiated by MINCETUR and entitled the National Tourism Strategic Plan, was launched with the co-operation of government agencies and the tourism industry in order to diversify, strengthen and develop tourism in the country (MINCETUR 2005).

Parallel changes in the management of tourism infrastructure and services have also been important recent developments affecting the tourism sector. For example, the privatization of the state hotel chains and the proliferation of a host of new accommodations throughout the country have increased lodging options and availability significantly, including the arrival of several well-known global hotel chains to Lima, Cuzco and several other cities. In addition, the privatization of many segments of the country’s infrastructure has also affected tourism flows. For example, in 1999, the government of Peru awarded a 30-year concession to operate the railway between Cuzco and Machu Picchu to Orient-Express, a British and North American company.

While shifts in the management and control of tourism infrastructure, promotion and services have been key elements affecting tourism activity in the country, concomitant shifts in natural resource management have also affected new tourism networks and activities significantly. Peru has unquestionably become a world-class destination for archaeological and historical tourism as the country has diligently promoted its pre-Columbian Incan heritage. One of the most important destinations for this sort of tourism in Peru is the city of Cuzco and the nearby Incan city of Machu Picchu, which in 2007 was declared one of the New Seven Wonders of the World and has been listed since 1981 as a World Heritage site. Today, by one estimate (Solano 2005), more than 90 percent of the people visiting Peru travel to Cuzco and nearly 47 percent of these tourists travel to Machu Picchu. However, these trends have been shifting in the past few years as new flows of tourists, attracted by the spectacular mountainous topography, coastal deserts and tropical forests of the country, are increasingly engaging in nature-based tourism.

This research purposively utilizes the term ‘nature-based’ tourism in order to distinguish between the new types of attractions and destinations that tourists are visiting in Peru and the larger and much more problematic term ‘ecotourism’. As tourism flows have shifted towards natural landscapes and local communities in the region, ecotourism has been put forward as an important activity that can both promote ecological conservation and economic development (Honey 1999). Commonly accepted components of ecotourism include effective conservation, community empowerment and economic development (International Ecotourism Society 2007). In the case of Peru,
these elements are certainly relevant considerations and are being adopted widely in many areas of the country. However, in areas such as the Cordillera Huayhuash, where tourism inflows are just beginning to increase, many of the afore-mentioned elements of ecotourism are just beginning to garner discussion. Consequently, this research adopts the term ‘nature-based’ tourism as a way of identifying tourism that is focused centrally on natural landscapes, but not necessarily adopting the central principles outlined by proponents of the ecotourist model.

While tourists are being drawn to new areas in Peru by the unique natural endowments of the country, one of the most important elements of recent changes in both the flow of tourists and the nature-based content of their activities is related to the rapidly expanding system of national parks, reserves and preserves. Like many other developing countries, Peru’s system of protected areas has grown rapidly in the past decade. Presently, almost 15 percent of the country is covered by nationally protected areas, which makes Peru’s conservation system one of the largest in Latin America (National Institute of Natural Resources [INRENA] 2006). Today, protected areas cover more than 19 million hectares across 60 different areas, and a host of new areas have recently been set aside as reserves, which are essentially protected areas that are in the process of being evaluated and classified by the Peruvian national conservation agency.

While the system of national protected areas in the country has a long history, covered more extensively in recent work by Solano (2005), the most recent period of economic restructuring and neoliberal change has reconfigured conservation activities in Peru. Since the early 1990s, three important shifts have taken place. First, as the Fujimori administration sequestered hostilities related to the ongoing civil war, particularly in remote areas where many of the country’s protected areas are located, the government was able to reassert its control over many of these places. Secondly, a new institutional framework was created for the country’s protected areas. Based on decentralization and privatization, new national institutions and mechanisms were put into place to enhance the management and provision of services in many areas. Finally, a host of new areas was added to the system of protected areas, including a variety of sanctuaries, parks, travel reserves, game reserves and new community-based private parks.

Overall, these changes in conservation and protected areas management have created a variety of new spaces for tourism throughout the country, which are increasingly drawing tourists from the traditional tourist areas. The new strategic tourism plan for the country highlights a new series of nature-based tourism areas along the northern coast (Huanchaco, Mancora, Trujillo), tropical lowlands (Iquitos, Puerto Maldonado) and highlands (Cajamarca, Huaraz, Lake Titicaca) (MINCETUR 2005). The movement of tourists to these areas is contributing to new geographies of tourism in the country such that a host of new economic and social relationships are being forged across the Peruvian landscape. Where new tourist flows are being embedded in the physical and human geographies of the country, they are reworking our understanding of tourism geographies.
Research Context – Cordillera Huayhuash

In order to begin to interrogate these changes, this article turns its attention to a relatively new but increasingly popular destination for tourists in the Central Peruvian highlands, the Cordillera Huayhuash. The Cordillera Huayhuash (a Quechua word for a type of small rodent, pronounced ‘why wash’) is located along the continental divide of the Central Peruvian Andes, 35 km south of Huaraz and 200 km north of Lima (Figure 2). The Cordillera, one of twenty mountain corridors in the Peruvian Andes, has the country’s second tallest mountain peak, Yerupajá (6,634 m), as well as 15 major peaks (six of these above 6,000 m) (Kolff and Bartle 1998). The range consists of a 30 km north-south-trending ridge of ice and snow clad summits.

The flanks of the ridge have been corrugated by glacial streams and lakes that have formed precipitous gorges which drain into both the Amazon and Pacific Basins. The range contains more than 50 lakes and 115 glaciers, covering more than 8,000 hectares, which have been in recession since at least the early 1930s (Coney 1964; Hidrandina 1988; Kolff and Bartle 1998).

The relief of the range, from below 3,000 m to 6,634 m (in less than 20 km) has created conditions for a wide variety of climates and ecosystems. Generally, the climate of the region is punctuated by a dry season between April and September and a rainy period between October and March. The high valleys and peaks are dominated by a cold and dry climate, but along the flanks of the range, climatic and biological conditions allow for at least six distinct life zones, including montane forests, paramo, and tundra (The Mountain Institute [TMI] 2001). The Cordillera, being one of the few tropical mountain chains in the world, is the location of important high mountain ecosystems. Studies have identified more than 1,000 plant species, 62 bird species and more than a dozen mammal species in the region, including the threatened Quenal (Polylepis) plant and the rare Andean Condor (Vultur gryphus) (Weberbauer 1945; Cerrate de Ferreyra 1979; Fjeldsa and Krabbe 1990; Oxford University Report 1996).

Human populations have utilized the resources of the Cordillera Huayhuash since at least the early 1500s (Hemming 1972). Communities are dispersed along the lower flanks of the range and small settlements extend throughout the high valleys up to 5,000 m. Along the western slopes there are five villages that include Llamac, Pacllon, Pocpa, Huayllapa and Urumaza. Below these villages are the larger communities of Cajatambo and Chiquian, which are also the major access points to the range. Along the eastern slope, which is more lightly settled, are the communities of Queropalca and Jesus. These areas belong to three different national administrative units (Ancash, Huanuco and Lima). In 2000, it was estimated that 18,100 people lived in the area, mostly concentrated in the larger communities at lower elevations (TMI 2001).

Historically, the communities surrounding the Cordillera Huayhuash have pursued rural-based livelihoods isolated from the rest of the country due to lack of transportation networks and support from the Peruvian state. The deep valleys and open grasslands surrounding the peaks, as well as perennial water resources that have been harnessed and utilized for centuries, allow for a variety of natural resource-based
Figure 2. The Cordillera Huayhuash region
livelihood production strategies. Livelihoods in the region are dedicated primarily to agricultural and livestock production. Every hectare of land below the glaciers corresponds to the communities of the region, which is held either collectively by the community or individually, as some parcelization has taken place in recent decades. Agricultural pursuits include the cultivation of wheat, barley, a variety of potatoes and other tuber crops and corn at lower elevations and in small quantities (TMI 1998a, 1999b). Households also graze small herds of sheep, cattle and mules for consumption and transportation. Finally, households historically have relied upon migration to the coast and other areas of the country for part-time work and sell cheese and some artisanal products in Chiquian, Cajatambo and the regional centre, Huaraz. More recently, new opportunities to support tourism in the region have begun to integrate local communities into the larger economic processes transforming the country.

Historical Origins of Tourism in the Cordillera Huayhuash

Tourism in the Cordillera Huayhuash is rooted in the region’s rich historical heritage. The high valleys of the Central Andes were well integrated into the Incan empire prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. Major transportation routes were constructed along both sides of the rugged mountain corridors and served as key links between the northern and southern areas of the Incan empire. In 1533, Hernando Pizarro (brother of Francisco Pizarro) was the first European to visit the region as part of his initial survey of the Incan empire. Pizarro struggled across the Cordillera Huayhuash from Cajatambo to Huanuco, stating that the ‘road was mountainous and so covered in snow that we experienced great difficulty’ (Hemming 1972: 66). Since then, the region has hosted highland communities, rebels, explorers and liberators such as Simon de Bolivar, who passed along Pizarro’s route during his liberation of the region.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the region was quite isolated from the rest of the country due to lack of roads, public services and a bias towards development in coastal areas. The first large-scale European expedition to re-explore the area was made in 1909 by German geographer Wilhelm Sievers, who described the area in detail. In 1927, the American Geographic Society expedition passed through the area and accurately calculated the height of Yerupaja and several other peaks above 6,000 m (Miller 1929). Shortly thereafter the first mountaineers began to enter the area, including Hans Kinzl’s famous 1936 expedition, which included a high quality topographic survey of the entire region and the first ascent of Siula, Rasac and several attempts to climb Yerupaja (Kinzl and Schneider 1954). Between 1954 and 1986, collegiate climbing parties and small expeditions continued to map the range and make ascents of most of the major peaks, which culminated in the widely publicized climb of Siula Grande by Joe Simpson and Simon Yates (Sack, 1954; Matthews, 1959; Bartle 1981; Simpson, 1988; Neate 1994; Frimer 2005).

By the mid-1980s the Cordillera Huayhuash assumed a new role in Peruvian history as it became a major training base for Shining Path rebels, a revolutionary group
intent on overthrowing the government and establishing a new social order. Because the area was inaccessible and remote, it served as a safe location for rebels to train and organize. Several expeditions in the region encountered armed parties, which resulted in violence, death threats and robberies. By the end of the 1980s, tourists had nearly ceased to travel in the range due to these increasingly dangerous encounters. After the end of the civil war in the early 1990s, the region became progressively safer for travel, thus international and national climbing and trekking tourism in the region began to increase rapidly. In 2001, approximately 2,000 international tourists visited the region to engage in trekking, wildlife observation, and climbing activities (TMI 2001). The region has also recently become an important destination for transnational and national mining operations and power generation schemes, buoyed by the country’s new neoliberal export-led orientation (Bury 2004, 2005, 2007). These operations have linked the region to automotive transportation networks and facilitated tourist travel to the area. For example, in the mid-1990s Mitsui Mining and Smelting Peru began operations in the area and constructed a series of new roads that now link several communities to larger transportation networks (Kolff 2000). A host of new mineral rights claims and exploration activities have been initiated both within and surrounding the range as well. In addition, in 2002, a Norwegian hydroelectric firm proposed the construction of two new electrical plants that would result in the construction of 57 km of tunnels near Huayllapa and would also lead to new roads and ecological disturbances in canyons above the community. The potential of these new projects to dramatically reconfigure the landscapes and livelihoods of the region is enormous and they are key features of development and conservation debates in the future. However, the status and future of these mining and hydroelectric projects are still unclear.

Finally, the Cordillera Huayhuash has also become centrally involved in Peru’s new conservation efforts. As the Cordillera Huayhuash has been integrated into wider political, economic and social processes, debates over the form and content of conservation priorities in the range have also intensified. By the mid-1990s, communities surrounding the range, in conjunction with national and international conservation groups, began to express concerns about the impacts of the new influx of tourists visiting the trekking and climbing circuit and new mining exploration efforts. In conjunction with The Mountain Institute, a US-based non-governmental organization (NGO) intent on protecting high mountain environments, initial efforts were begun to study the possibility of gaining national protection for the area (TMI 1998a, 1998b; Kolff and Bartle 1998; Kolff and Tohan 1997). Initially, communities were most concerned with the impacts of new mining operations on the region’s water and land resources. These concerns were heightened significantly after Mitsui punctured an underground aquifer above Llamac and Pocpa in 1999, and water quality in the river sustaining both communities was significantly reduced (Kolff 2000).

In 2001, TMI conducted a broadly participatory study intended to provide the foundation for a new conservation zone in the region (TMI 2001). Shortly thereafter, in late 2002, and by act of Congress, a new national conservation zone was created in
the Cordillera Huayhuash. The Ministry of Agriculture temporarily designated approximately 67,000 hectares of land in the region as a reserved zone and a technical commission was created by INRENA to determine the level of protection that would be granted to the new conservation unit (Figure 2). Since then, there has been a remarkable shift in conservation efforts in the region. Local communities, motivated by concerns over the ways in which these new lands are to be managed and by whom, now oppose efforts to create the national conservation zone in the area. Instead, local communities have initiated new management plans that would create a group of community-led private conservation areas in the region. These private conservation areas will be managed and controlled by local communities, rather than the national government. While they will be recognized as conservation areas within the national system of protected areas, the land to be protected is private property and the role of the state in management efforts will be minimal. In 2005, the Ministry of Agriculture simultaneously issued two resolutions (0908-2005-AG and 0909-2005-AG) granting Pacllon and Huayllapa new private conservation areas (El Peruano 2005). Since then, nearly every community in the range has submitted similar requests for private conservation areas.

Research Methods

In order to examine these recent changes in both tourism and conservation in Peru, intensive field research was conducted in the Cordillera Huayhuash for eight months during 2005 and 2006. The goals of the field research were to evaluate new conservation models in Peru, the nature of new tourist flows into the region, and how they were interfacing and impacting local communities and households. The methods utilized during field research included a mix of qualitative techniques - archival research, key informant interviews, participant observation and interviews with tourists visiting the region.

Archival research was conducted using governmental resources and a variety of civil society and NGO resources focusing upon tourism in the mountain chain. Key informant interviews were conducted with leaders from several communities (including mayors, justices of the peace and community organization presidents), civil society and NGO representatives, governmental agency personnel, households and guides, and expedition support staff visiting and working in the region. Key informants were selected using a snowball sample, which was accomplished through repeated community visits. These interviews provided important context and historical depth to the research, as well as insights into the size, extent, diversity and movement of tourists throughout the region and how they have been interfacing with local communities. Participant observation activities included attendance at a regional workshop focusing on conservation and tourism activities in the region, which was attended by representatives of communities throughout the region. Participation in the meetings was well balanced, as most of the attendees were community mayors, and the topics discussed
included tourism security, plans for new conservation areas, relations with external
government agencies and NGOs, and the economic and environmental impacts of
tourists. In addition, participant observation was conducted during several months of
hiking, trekking and working with a variety of representatives from nearly all of the
communities in the region. Furthermore, in conjunction with extensive data collection
efforts at both the national and international scales, a new geographical information
database utilizing both vector and raster datasets was constructed in order to conduct
participatory mapping exercises with community leaders and households. These exer-
cises and the construction of the database helped to establish community boundaries
and land- and resource-use activities, to identify areas of conflict both within and
between communities, and to establish a foundation for future participatory research
and activities in the region in coming years.

Finally, during a three-week period in July of 2006, a semi-structured survey
was conducted with tourists visiting the region. Interviews were conducted with 32
groups of tourists trekking through the region. A convenience sample was utilized,
but included nearly all of the parties travelling through the region during June and
July of 2006. Overall, data for 191 people were collected during the survey. The
semi-structured interviews focused on gathering information from tourists concern-
ing country of origin, number of people travelling in each group, the duration of the
stay, the nature of local services utilized during the stay, the route followed and the
purpose of the trip.

New Tourism Flows in the Cordillera Huayhuash

Tourists visiting the Cordillera Huayhuash are drawn primarily to the region’s natural
landscapes and adventure opportunities, which include high altitude trekking, bird
watching, climbing and camping. Tourist routes have been developed across more
than 160 km of trails that follow along both flanks of the mountain range, wind up
through heavily glaciated valleys and traverse high altitude passes. The trail system
is punctuated by significant changes in elevation and tourists generally trek through
more than 1,000 m on a daily basis. Climbers seeking to summit the peaks of the
area reach more than 6,000 m in elevation (Figure 2). Attractions of the route include
a variety of glacial lakes, snow-clad peaks, challenging technical climbing routes,
high altitude vegetation, large flocks of migratory birds, fishing, remote and isolated
camping and experiences with dramatic variation in weather conditions.

Access to the Cordillera Huayhuash has changed significantly since the late 1990s,
but is still limited primarily to two different entry points, both of which originate
in Lima. The south side of the range is reached by transport from Lima, which
winds up the Pativilca River valley and terminates in Cajatambo. The northern side
of the range is reached by transport that generally begins in Lima and arrives in the
frequently visited town of Huaraz. From there, access to the range is through the town
of Chiquian. Since 2000, two important extensions in the regional transport system
have transformed tourist access to the region. On the south side of the range, a new highway is under construction that will eventually link Cajatambo and Huayllapa. On the north side of the range, a new highway has been constructed between Chiquian and Llamac (which passes by Pacllon), and extends several kilometres above the town. The road was constructed by Mitsui Mining and Smelting to service a new mine operating in the region, but it has also facilitated the flow of tourists into the region. Tourists generally disembark in the community of Llamac or begin trekking in the high valley several kilometres above the town.

The numbers of tourists travelling to the region have changed significantly since the early 1990s. Prior to 1990, most tourist groups predominantly were comprised of climbing and expedition parties. However, today, hiking and trekking parties far outnumber climbing groups. Climbing and expedition parties generally spend more time in the range and often focus on a few locations. Trekking groups often focus on completing a circuit of the range in a shorter amount of time. Estimates of tourists visiting the region illustrate a fairly substantial increase in overall numbers. Key interviewees, who have been involved in the trekking industry for several decades, indicated that in the early 1990s several hundred tourists visited the region. By the late 1990s these numbers had increased significantly. Kolff and Bartle (1998), for example, estimated that 1,000 people visited the region in 1997. These numbers increased quickly by 2000, as estimates suggest that more than 2,000 people visited the region (TMI 2001). In 2005, based on community records of tourists visiting the town of Llamac, approximately 2,500 people visited the region. Estimates of future growth suggest that by 2010 more than 10,000 people may visit the area each year (TMI 2001).

During 2006, international tourists from at least 16 different countries, mainly from North America and Europe, visited the region. Based on interview data, composed of 191 people from 32 different parties, groups of tourists ranging in size from one person (New Zealand) to 16 people (England) spent a total of 291 days (total number of days all groups were present) in the range. Table 1 further examines tourist activity in the area during 2006. Countries not included in the table, because they were part of mixed groups, include Austria, Costa Rica, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

Overall, the national origin of tourists parallels trends in international tourism to Peru (Figure 1), but with a few key exceptions. First, Israel accounts for more than a third of tourists in the area, something which key informants, guides and local communities noted repeatedly. Secondly, few countries from Latin America are represented in the new tourist flows to the region. This is significantly different from the national data on tourism, which suggests tourists from Latin America are visiting Peru increasingly (Figure 1). Finally, the duration and routes of tourists in the region diverge significantly from previous periods (pre-2000). Prior to 2000, tourist groups were spending 12–15 days in the range. In 2005, however, the average stay in the region was only nine days and many groups were doing the entire circuit in 7–8 days. This is partially reflective of improved transportation networks throughout the region, which have shortened travel times. In addition, based on key informant interviews,
many groups, in an effort to cut costs related to mules, cooks and guides, plan longer
days of hiking. Moreover, in terms of travel patterns, many tourists are now following
shorter routes that result in fewer days spent in the area. For example, nearly one-
quarter of the tourists interviewed during 2006 indicated that they were following
partial or shortened routes through the region in order to lessen the amount of time
necessary to complete the entire circumnavigation of the range. This compression of
the duration of stay is likely to continue as the new road is completed into Huayllapa
and as several passes become traversable due to the recession of glaciers in the region.

Tourism Impacts

New forms of conservation and increasing flows of ecotourists around the Cordillera
Huayhuash have also begun to spatially reconfigure tourism-related impacts in the
region. These impacts are related most clearly to construction of new transportation
networks, the creation of private parks and the forging of new national and interna-
tional economic linkages. Based on the research conducted in the region, the most
significant impacts are related to new economic opportunities for communities and
households to earn income from tourism, the environmental impacts of tourists in the
fragile watersheds and the influence of national and international tour companies in
the region.

One significant finding of this study is that new economic and social relationships
are being created in the region, based primarily on the fact that tourism networks have
been extended beyond the historically important gateway communities of Chiquian
and Cajatambo and into smaller communities that now are served by new trans-
portation networks. While tourism is still important in these historically significant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Number of parties</th>
<th>Total number of people</th>
<th>Average duration of stay</th>
<th>Total number of person-days</th>
<th>Percentage of tourists in sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.75</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gateway communities, most of the tourism networks have been extended into communities closer to the mountain range, including Llamarac, Huayllapa, Pacllon and Pocpa. This is due to the fact that many trekking groups are now drawing upon these communities for porters, guides, mules, horses and cooks. These changes have begun to integrate local communities into new economic networks, which have become extremely important for community welfare and household income-generating opportunities.

Important new sources of income for communities of the region are related largely to the creation of the new private conservation zones in the region. As these zones are based on private property and community management, their spatial boundaries are reflective of communal and private land holdings pertaining to each individual community. Beginning several years ago, communities began to charge tourist access fees to cross community lands along both sides of the mountain range. These fees have become a crucial source of income for the communities. For example, in 2005, Llamarac, which is the most important gateway community in the region (since the new road on the north side of the range passes through town) collected 25,000 soles ($US7,500 dollars). Communities have chosen largely to invest this new income in conservation planning and infrastructure improvements, many of which would not have been accomplished without tourist dollars.

The collection of tourist fees is also important for the promotion of more sustainable tourism-related activities in the future. One central proposition of the new private conservation area management plans is that communities will be able to integrate conservation, development and tourism more effectively into more sustainable forms of ecotourism. Generally, following one of the most accepted notions of ecotourism (International Ecotourism Society 2007), communities have argued in their management plans that they will be able to minimize the ecological impacts of tourists, provide direct resources for conservation and foster economic development in the communities. While efforts to meet these objectives are only just beginning, the collection of tourist fees by communities are the avenue through which many of these changes are likely to occur.

Among households in the communities, tourism has also become an important source of income, particularly because cash-generating activities have always been scarce in the region. Prior to the late 1990s, households had few opportunities to generate income outside of traditional livelihood pursuits, but since then, tourist-related income has increased significantly. Within each town, new hostels, stores and restaurants are springing up to provide services to tourists. In addition, households are generating new income by providing mules and camping equipment to tourists, and serving as guides, cooks and animal care-takers. These sources of income are significant for households. For example, the highest paid guides generally earn $US25 a day for services, animal care-takers can earn up to $US15 a day and mules cost up to $US5 a day. While these are the highest rates, interviewees most involved with the provision of services indicated that they earn up to $US400–500 a year working
with tourists. This represents nearly half of average annual household income in the communities.

Based on the survey data, nearly every group travelling into the region either hires people or purchases goods and services in the region. Of all the tourist groups included in the field research, only one group was self-reliant in terms of hiring local people or animals to assist in the trek, but they did purchase significant quantities of food from communities along the trail. However, as trekking times have shortened, on average, throughout the region, tourist groups are purchasing fewer goods and hiring locals for shorter periods. This was noted repeatedly by key informants and households, and represents an important shift in the generation of economic impacts in the region. Overall, even for households marginally involved in the provision of goods and services to tourists, and regardless of decreased tourist spending, new tourist flows in the region still represent critical sources for income-generating opportunities.

One of the most significant impacts of new flows of tourists into the region is related to their environmental impacts on the fragile high-altitude watersheds. There are no national protected area managers, regulations or formal camping zones throughout the range and, due to the severe altitudinal gradient of the mountainous terrain, most tourist parties tend to congregate in a few key areas (Figure 2). Since there are no guidelines for camping and few efforts have been initiated to regulate human waste, waste water, cooking areas, fishing activities or the grazing of animals, these areas have been degraded quickly. Data collected on the number of days tourists are spending in the area (Table 1) illustrate this point. In an effort to understand the environmental impacts of people on the trail, the total number of person-days spent in the range (the number of people multiplied by the duration of time spent on the trail) was analysed. This figure, for a sample of approximately ten percent of the total number of people in the range, was just over 1,700 days. Extrapolating from this number, it can be estimated (based on an estimate of c. 2,500 tourists visiting the area) that tourists spent more than 20,000 days in the range during 2006.

In the past several years the impacts of this large number of days people are spending in the region, and the animals that support trekking parties, have become quite notable, even through casual observation. While this research did not attempt to quantify these impacts, the proliferation of waste paper, declining fish populations, overgrazed land, degraded water, campground litter, and a host of other impacts are becoming very serious. Local communities and guides are beginning to address these issues by providing sporadic latrine services and litter removal, but the scale and long-term nature of tourist impacts on the very fragile ecosystems threaten the very natural landscapes that have drawn tourists to the area in the first place.

Finally, another important impact of new flows of tourists into the region is related to the increasing influence of national and international tour companies in the region. One of the most significant observations of decades of critical research analysing the impacts of tourism in developing countries has been that the majority of tourist dollars ‘leak’ out of these countries (Honey 1999; Young 2001).
This is due largely to the transnational organization of tourist companies and an international political economy that extracts these revenues from local areas. In the case of the Cordillera Huayhuash, the leakage of ecotourist dollars has begun to increase as large national and international tour companies have begun to arrive in the region.

Prior to the 1990s, in order to engage in a trek through the region, tourists usually had to purchase supplies in either Huaraz or Cajatambo and then travel to Chiquian or local communities surrounding the mountain range to contract local guides, mules, cooks and animal caretakers. However, as tourist flows began to increase and access to the region began to improve, tour companies in Huaraz, Lima and the countries where large numbers of tourists originate (Table 1) began to offer services and organize large trekking groups. These companies have also begun well-organized marketing campaigns in international forums and on the internet to attract new tourist dollars. By 2001, 24 national tour agencies based in Huaraz had begun to offer tourist treks to the area (TM1 2001), which has increased significantly in recent years. In addition, a host of large companies based in the UK, the USA and other countries have recently begun to market tours into the range. These companies have begun to account for significant quantities of tourism-related business. For example, most of the large tour groups that were travelling through the range during 2006 were organized by transnational tour operators.

The impacts of this new political economy of ecotourism in the Cordillera Huayhuash have already become significant. For example, as transnational tour companies and agencies based in Huaraz have begun to compete for clients, they have also begun to shorten the overall length and duration of treks in order to offer the cheapest rates. In addition, in order to attract more clients, many tour companies have also begun to drive prices downwards for guides, cooks and animals by offering smaller fees to local providers or by bringing outside employees into the region. This has begun to affect households’ income-generating opportunities significantly and, because tour companies often hire the cheapest service providers and promote competition between and among communities, it has generated a host of new conflicts and disputes in the region. Overall, the leakage of tourism dollars out of the Cordillera Huayhuash has begun to parallel many other so-called ecotourist areas throughout Latin America (e.g. Young 2001). This raises important questions about the promise of such activities for local communities in the future as national and international companies further consolidate their control in the area.

Conclusions and Questions for Further Research

Contemporary shifts in tourism and conservation in Peru have placed the Cordillera Huayhuash at the forefront of new debates related to new models of conservation, new tourist flows and social and the environmental impacts of tourists in the fragile high
mountain watersheds. As the previous sections illustrate, a host of new environmental, social and economic changes have begun to affect the mountain chain and communities along its flanks. While this article only begins to address these changes and place them within the biophysical and historical context from which they have emerged, based on the findings presented in the case study a host of questions remain for further investigation.

First, as previous sections illustrate, there has been a fairly rapid increase in new nature-based tourism in the region. Because tourism activity is projected to continue to increase rapidly in coming years, future research is needed to examine the ways in which tourist networks integrate the region further into the country’s tourist economy, as well as how there might be shifts in the nature, extent and duration of tourist activity. As previous sections illustrate, in the past several years tourists have generally spent less time in the area and are creating new networks for travel. These changes are likely to intensify as new transportation networks and tourism objectives are created. This is particularly salient as new tourism-related activity has been expanding quickly into the natural landscapes and archaeological sites of interest along the eastern side of the range.

The recent growth of tourism to the Cordillera Huayhuash is also indicative of a shifting set of economic and social relationships within the country. While this article focuses exclusively on the Cordillera Huayhuash, new research is needed to examine how tourism networks might be shifting in other areas of the country, including the northern tourist circuit of the country, tropical forests and riverine areas, new coastal destinations and historical sites of interest along the edge of the Amazon Basin. If, indeed, a new geography of tourism is being forged in Peru, future work could begin to examine the ways in which this is occurring and how it is shifting our understanding of environmental change and economic development in the country.

Finally, the recent growth of ecotourism in the Cordillera Huayhuash also suggests there is a need for more rigorous examinations of the impacts of ecotourism on households and communities in the region. This article only begins to examine these questions through a brief analysis of these changes for household livelihoods and community activities, but much more work is needed in order to understand and elaborate fully on these relationships. Particular attention should be directed towards the uneven nature of ecotourism-related impacts across human populations of the area, as well as new and increasingly strident conflicts that are arising between and among communities. More importantly, as the case-study findings illustrate, the environmental impacts of large quantities of new people in the high mountain watersheds threatens to seriously degrade the ecological resources of the region. New research is needed to elaborate the ways in which these changes are occurring and to contribute to the resolution of these concerns. Lastly, the Cordillera Huayhuash is being integrated into national and international tourist networks through the increasing presence of large tour companies. These new organizations seriously question the degree to which local communities...
might benefit from Peru’s new tourism economy as tourist dollars begin increasingly to ‘leak’ out of the area. If, indeed, the Cordillera Huayhuash is a harbinger of innovative national conservation models as well as new and sustainable economic development in the region, the role of large external tourism companies needs to be examined further in order to evaluate the ways in which they might, or might not, be affecting these processes.

References

Coney, P. (1964) Geology and geography of the of the Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru, Phd Dissertation, Department of Geology, University of New Mexico.

Notes on Contributors

Jeffrey Bury is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His current research interests include climate change, extractive industries, conservation and tourism in Latin America.
Résumé: Nouvelles Géographies du tourisme au Pérou : tourisme de nature et conservation dans la cordillère Huayhuash

On examine ici les nouveaux réseaux de tourisme et les changements sociaux, économiques et en conservation au Pérou. Ce faisant, cet article illustre comment les changements politiques et économiques actuels, le tourisme global et les nouvelles formes de conservation ont contribué à de nouvelles géographies de tourisme dans le pays. Dans le cas d’étude dans la cordillère de Huayhuash, on a évalué la nature des augmentations récentes du nombre de touristes dans la région, la façon dont les nouvelles activités pour les touristes s’articulent avec les nouvelles zones de conservation et comment tout cela contribue aux changements économiques, politiques et environnementaux. Les résultats principaux obtenus en utilisant plusieurs méthodes qualitatives démontrent l’amplitude et la composition des augmentations récentes du tourisme dans la cordillère Huayhuash et les impacts économiques et sociaux de ces activités dans les communautés et les ménages de la région. On conclut avec quelques questions pour une recherche géographique continue sur la façon dont le tourisme est lié à ces changements dans les Andes.

Mots-clés: Tourisme, conservation, Pérou, cordillère Huayhuash

Zusammenfassung: Neue Geographien des Tourismus in Peru: Naturtourismus und Naturschutz in der Huayhuash-Kordillere


Stichwörter: Tourismus, Naturschutz, Peru, Huayhuash-Kordillere