

COLCA BEYOND NATURAL BEAUTY, AN EXPERIENCE THAT REACHES YOUR HEART

The Colca Valley, located within the first Geopark of Peru, declared by UNESCO: "Colca Canyon and Valley of the Volcanoes of Andagua", is one of the most important tourist attractions in southern Peru, as it is one of the canyons deepest in the world, with more than 4,160 meters; it has a unique landscape, combining a rugged terrain, with agricultural terraces worked by our ancestors collaguas and cabanas; and that each morning allows the sighting of the majestic flight of the condor (*Vultur gryphus*) around the canyon, capturing the interest of thousands of visitors.

The tours to the area, basically were made for 3 and 2 days in a regular tour, however over the years the visits are becoming shorter and now we have programs of up to 1 day; By reducing permanence, tourism activity does not give opportunity to cultural exchange and participation of the local population, generating a lack of effective contribution from tourism activity and few job opportunities for our vulnerable population, women, older adults; it was paradoxical that Colca was positioning itself as a tourist destination, however our population was gradually migrating and abandoning their small towns in search of better opportunities

For the years 2000, the UNWTO recognizes, a world current of tourism that seeks different experiences, that imply the interaction with rural life, traditions and way of living of the people and the attractions of the area, is as a result of this, that this practice begins to apply around the world.

For the year 2006, Colca timidly started some experiential tourism ventures promoted by NGOs. However, a decisive factor was from 2008, with the implementation of the National Program of Community Rural Tourism of the Ministry of Tourism (MINCETUR), which promotes strategies for the consolidation of the policy of social inclusion in the main tourist destinations in the southern area. from the country. This strategy was implemented in the Colca Valley, in 2009, our ventures in Sibayo, Yanque and Coporaque were entered into this strategy, satisfactorily complying with the following conditions of cultural and natural heritage, tourist product proposal, demand, tourist facilitation, community-based organization and tourist vocation.

Community tourism had many favorable factors for its development in Colca, which led to the implementation, mainly, of the natural wealth, archaeological sites and living culture present in thousands of traditions and customs, typical of each of our towns, which has allowed That our ventures have unique and differentiated characteristics, so much so that: Yanque and Coporaque, which are in the valley area, we offer a visit to nearby thermal baths, our area is characterized by working on garments with typical embroidery and we share with the tourists camp activities.

While Sibayo, the town conserves its characteristic stone constructions, being located in a higher area, its production stands out for its alpaca fiber fabrics, and tourists are offered to carry out artisanal fishing activities and stroll with alpacas and llamas, in the popular llamatrek.

The view of the Colca canyon is done through small family ventures, generating an enriching experiential tourism experience in which the tourist has the opportunity to stay in our homes, sharing roles and traditions, such as agriculture, being characteristic of the area, the production of corn, beans, quinoa, sancayo, the best in the region and that offer exquisite Andean cuisine to visitors.

Our people are the most precious value during the visit to the Colca, they can also see us always wear our traditional garments, with beautiful embroidered collaguas and cabanas, declared Cultural Heritage of the Nation, not for tourist shows, but for daily living, since we We are very proud of our traditions and we share it with our tourists, who after the visit are happy to try on the clothes and get to know our customs better, dancing the popular Wititi, a dance declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO

At first it was difficult to compete, as Colca service providers regularly offered fairly low prices, however, we understood that we did not sell services; We sell experiences, which jointly offer lodging, food and cultural and recreational activities.

We had problems with the infrastructure, since we did not have rooms, dining rooms and the facilities of our houses, they were quite simple, to overcome this problem, many of the entrepreneurs competed for financing with innovative ideas in order to get funds to improve the infrastructure, today We see that each undertaking has sought to highlight its potential and particularity, we have a house museum, the house of dances, house of flowers, etc.

The local population did not have previous knowledge for tourism, how could we communicate if we did not know other languages? How to serve and prepare food according to the demand of your future passengers? Fortunately, the Ministry of Tourism implemented capacity building programs with fast and technical courses in English and French, classes with chefs and technical personnel in the management of food and beverages; In spite of everything, when there is a will, the heart speaks louder than words, and any obstacle could be overcome, today our ventures seek to meet quality standards, preserving our essence.

People stayed less time in the Colca, with no opportunity to really meet us; However, in each of our services we seek that each visitor who lived the experience, motivates more passengers to visit us, fortunately today we have more tourists who tend to seek closer contact with the customs and lifestyles of the community.

It is well known that, with the tourist activity, the receiving population is losing their customs and they tend to copy the foreign ones, losing their identity; however, with community tourism, tourists show their interest and respect for our customs and we feel more proud to transmit our culture to them.

Our ventures are a tourist proposal with a high cultural value; that seeks sustainable and inclusive development with our communities. We can affirm that the flow towards community tourism in the Colca Valley has allowed greater permanence and has been in continuous growth; it has gone from registering 304 visitors in 2010; to 26,003 for the year 2017; This number of visitors represents 10% of the total number of visits that the Colca Valley Destination receives.

Our main visitors being the brothers from France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Spain, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, Belgium, Italy, among other markets.

The economic income of all our ventures for 2010 was approximately S /. 15,931.00 soles, however for the year 2017 we achieved a scope of S /. 567,542.00, having continuous growth figures.

We always seek to help our community, which is why now we not only make tourists stay in our homes, we take them to neighborhood businesses to visit embroidery, knitting, alpaca leather workshops, among other local products, motivating the development of everyone in our town.

Community tourism in Colca has been promoted on different websites, fairs and tourists can purchase our programs from the main operators at the international, national and even social media levels.

Today tourism is going through one of its worst moments, before the covid19, we have clearly been very affected, but we will get ahead; Until now our clients have been mainly foreigners, this will be an opportunity to reinvent ourselves, and seek the interest of local visitors, offering them the best we have, the experience that no book will teach you, and that can only be discovered by visiting our towns through each of our homes.

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