

Pampas Cat seen near Salkantay Lodge, Peru
April 22, 2018



For a physically challenging nature holiday, my wife and I decided to trek the Salkantay Pass. We signed up with Mountain Lodges of Peru, who provided guiding and porting services, and accommodation along the way. The seven-day itinerary involved hiking most of the day, every day. Each night we stayed at a remote lodge. To allow for acclimation to the altitude, the first few hikes were shorter in duration, and we had afternoons free to relax, which in my case meant exploring the areas around our lodge.

On one of our free afternoons (April 22), I headed out of the Salkantay Lodge (located at Soraypampa) at 2:45 PM in the light rain, and walked up a small valley (which is labelled as "Soray" on Google Maps). The rain stopped soon after I left the lodge, and I followed a trail along the creek for about 2 km (my track is shown as a blue line in the satellite image, below).

Very early on in my walk, at 3:19 PM, I encountered a Pampas Cat (*Leopardus colocola*), AKA 'Colocolo'. The approximate latitude and longitude were 13.3975 °S and 72.5775 °W (see star on map). The cat was moving up a rocky bank on the opposite side of the creek. It was quite camouflaged against the rocky background. I snapped a few photos, which caused it to freeze and look my way. I took a few more pictures, and then it bounded up into the vegetation as was not seen again. The entire encounter lasted about one minute.



The only other mammals observed during the 7-day trek were:

- Montane Guinea Pig (seen running across the 'Mollepata to Salkantay trailhead' road), April 21
- (Northern) Mountain Viscacha (seen in rocks just north of Salkantay Pass), April 23
- Brown Agouti (seen in gardens behind the Inkaterra Pueblo Hotel in Aguas Calientes), April 26

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