



**Argentinian
Explorer**

ARGENTINA TOURS

MENDOZA, SAN JUAN, LA RIOJA, CATAMARCA & CÓRDOBA IN 21 DAYS

Travel to the Central Northern Argentina, through Mendoza, San Juan, La Rioja, Catamarca and Cordoba provinces. We visit wineries in Mendoza, Rio Atuel Canyon, Talampaya Canyon, Valle de La Luna (Moon Valley), Calingasta Valley, Pampa El Leoncito, Jachal, El Rodeo, La Cuesta del Portezuelo in Catamarca and we enjoy the many attractions in Cordoba, such as the Calamuchita Valley, La Cumbrecita, etc.

21 DAYS - 20 NIGHTS

- Accommodation in double room with breakfast
- Transfers detailed itinerary
- Regular excursions listed in the itinerary (except optional)
- Bilingual English Spanish Guide
- Permanent coordination

Day 1 - Knowing Mendoza at Night

Welcome to Argentina. Reception and transfer from Ezeiza International Airport (Buenos Aires City) to Jorge Newbery Airport. Transfer from Mendoza Airport to the hotel.

We discover another Mendoza during the night, lights give other appearance to the Cuyo city. The pedestrian street, the parks and the Civic neighbourhood, stand out with the gleaming lights once the sun sets. We go along España street to visit the San Martín, Independencia and España squares. Then we go to the Civic neighbourhood where we watch the Government House and the Law Courts getting into Belgrano Street where we go parallel to the railways which used to go from Buenos Aires to Mendoza. A special case is the Aristides Villanueva Avenue which is the highlight of the Mendoza night. This avenue has its own life, due to the varied shops and restaurants it offers. Then comes the General San Martín Park with its over 300 hectares, where we enjoy its principal attractions: The Rosedal, the Regatas Lake, the Cinco Continentes Fountain and the Portones. The return trip to the city is along the stately Emilio Civit Avenue, in an exclusively residential zone. Optionally, we can continue enjoying the night with a Tango show or a wine-tasting of the excellent quality and worldwide known wines.

Day 2 - High Altitude vineyards: Uco Valley - Cerro Punta Negra

Breakfast at the hotel. We begin the journey to the south of Mendoza province, to the Uco Valley, crossing the river with the same name and arrive at Tunuyan to know the wineries that manufacture worldwide known handcrafted wine. Tunuyan, Tupungato and San Carlos are a summary of blue sky, long tree lines and snowy mountains, where a formidable area for high production of wine is created, unique for its quality, grapes cultivated between 1,000 and 1,500 meters over sea level. These zones are now covered of vineyards irrigated with a high technological level, where the technique of micro oxygenation of the wine is used. This is the case of the Lurton winery, where we visit the organic wine factory together with its vineyards with wine-tasting.

We can appreciate the Tupungato volcano, 6,800 meters high. Then our wine tour continues to the Manzano Histórico, place where San Martín rested after the liberating campaign in Chile and Peru. There is a monument to this called El Retorno a la Patria (Return to Homeland) where strangely San Martín can be seen with plain clothes. We continue our way to Arroyo Grande, in the Argentine Portillo Pass where we can see the Punta Negra Mount with its 4,400 meters. We continue through a winding road among the Pinares de Wosso up to the Salentein winery, where we visit its facilities, its restaurant in its cultural center Kilka and its impressive cellar where the aging barrels lie. We finish the journey going back to Mendoza.

Note: The program development is subject to the routes status, the snow, the traffic and the temporary closing of the wineries due to annual maintenance.

Day 3 - Along the Cordillera de los Andes through Villavicencio

Breakfast at hotel. We go towards the Andean mountain range through the road to Villavicencio, reaching the highest place at the foothills in Cruz del Paramillo, some 3.000 meters over sea level. During the journey we see a monument representing the division of the San Martin Army when going to free Chile. When entering the foothills, we can see the Puesto de Vaquerias, entrance to the Natural Reserve of Villavicencio. The Termas de Villavicencio hotel is in it, it has a typical Nordic-Scandinavian style, now closed since 1978. We overcome endless curves from the Hotel Villavicencio to the Cruz, climbing the foothills up to 3.200 meters over sea level, coming across some guanacos, hares, foxes and watch some condor fly.

In Uspallata, we can optionally have breakfast and continue as from here with the high mountain road. During the journey we see the Uspallata Valley, the Picheuta Bridge (San Martin milestone), the Aconcagua Mount, the Penitentes and Puente del Inca (Inca Bridge). Our route takes us then to Aconcagua Park, we descend while entering the park to trek up to the southern wall and the Horcones Lake. We continue up to the border village of Las Cuevas, where the old railway station is located, we can have lunch (not included) and if the weather allows us, we climb up to the Cristo Redentor (Christ The Redeemer) located at 4.200 meters over sea level on the Santa Elena Mount. We remain speechless with the Potrerillos Reservoir, built between the high peaks. We return to Mendoza.

Day 4 - Atuel Canyon

Breakfast at the hotel. We set off from San Rafael towards the Cuesta de los Terneros to go to Dique Valle Grande and the Atuel river. We stop at the San Francisco de Asis lookout point to enjoy a terrific sight of the city and the canyon. After several kilometres we enter El Nihuil which is impressive for the depth of its lake. We rest and may have lunch (not included). We set off to the Atuel Canyon, to be trapped by a landscape of pure beauty, typical of the andean ecosystem, due to the erosive action of winds and water creating natural sculptures becoming awesome landforms, fanciful shapes of mother nature such as Museo de Cera (Wax Museum), el Lagarto (the Alligator), Los Monstruos (the Monsters), Los Jardines Colgantes (The Hanging Gardens) or La Ciudad Encantada (The Haunted City), etc. The canyon is formed by the Atuel river, Valle Grande Reservoir and El Nihuil. We make a short

walk along the canyon to arrive at the Valle Grande. The ones who want adventure tourism, can enjoy rafting, rappel or a boat voyage (all these activities must be booked at destination).

Optional: Rafting in Mendoza

Breakfast at the hotel. The Cañon del Atuel river is a synonym of rafting and is famous in all the country for its rapids and the transparency of its water which combine with the beauty of the place. The river is navigable every month except June with a difficulty level 2, based on the international scale from 0 to 6, its average depth is 1,20 meters. The rapids of Atuel and Diamante rivers are excellent to practise this sport, Grande river is another option.

Day 5 - Caverna de Las Brujas

Breakfast at the hotel. We go towards Malargüe city, we go through the city to go other 60 kilometers to arrive at the caves. During the journey we appreciate the Cuesta del Chihuido and the Petrified Forest. Once we arrive, we start a medium level trek inside the cave, which lasts nearly 2 hours. We provide helmets and torches for this. We find stalactites and stalagmites inside the caves, as a product of water filtering during years and forming different shapes. Each centimeter of stalactites and stalagmites have

been formed in more than 1300 years, this makes us think that Las Brujas Cave (The Witches Cave) is millions of years old. We finish our journey returning to Malargüe, after visiting the city, back to Mendoza.

Note: It is recommended to be lightly dressed with trekking shoes and a jacket or sweater as there are 10° in the caves. Children over 5 and below 8 can access to the first section. Children below 5 years old's access is forbidden to the caves.

Day 6 - San Juan & its surroundings

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the bus terminal in Mendoza. Reception and transfer to the bus terminal in San Juan to the hotel.

We visit the principal places of interest in the city of San Juan, which is located in the centre north of the Valle del Tulum. This city was practically destroyed by an earthquake in 1944, thus it is one of the newest cities in Argentina. It is the city where Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was born, he was president of Argentina and a great creator of the public education. The most important attractions in San Juan are the Embalse de Ullum, the Quebrada de Zona and the Ruta del Vino (Wine Route). Within our visit we can visit the house where Sarmiento was born, the only colonial testimony left in the city, with 9 rooms and 3 servants' rooms with 2 courtyards, typical distribution of that time. Another place worth visiting is the Cathedral, in honour of San Juan Bautista (St. John Baptist), which is one of the most modern churches as it was first built in 1712 by the Compañía de Jesús and rebuilt in 1979 after the earthquake. Other interesting places are the Auditorio Juan Victoria, the cultural place par excellence, the Museo Sanmartiniano, etc. Then we visit the Ullum dam and the Cavas de Zonda, where we will taste first quality San Juan wines.

Day 7 - Barreal, Valle de Calingasta & Pampa del Leoncito (Astronomical Observatory)

We set off to Pampa del Leoncito, then we go to the Astronomical Observatory and the Cerro Alcázar. During this mountain road, we see the cerro Villicúm, the Quebrada de las Burras, Talacasto town, entering Calingasta up to the Barreal. From there we go to Pampa del Leoncito where wind-car is practised thanks to the sustained winds that blow more than 80km per hour. The wind-car is a small vehicle with 2 car wheels at the back and a motorbike wheel at the front, it has a fuselage and a mast made of aluminium to be light and be able to move with great impulse. The Pampa del Leoncito also called Barreal Blanco is a geological structure next to the Barreal town, where a natural reserve has been created. It is a plain with arid and cracked soil 15km long per 5km wide, which before was the bottom basin of a lake, without vegetation of any kind, similar to a spider web.

The vision is atypical and the white colour is very deep. We can observe the impressive Mercedario Mount 6,772m high and then have lunch at the Barreal. It is the most important tourist centre of the valley, a town with dirt streets and beautiful poplars, where we will also visit the astronomical complex El Leoncito. It is an observatory located at the foot of the mountain range, 2,500m over sea level, in the San Juan Astronomical Reserve, occupying almost 70,000 hectares, being an excellent place to observe the space. Once again in San Juan, we will enjoy a spectacular view of the Cerro Alcázar.

Day 8 - North of San Juan: Jáchal, Dique Cuesta del Viento & Rodeo

Breakfast at the hotel. We take the Ruta 40 towards the north of San Juan province, leaving the San Juan river behind, going through towns like Albardón, Matagusanos, Talacasto and next to Villicúm Mount we

arrive at San José de Jáchal city, where we learn about its indigenous cultures. We change direction to the west to the central Andean foothill along a mountain road discovering unique sights.

We visit Cuesta del Viento, ideal place to practise nautical sports such as windsurf, then we go to Rodeo, small mountain town next to the Dique Cuesta del Viento, hydroelectrical dam with a mirror of crystalline water of a turquoise colour. We continue with the itinerary to Pismanta, where the famous thermal water complex is, mixing the arid desert with the green oasis, being one of the nicest places in San Juan. Its thermal water has healing, therapeutics and rejuvenating effects, ideal for rheumatism and skin diseases. We return to San Juan capital by Las Flores and Bella Vista, foothills road climbing up the slope to arrive at the highest zone at El Colorado. Then, in Talacasto we go back to the Ruta 40 to enter San Juan.

Day 9 - Ischigualasto Provincial Park: Fertile Valley and Valley of the Moon

Breakfast at the hotel. We leave towards Valle Fértil, going through the Difunta Correa Sanctuary in the town of Vallecito, San Juan. There is a great popular devotion from Catholic people although she was not recognized by the Catholic Church. Her followers believe in her miracles and consider her a popular Saint, worshipped as a Goddess. We arrive at the Ischigualasto Provincial Park to discover the Valle de la Luna and its five stations.

This park has an extension of 62.000 hectares and is 330km away from San Juan capital city. It boasts a considerable paleontological and geological patrimony, UNESCO declared it as Natural Heritage of Humanity in the year 2000. Ischigualasto belongs to the Triassic period, 300 million years ago, and it is an accurate representation of those times when the first mammals and dinosaurs spread. It was in these lands where one of the oldest dinosaurs, the Eoraptor Lunensis was found. Its principal landforms are: El Gusano, Valle Pintado, Cancha de Bochas, El Submarino, El Hongo and Los Colorados. We go back to Valle Fértil in the afternoon, where we will spend the night.

Day 10 - Laguna Brava: The natural perfection

Free day in Fertile Valley. We recommend as optional activity go to visit Laguna Brava.

We spend all day travelling to a unique and unforgettable place: Laguna Brava (Brava Lake), more than 4,400m over sea level, part of some Andean lakes system of saline shallow water. It is surrounded by the highest volcanoes in the world. There is an important biodiversity due to the presence of wetlands, observing endemic marine birds populations such as flamingos and Andean parinas (*Phoenicoparrus andinus*). It is also a wildlife shelter to camelids such as guanacos and vicuñas, condors can be watched as well as mules and foxes. The appearance of the place changes as we climb upwards and its beauty is due to the fact that it is a bright clear blue lake amidst the mountain range surrounded by pink flamingos, creating a landscape quite similar to the high plateau lakes of Atacama. The surrounding area has wind-shaped mountains, as if they were painted with a mixture of magic colours and in the background a bright deep blue sky that with the eternal snows, give a special touch even though there is no green which would finish off the picture as there is no vegetation.

Day 11 - Talampaya National Park, La Rioja

Breakfast at the hotel. We get up early to leave San Juan province and travel to La Rioja province to Villa Unión to visit the Talampaya National Park. Villa Unión has 6,000 inhabitants and is located on a valley between the foothills of the Andes and the formidable Famatina mountain range, 60km away from the park. Talampaya is a natural reserve with sites of great archaeological-paleontological value due to the

number of fossils found, such as the *Lagosuchus Talampayensis*, dinosaur of the Mesozoic era. To sum up, this park is a product of the intense tectonic movements and wind erosion produced during millions of years. It has 215,000 hectares and it is famous for its incredible red rock cliffs and the wind sculptured eroded figures where condors nest. Its rocks belong to the Triassic period in the Mesozoic Era where the first dinosaurs' pawprints are found. The return journey to San Juan is through the majestic Cuesta de Huaco.

Day 12 - Chilecito, Cuesta del Miranda, Nonogasta

Breakfast at the hotel. We say goodbye to Villa Unión to go to La Rioja through Cuesta de Miranda, caught between the Sierras de Famatina and the Sierras de Sañogasta (small mountain ranges). These hills have one of the few good roads linking the Valle de Chilecito with Cuyo. It is the obliged route to join Villa Unión with Chilecito. The Cuesta de Miranda shows a landscape full of different reddish shades, a path that draws a silhouette between the hills and the canyon of the river with the same name, ending in an edge road with stunning curves and gullies. Before that, we had entered Chilecito, the second important city in La Rioja, located in the Valle Antinaco – Los Colorados and hidden between the Sierras de Velasco and Famatina. It is a zone dedicated to the winery industry and the walnut and fruit trees plantations. We arrive at the capital city in the afternoon.

Day 13 - La Costa Riojana: Sanagasta, Huaco, Chuquis, Anillaco...

Vamos a recorrer la costa riojana, de trata de las principales poblaciones de La Rioja. El mayor encanto lo brinda el cordón montañoso de la sierra del Velazco, que nos acompañara durante todo nuestro recorrido, encontrando lugares llenos de vida, colores, una paz que detiene el tiempo, el microclima que nos pone en contacto con la naturaleza. Las Peñas es el primer pueblo con sus casas de adobe sobre peñones de granito y la iglesia de San Rafael. Luego viene Agua Blanca, famosa por sus dulces caseros Sigue el pueblo de Pinchas, lleno de frutales, hortalizas y nogales. En sus tiendas artesanales, se pueden conseguir mantas de llama o vicuña.

Chuquis es conocida por que se encuentra el solar de Pedro de Castro Barros, actualmente es un museo regional. Continúa el pueblo de Aminga, con casonas, quintas y bodegas hechas con muros elevados de pircas. En su plaza principal está el Mercado Artesanal y la iglesia de La Merced. Una vez más sobre la ruta, alcanzamos a reflexionar sobre la alegría y la tranquilidad que se perciben en el aire de cada una de estas localidades. Llegamos a Anillaco, el más moderno de los pueblos de la costa riojana con calles de asfalto y grandes propiedades de viñedos ideales para degustar vinos de alta calidad o vinos pateros.

Avanzamos hasta Los Molinos con sus fincas de nogales, olivos, almendros y membrillos. Sigue Anjullón, con la iglesia más bella de la costa riojana, que data de 1896, de estilo italiano. Más tarde está la localidad de San Pedro y finalmente Santa Vera Cruz, que está sobre la montaña. Sobresale en el viaje el Castillo de Dionisio Aizcorbe. Por la tarde traslado a la terminal de buses de La Rioja para viajar a Catamarca (200 km). Recepción en la terminal de buses de San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca y traslado al hotel.

Day 14 - Catamarca & Cuesta del Portezuelo

We know the city of Catamarca during the morning. From the Basilica, the Paseo de la Fe, 25 de Mayo Square, San Francisco Convent up to the Handcraft Market. We set off to the Cuesta del Portezuelo arriving at the Dique Las Piquitas in the afternoon. The Cuesta del Portezuelo is a beautiful, long and winding road which is almost 1,700m over sea level, where we will have spectacular views of the Valle de Catamarca (the Catamarca Valley) crossed by the Paclin river and the Sierra de Ambato. This downhill has

been immortalized in the zamba Paisaje de Catamarca, sung by the famous Argentine folklore group: Los Chalchaleros. During the journey we enjoy different towns by the roadside.

Day 15 - Departure to Córdoba

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the bus terminal in San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca. Reception and transfer to the bus terminal in Córdoba to the hotel.

Day 16 - Knowing Córdoba

We begin our tour around the city of Córdoba. During the excursion we can observe the influence of colonial times in the architecture, contrasting with modern designs. The places of interest we visit are the San Martín Square, before called Plaza Mayor, to stroll around the historical and cultural quarters of the old town, today the microcentre. Places of interest are: the Cathedral, the Cabildo, Santa Catalina Convent, the Cripta del Noviciado, the Oratorio del Obispo Mercadillo, the Compañía de Jesús Church founded by San Ignacio de Loyola located on the Jesuit Square in downtown, The Monserrat National School which is the second oldest in Argentina, after the Inmaculada Concepción School in Santa Fe, from 1687. It was in this school where the first printing company in the country worked. We continue to the Sagrado Corazón Church which belongs to the Capuchin Priests outstanding for its neo-gothic architecture designed by the Italian Augusto Ferrari, then we go to the Nueva Córdoba neighbourhood, the Sarmiento Park, the Ciudad Universitaria (University Campus), until we arrive at the centre of the metropolis. Finally, we go by the Chateau Carreras Stadium and other attractions. After finishing this circuit, we return to the hotel.

Day 17 - Villa Carlos Paz

Breakfast at the Hotel. Free day to rest or optional activities or to visit Villa Carlos Paz. Are you can make kayak in Los Molinos, a mountain ride, trekking by the Quebrada del Condorito national park or have 4 x 4 Overland by the high peaks or the Cerro Champaqui.

Optional -Villa Carlos Paz

We visit Villa Carlos Paz, going through the mountain town of La Calera, then we continue by the route which goes around the Suquia river banks along the "Camino de las Cien Curvas" (Road of 100 Curves) till we are near the Dique San Roque. We stop at it to watch the dam and the wonderful view of the lake. We continue climbing up to Villa Carlos Paz, located on the Punilla Valley, on the shore of the San Roque Lake and at the foot of the Altas Cumbres (the High Peaks). This is the most important tourist place of Córdoba province, founded in 1915. We start our return back to Córdoba City along the Ingeniero Allende Posse Highway.

Day 18 - The route of the Jesuit Estancias

Breakfast in the hotel. We leave early to start this trip by the Córdoba roads to the town of Jesús María following the same route as the old Camino Real to Alta Perú. There we visit the Jesuit museum, a 17th century Jesuit Estancia, and go on to see the Doma and Folklore Amphitheatre and Colonia Caroya, a town of Italian immigrants that are famous for their making of sausages and preserves. Also we enter the Casa Caroya, where operated the first manufacturer of swords and knives that dates back to the beginning of the 19th century. At this house stayed General Belgrano and General José Don de San Martín, fathers of

the Republic. After, we go to the church and the Estancia Catalina and on to the locality of Ascochinga. Continuing in the direction south we pass El Manzano, Salsipuedes and the River Ceballos. Finally we make our way back to Córdoba.

In the middle of 2000, UNESCO recommended to name the Camino de las Estancias and la Manzana Jesuítica de Córdoba as Patrimony to Humanity. The monuments that we see in this trip show the origins, progression and consolidation of the work of the Compañía de Jesús in all South America. All their architectural works are true testimony to their socio-economic, cultural and religious system that operated in Córdoba for more than 200 years. In Córdoba the works consist of La Manzana Jesuítica de Córdoba in conjunction with the church of la Compañía de Jesús, the Rectory of the Universidad Nacional and the Colegio Monserrat. But in the Camino de las Estancias we find other works that form part of this system such as the Estancia Catalina, La Capilla de Candonga, La Casa del Virrey Liniers (Ex-Estancia de Alta Gracia) and the Estancia de la Candelaria. The contextual systems such as these can only be seen in one place outside of Córdoba and that is in the Jesuit Missions in the province of Misiones. Their territorial system has to this day conserved its integrity and was fundamental in the structure and maintenance of the Spanish cultural organisation in South America.

Day 19 - Calamuchita Valley

Breakfast at the hotel. We set off to the Calamuchita Valley, towards the city of Alta Gracia, 35km away from the provincial capital. Alta Gracia is located on the Paravachasca Valley, it is a mainly touristic site where there used to be a Jesuit ranch. Once we arrive, we visit the Museo Estancia Jesuítica (Jesuit Ranch Museum) and Viceroy Liniers's House built in 1588, the characteristic Tajamar, also built by the Jesuits in 1643 as a water reserve for watering crops which ended forming a lake.

The journey continues on a route that goes through the mountain towns along the valley like Anisacate, Villa La Bolsa, La Serranita, Villa Ciudad de América, and following this attractive mountain road we arrive at the Dique Los Molinos (Los Molinos Dam). We continue with the itinerary to Villa General Belgrano, located on the Calamuchita Valley. The Bavarian architecture is typical here due to the mostly German immigration as well as Swiss, Italian and Austrian. The natural environment is really beautiful, with coniferous and oak forests together with streams which define the mountain landscape. We return to Córdoba City in the afternoon.

Day 20 - Traslasierra, Altas Cumbres Road: Mina Clavero & Cura Brochero

Breakfast at the hotel. We leave the capital of Córdoba taking the same road to Villa Carlos Paz. After leaving Carlos Paz behind, we approach San Antonio de Arredondo and Icho Cruz to enter the Camino de las Altas Cumbres (High Peaks Road). The journey goes through Copina, La Pampilla and El Cóndor, the highest point in the itinerary. During the journey we see the Pampa de Achála which spreads on the Córdoba Mountains, defining the typical wild landscape of the region. It is a very steep zone with little vegetation, located some 1,500m over sea level. It is formed by the Cumbres de Achála and the Sierra de Comechingones, it is a zone of deep canyons, being the most important one the Quebrada del Condorito. We stop where the Mina Clavero River starts.

We continue our tour descending to find an homonymous town, which is the tourist centre of the Valle de Traslasierra, characterized by its natural landscapes and beautiful beaches. We also get to know a town called Cura Brochero, continuing to Nono, Las Rabonas and Los Hornillos. Cura Brochero is named after José Gabriel Brochero, known as the Cura Gaucho (Gaucho Priest). When returning we will enjoy a trapping sight of the Dique la Viña, to finally return to Córdoba.

Day 21 - Córdoba - Return to Buenos Aires

Breakfast in the hotel. Transfer to Córdoba Airport. Reception and transfer from Buenos Aires Airport (Domestic Airport) to Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires. End of our services.

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