



**Argentinian  
Explorer**



## ARGENTINA TOURS

### **MENDOZA & SAN RAFAEL IN 9 DAYS**

*We go to San Rafael to complete the large itinerary along the Mendoza province. We start with a different Mendoza travelling at night, then we follow the Mendoza wine trace to know the Malbec production. We climb up the Cordillera de los Andes along the Mendoza River and to the Rio Atuel Canyon to enter the Caverna de las Brujas (Witches' Cavern).*

## 9 DAYS - 8 NIGHTS

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

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### Day 1 - Knowing Mendoza

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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 dedicate half a day to visit the city of Mendoza, famous for its legendary trees, wide sidewalks and its great order and cleanliness. Founded over 400 years ago by the first colonists, this city offers a lot of history and culture. We will visit La Alameda, the historical zone where Pedro del Castillo founded this large city in 1561, where most shops and civic life was concentrated until it disappeared with the 1861 earthquake. The town council was, in the old days, where the Foundational Area Museum is nowadays. There are still remains of what once was the San Francisco church. We continue to the new city, post-earthquake. We visit its principal avenues, the downtown, the Plaza Independencia

(Independence Square), the civic neighbourhood with the Government House, the Law Courts and the General San Martin Park going along the Civit Avenue, entering the park through the Portones (Gates). We can enjoy the beautiful woods in the park, as well as the Rosedal (rose garden) next to the lake and the clubs located in the area. We also meet the Caballitos de Marly (Marly Little Horses, replica of the ones in Paris), the Fuente de los Continentes (the Fountain of the Continents), etc. Then we climb the Cerro de La Gloria (The Glory Mount) where there is a monument to the Ejercito Libertador (the Liberator Army) and very near it, the Greek theatre Frank Romero Day.

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### Day 2 - The Wine Road: Wineries in Mendoza

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We will see the true transformation of the place during this program. The wine industry, with the man's effort, has made the desert disappear and turn into an oasis thanks to canalization and ditches which were the irrigation systems that the Huarpes and Incas natives created. Nowadays the computerized watering technique is used, being Argentina one of the most important producers worldwide.

We will go through the first wine-region in Mendoza which spans on Maipu and Lujan de Cuyo departments. Along our road, we find family wineries producing handcrafted wine such as the one of the Cecchin Family or Cavas de Don Arturo that produce organic wines. There are also industrial wineries in the zone such as La Rural, Finca Flichman, Cavas de Weinert o Zuccardi. We visit one to two wineries where experts receive us, teach us about the wine manufacture process and then we taste wines of international quality. Depending on the program we might also visit a factory that produces olive oil.

**Note:** This program can be performed during the morning or the afternoon. Depending on the time we visit an industrial production winery and another one of organic production. If we go in the afternoon we also go to an olive oil factory, if we go in the morning, we don't. The possible wineries could be: La Rural, López, Cavas de Weinert, Cavas de Don Arturo, San Huberto, Zuccardi and Cecchin Family. In Winter, the tour depends on the snow and the conditions of the roads as long as National Gendarmerie authorizes

the vehicles to go by. The ascent to the Cristo Redentor (Christ The Redeemer) is performed between January and February.

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#### Day 4 - By the Andes Mountain Range bordering the Rio Mendoza

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Breakfast at the hotel. This program takes us to the limit with Chile crossing the Cordillera de los Andes (Andean Mountain Range) along the Routes 40 and 7 bordering the Mendoza river. We go by the Potrerillo Reservoir which contains the Mendoza river waters and along the Uspallata Valley dividing the foothills from the mountain range. We make a short detour to visit the Picheuta Bridge, a real milestone as General Jose de San Martin crossed it with The Andean Army when crossing the Andes. We will visit the most imposing Andean massif, the Aconcagua Mount, with its 6.962 meters over sea level and we watch the Puente del Inca (Inca Bridge), which is a natural bridge with a famous history and thermal waters. We stop at the entrance of the park to make a short walk to be able to watch the southern side of the Aconcagua and enjoy the sight of the Horcones Lake. The journey continues along the Route 7 and takes us to the ski resort Los Penitentes, up to the border town of Las Cuevas and with good weather we climb to the Cristo Redentor Monument (Christ The Redeemer). We can optionally have lunch (not included) to return later to Mendoza city.

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#### Day 4 - Quebrada de Villavencio

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Breakfast at hotel. We set off to the Villavencio Gully, leaving Mendoza in a northerly direction towards Las Heras department. During the journey we leave at one side the Historical Field del Plumerillo, historical place because the national troops of the General San Martin's Army organized here. Then we turn into Route 52, the old former route to Chile, in a northwestern direction. It was here that General Las Heras crossed with the Andes Army in 1817 during the campaign to free our neighbor country. Along this path we arrive at the old and new Minetti cement factories. Turning west we arrive at the Cañota Monument, famous for being the place where San Martin's Army divided, one wing overtaken by him crossed by the Paso de Los Patos and the other wing overtaken by General Las Heras crossed by the Puesto de Vaquerias, where we get before entering the Natural Reserve of Villavencio. There is an interpretative center of the autochthonous flora and fauna of the region. We continue up to the famous and abandoned hotel, with beautiful flowery gardens. We come to know its chapel, built by Angel Velaz, owner of the place. In the afternoon we return to Mendoza.

**Note: The Thermal hotel in Villavencio.** The hotel is located nearly 1,800 meters over sea level, it is well-known for its natural springs of mineral water. It was built in 1940 and was opened until 1978 working as a thermal hotel. Nowadays it is still beautiful as it was at first and is an Andean Mountain Range symbol. The water has mineral properties. Villavencio is born from water falling from the Aconcagua Mount, filtering due to gravity to the subterranean formations descending to low depths. Pressure and temperature impel it towards the surface ascending through a tectonic crack, rising as a spring near 1,800 meters. Minerals of the stones are added on the way.

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#### Day 5 - San Rafael - Los Reyunos

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Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to San Rafael. We leave San Rafael city, before the excursion to The Reyunos we visit a winery which dedicates not only to high quality wine manufacturing but also champagne. Then we take the Christ roundabout to reach the Historical Fortress and the first chapel in the zone, then we visit the Galileo Vitali, The Tigre y The Reyunos dams. The Reyunos dam is 35 km away, it is a 740 hectares lake, where minnows are sown and excellent for trout and silverside fishing. It is the

first pump central in South America, with a less energy consumption when its turbines spin to give back the accumulated water to the lake. It was finished at the beginning of the 80s, it is fed from the Diamante river and was made on the canyon with the same name.

#### **Optional -The Sosneado 4 x 4**

Near San Rafael, some 150 kilometers away, is the Sosneado, let's go towards it. At midday we have breakfast there and in the afternoon we set off on Land Rover 4x4 pick-up trucks with a professional guide along a good road bordering the Atuel river entering the Sosneado Lake, to Cueva del Indio (Native Cave) which faithfully represents the ancient cultures that inhabited these lands. We also visit the remains of the old hotel Termas El Sosneado which had thermal water pools with healing effects. We come to know a mineral water spring and we reach the Fosiles Mount to discover fossilized marine algae and snails. We go back to San Rafael in the evening.

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#### **Day 6 - 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.

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#### **Day 7 - 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.

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## Day 5 - Visiting Mendoza Wineries: Malbec Wine Tradition

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Breakfast at hotel. To go after a good Malbec we must travel up to Lujan de Cuyo, there we go. We stop at the Lagarde Winery with an exquisite gourmet lunch washed down with wines from the winery. The road is among vineyards, fruit trees and olive trees towards another winery, but of handicraft production. This family business is dedicated to organic wines production. Then we continue our wine route but now to know an industrial winery. Then we continue to visit an olive oil factory. In the background we can enjoy the beautiful Cordon del Plata mountains.

**Note:** The possible wineries to be visited are principally Lagarde, Lopez or Flichman and as handicraft wineries, Cecchin Family, Cavas Don Arturo or San Huberto, among others. The program covers a visit to 2 wineries.

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## Day 9 - Mendoza - Return to Buenos Aires

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

### ARGENTINIAN EXPLORER EVT

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