



**Argentinian
Explorer**



ARGENTINA TOURS

SAN JUAN, LA RIOJA, CATAMARCA, TUCUMÁN, SALTA & JUJUY IN 14 DAYS

This is not just another trip in the North of Argentina, it is a very special itinerary because it shows Jujuy from the point of view of the jujeños which make it different from those tours where we travel from Salta to the Quebrada de Humahuaca in Jujuy... we start now from Jujuy. We also offer a plus: we discover the Puna Jujeña as very few people does. We spend two days to go to Laguna de los Pozuelos visiting Casabindo which is famous because of the Toreo de la Vincha, then we continue descending through Barrancas until the Big Salts (Salinas Grandes). This journey can only be made during the dry season, from April to November because the paths become impassable during the wet season.

14 DAYS - 13 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 - San Juan

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

Day 2 - 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 3 - 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 4 - 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 5 - Knowing La Rioja

Breakfast at the hotel. We will discover the principal charms of La Rioja city, we will also go to the Dique Los Sauces. This capital city with the soul of a town, has a square called 25 de Mayo which is the centre of the metropolis and the Government House of Greco-Roman style adapted with an entrance hallway and courtyards with galleries. In front of the square there is a Social Club where exhibitions take place and the San Nicolás de Bari Basilica of Byzantine style. The house of the former governor Joaquín Víctor González is very interesting to visit, too. It has a colonial style with a Medieval Castle image, built in the middle of the 19th Century. There is also the Santo Domingo Temple, built in stone with an outstanding carved carob wooden door, in 1623 by the natives. Finally there is a Museum of Religious Art.

Day 6 - 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 Paclín 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 7 - San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca - Departure to Tucumán

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

We will start visiting the historical center and its surroundings, with places full of history which are reflected in their buildings. The Independence Square (Plaza Independencia) is our departure spot, so we can go to the Government House (Casa de Gobierno) and all the historical houses which surround it.

Then, we will go the Cathedral, the Church and the San Francisco Convent, a national monument because of the old relics it preserves, like the first national flag that was raised in Tucumán in 1814, among others; Nuestra Señora de la Merced Church has a neoclassical style with a simple interior, the Nicolás Avellaneda Historical Provincial Museum (Museo Histórico Provincial Nicolás Avellaneda) which is the house where he lived as many other politicians in the XIX Century, the Church and Convent of Santo Domingo, among other buildings and representative houses.

Once the tour is finished in the historical center in the city of Tucumán, we will continue to 9 de Julio Park, designed by Carlos Thays, a french artist who designed gardens and Parks. This park has a very beautiful clock made of flowers, very colourful and paths to walk between the trees. Then, we will go to the Museo de la Industria Azucarera "Casa del Obispo Colombes", in which we will learn the history about the sugar industry in the province from its origin. We will continue to the most distinguished area in the city of

Tucumán, the outstanding Urquiza Square because of its paths and spaces so people can skate and ride a bicycle, it is also a green area to rest which has a french style in its surroundings; San Martin Theatre, the Legislature Building and the Casino. Alberdi Square is another green area with its very well preserved grass and benches and it is located in front of the General Mitre Railway Station which will be our last spot in the tour.

Day 8 - Tafi del Valle

Breakfast in the hotel. We visit one of the special summer places of Tucumán where lies the remains of one of the most ancient precolombian cultures of the region. We leave from San Miguel de Tucuman by the south. Before reaching our destination we visit the Jesuit Ruins of San José Lules that date from 1670 and was the site of the Jesuits until they were thrown out a century later. We also pass by the locality of Famaillá which celebrates the National Fiesta of the Empanada, a famous Argentinean food. Continuing our journey we pass by Acheral and Santa Lucía and climb the slopes between the citrus and sugar plantations. Near to La Quebrada de los Sosa we begin the mountain way and encounter the vast vegetation classic of the Tucumán forests.

We observe places like El Indio, Fin del Mundo, la Heladera. During the climb the vegetation changes significantly. We cease to find the large trees and begin to encounter other species such as alisos, sauces and pines. We then arrive at the La Angostura dam, the door to the valley. We drive for 38 Km. along this beautiful valley beginning at Tafi del Valle, and after by La Banda, El Churqui, San Isidro, Rodeo Grande, Campo Carreras, La Quesería, El Rincón, Potrerillos, El Mollar and La Angostura.

Day 9 - Archeological Ruins of Quilmes – El Cafayate

Breakfast in the hotel. Crossing the Abra and on the way to Ampimpa we can observe the giant cactus to our sides. A natural balcony of the Yocavil or Santa Maria valleys affords a good view of the town, Amaicha del Valle at a few kilometers. In this town live a unique indigenous community of the north east, the diaguita culture who make unique things and is a famous locality for wine in earthenware pots, alfajores, nougats and small cheeses. Furthermore we can visit and explore the pre-Columbian settlements of Fuerte Quemado and el Pucará de Loma Rica, remains that have been well conserved of this town with pebbled walls using a mortar of mud and filled with debris and there you can see some of the diverse elements that they use such as San Jose and San Maria urns and objects of bone and stone.

Also the Pucará de Los Cardones is an archeological site that is conserved naturally. Here we pass trails, rivers, gorges, the dam, amongst other attractive features that we meet. Crossing the river Yocavil we enter to the ruins of the Quilmes, the remains of the biggest pre-Columbian settlement in Argentina. When defeated by the Spanish, the residents were forced to walk thousands of kilometers to Buenos Aires, to a locality that now bears its name. We make a visit to the museum and later to the fortress constructed for this community. We pass El Bañado, Colalao del Valle and continue to the town Tolombón to enter to Cafayate. On the way the countryside changes from arid to vineyards, where we meet the Cafayate soils. We sleep in Cafayate.

Day 10 - Calchaquíes Valleys through Cafayate

Breakfast at the hotel. We will continue our journey from Cafayate, by visiting the Calchaquí Valleys. We will visit the Cathedral "Nuestra Señora del Rosario" which contrast with the multi – coloured hills in the background and then we will cover the most traditional wineries in this beautiful city between valleys and hills of an impressive green colour, which is the most important one in the Calchaquí Valleys because of

its "torrontés" wines above all, an ideal place because of the temperature and humidity to the development of this kind of grape with a sweet and fruited taste, together with their goat cheese. The name of the city was given because of an old native settlement which means "Bury of sorrows or sadness" (Sepultura de las Penas). We will be pleased to taste some wineries' wines. We will continue to visit the Archaeological Museum, a place where there is a great quantity of objects which belonged to native villages. Many people have been investigating, making excavations, restorations and exhibitions about them.

We will be wondered as soon as we watch those rare and eye-catching shapes, going through Quebrada de las Conchas, where we will be able to see figures such as the Devil's Throat (Garganta del Diablo), the Amphitheater (Anfiteatro) a wonderful place where we can perfectly hear the echo of any sound and it is here where many festivals take place, such as the folklore; another shapes are the Obelisk (Obelisco) which makes a lonely crag, the Castles (Castillos) of an intense red colour which reminds the castles in the medieval times, the Yesera with its light sandstone formations, the House of Parrots (Casa de los Loros) named like this because there are stone walls which are the habitat for great flock of parrots during the summer; the friar (Fraile), the toad (Sapo) and the impressive Devil's Throat in Salta, shaped as a human trachea and also called like that because of its colour.

We will make a stop in Alemania, a lonely town, but we cannot miss the visit so we can admire its old country houses between green hills, the train station which doesn't work anymore and now we can see the beautiful work of the craftsmen who invite us to bring a nice souvenir from this town. We will get ready to descend through the valleys. We will get to Dique Cabra Corral, next to Coronel Moldes, an ideal place to practise water sports, then we will go through some towns dedicated to the farming activities such as El Carril, where we will find many stock-tobacco companies and also fig tree, walnut tree and peach tree fields; La Merced, with its clean streets and green spaces which make it so picturesque, and Cerrillos. All these towns belong to Valle de Lerma, where there are treasures which come from mines that were found and they are hidden somewhere between the hills, according to local stories. We will continue to Salta city, going through impressive landscapes that change on every curve we make in wonderful colours like the reddish hills, ochre colour of the grass, grey stones and green cactus. Night in Salta.

Day 11 - Safari to the Clouds – Salinas Grandes – Purmamarca

Breakfast at the hotel. We will get ready to travel on the Train to the Clouds from the city of Salta to Viaducto La Polvorilla, the highest spot in the tour. As we do this crossing on the train, we will see some different towns, valleys, quebradas and stations, such as Cerrillos, Rosario de Lerma, Campo Quijano, where people say hello when the train makes the horn sound. We will arrive at El Alisal, a place named this way because of the landscape which shows us many aliso trees and it is the station where the train makes the first zigzag while it moves back to reach altitude. We continue visiting some other towns like Chorrillos, Puerta Tastil, Incahuasi, Abra Muñaco, Los Patos, then we arrive at San Antonio de los Cobres, a centennial village which is located at the edge of the river with the same name and it offers many legends and natural resources, we will continue to Mina Concordia where we will ascend 4144 metres over the level of the sea, the place where the engine's coach will remove to be put behind and we can come back to Salta city. Our last spot in the tour on the Train to the Clouds is the Viaducto La Polvorilla where we will descend and we will be careful, as an example we will walk slowly because we will be at the highest point and the oxygen reduces itself, so we will be careful not to suffer from "apunarse" (get sick). In some stations, we will be able to get souvenirs that the craftsmen offer us, such as the vicuña poncho, among others.

Breakfast at the hotel. We will tour the road that the Train to the Clouds does, even visiting the Big Salts (Salinas Grandes) to Purmamarca. Campo Quijano will be the first village that we are going to cross, it is a peaceful town in which we have to highlight Las Lomitas Dike, where we are going to get beautiful views of its farms and green hills such as the Arenales river landscape in El Encón, it is a traditional town in the Lerma Valley, very well known for being the entrance door to the Puna, where the Train to the Clouds railway tracks go past.

We will continue our tour going through Río Blanco, which is surrounded by pure nature, we will get to Quebrada del Toro, which stretches to Puerta Tastil, a small precolumbian city which has its higher development in the XIV century and then, it strangely disappeared, in this very same village it appears the Río Blanco again that goes along the way. The prehispanic city of Tastil represents the entrance "door" to Quebrada de las Cuevas, where we will find the archaeological Ruins of Tastil. We will continue by Abra Blanca which is located at 4080 metres over the level of the sea to San Antonio de los Cobres, a small village that is found at 4000 metres over the level of the sea and it is famous because the Pachamama (Madre Tierra) National Festivity takes place there. Besides, it is the best spot in the Train to the Clouds.

We will continue on the Route 40 to the Big Salts (Salinas Grandes), now in Jujuy, which are at 3450 metres over the level of the sea, approximately. These stretch through the Puna Jujeña region. The origin of the salts date from 5 and 10 millions years ago, in which period this salt's basin was covered with water with a great quantity of salts because of the volcanic activity, and little by little, the evaporation of these waters gave rise to this big salt, which is an spectacle to enjoy and it contrast with the sky. We will descend the Cuesta de Lipán and we will get to Purmamarca town, located at the foot of Cerro de los Siete Colores.

Day 12 - Quebrada de Humahuaca

Breakfast at the hotel. Today a full day of history and landscapes will be waiting for us, as we will do the circuit to Quebrada de Humahuaca, where we will visit its prehispanic villages which date from hundred years ago and some are so well kept that they shows us its original buildings and houses, so we can visit and tour closer around them.

In first place, the Quebrada de Humahuaca was declared a Natural and Cultural Heritage Mankind in 2003.

We will start by crossing the Siancas Valley through Gral. Güemes town to tour a sugar cane, tobacco, cotton farming area, among others and we will get to the bordering province of Jujuy and its capital in a valley of 155 kilometres extense, which is surrounded of multicoloured mountains and hills, an arid vegetation area and río Grande. We will get into an area of an amazing variety of brown, green, ocre and reddish tonalities. We will continue to Yala, a summer village which is located in the middle of the mountains, rivers and lagoons, with guest houses and weekend houses, there is also the Potrero de Yala Provincial Park which preserves the Lagunas de Yala (Yala Lagoons) where some birds' species can be watched. We will start ascending the quebrada, going through villages which are kept like the ancient years and they make an unforgettable postal through the landscapes.

We now arrive at Purmamarca, a picturesque town located at the foot of the impressive and unic Cerro de los Siete Colores, which surprise us with its amazing ranges that mixes with the environment tranquility, its vegetation and the blue sky, apart from the hundred ruins of the first villages in the region. We will continue to Maimará, a town which is exactly in the centre of the quebrada, there we will be able to appreciate la Paleta del Pintor (Painter's Palette), with is multicoloured hills which honours its name; Posta de Hornillos where we will find a museum to live and be witnesses of the prehispanic life; we will go to Tilcara, a famous village because of its caves and its small church, which is one of the oldest ones in the area. We will enjoy some regional and exquisite dishes and then, we can do a tour where the

craftsmen are so we can buy some native souvenirs, rustic fabrics made of llama and vicuña, with the company of those kind and thankful people.

Day 13 - La Quiaca - Yavi - Villazón - Jujuy

Breakfast in the hotel. We visit the city and after go Yavi, known for its historic chapel. La Quiaca is on the Bolivian border with its sister Bolivian town of Villazón and they are connected by an international bridge. At the beginning of the 20th century a railroad was built from La Puna to La Quiaca and here it crosses the river Quiaca by a viaduct of three arches.

La Quiaca has developed over time and became important from the middle of the last century. There is an incessant transfer of people from the Altiplano Andino, typified by their puneña clothing. We also visit the Yavi, another important north eastern town due to its historical routes and then cross the bridge to get to know the Bolivian town of Villazón. We will return to San Salvador de Jujuy.

Day 14 - San Salvador de Jujuy - Return to Buenos Aires

Breakfast in the hotel. Transfer to San Salvador de Jujuy 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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