



**Argentinian
Explorer**



ARGENTINA TOURS

SALTA, ATACAMA & UYUNI IN 8 DAYS

An itinerary that goes along the 3 most known attractions in the Northwest of Argentina and the Chilean-Bolivian Andean Altiplano: Salta on board the Train to the Clouds getting to 4.000 metres over the level of the sea to San Antonio de los Cobres and the Calchaquías Valleys visiting Cachi and Cafayate. Then we visit Bolivia with its Uyuni Salt, Incahuasi Island, Colchani which is the entrance to the Salt and its White, Green and Red Lagoons and San Pedro de Atacama with its Altiplanicas Lagoons, the Tatio Geysers and the Altiplano villages.

8 DAYS - 7 NIGHTS

- Double Base accommodation with breakfast according to the selected hotel category
- Transfers detailed itinerary
- Regular excursions listed in the itinerary (except optional)
- Air tickets of cabotage
- Bilingual English Spanish Guide
- Constant coordination

Day 1 - Knowing Salta

Reception and transfer from Salta Airport to the hotel.

We will start our tour along the city from the nice 9 de Julio Square, so eye-catching because of its decorated coloured quarries and its fruited trees which leave a nice fragrance in the salteño air. From the square we will be able to have a first vision of its history and colonial past, as we will be surrounded by old buildings such as the Cabildo, the Cathedral, the Church of San Francisco, the Convent of San Bernardo de las Monjas Carmelitas, one of the oldest buildings in the city which was the entrance door to the convent and it is made of carob wood that was carved by the natives in 1762; its old houses complete the historical quarter, which are today very important monuments.

Then, we will go to the impressive and most recognised hill in the salteña city: Cerro San Bernardo. Before getting to it, we will tour along the streets, getting to Güemes monument, an argentinian general who is known because of its ideals of freedom, dispise to materialism and his love to his Motherland. We will get to San Martín Park where we will find the cable railway station, our means of transport to get to the hill so we can have an amazing panoramic of the city and its surroundings, with the hills at the background.

After the ascent, we will continue to a really charming place, which is chosen by many tourists because of its wonderful natural attractions and the different activities to do: the summer village of San Lorenzo, where we will find the Quebrada, an ideal place to spend the day at the edge of the river, listening its relaxing sounds. We will enjoy our way to it, as we will go through flowered Gardens, mansions and castles which are surrounded by small hills and where we can do (horse) riding, trekking and pic-nic. We will go back to the city, going through the Handmade Market (Mercado Artesanal) first, where we will be able to get some souvenirs from this beautiful city, such as silver and pottery pieces, rustic fabric of llama wool, craftwork in leather, among others.

Day 2 - Safari to the Clouds – Salinas Grandes – Purmamarca

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 3 - Departure to San Pedro de Atacama

Breakfast in the Hotel. will go to the city of San Pedro de Atacama by bus regular by the Paso de Jama. Reception at the bus station of San Pedro of Atacama and transfer to the hotel.

Day 4 - Atacama Desert & Altiplanic Lagoons

Breakfast at the hotel. We will go to Toconao town so we can previously visit this oasis. It is located at 2500 metres over the level of the sea approximately, where the Bell Tower Church (Iglesia Campanario), the Quebrada de Jerez, a place where the old inhabitants have left their marks with cave drawings, also called petroglyphs stresses the most. This town is the entrance door to the Atacama Salt, which is our aim point, that has its origin in a lake of big dimensions under a carpet of salt. Its extension gets up to 100 km approximately.

Once we are there, we will visit the Chaxa Lagoon, located at the edge of the Salt, which is the habitat for many species of flora such as the engrana salada, brea, among others, apart from some animals like the andean and chilean flamingo, andean seagull, playeros de Baird, pequenos, black breast swallow and small tricolour sea chicken. It is a landscape which contrasts with the sky and clouds in a perfect way and they offer us an amazing visual about life in that place. Chaxa Lagoon also belongs to Los Flamencos National Reserve.

Then, we will go around the Salt to get to Socaire, a precolumbian village at 3250 metres over the level of the sea and it is divided into a farm area in terrace, the town and the farmhouses. So, we get to Miñiques and Miscanti altiplanic lagoons while we ascend at 4000 metres over the level of the sea, that is why we are going to be careful so we can enjoy the visit to this amazing lagoons, which were formed a million years ago when the Miñiques Volcano eruption took place. There we will be able to watch flamingos, tagua cornuda, ducks, juar-jual, caiti, guallata goose, ñandu, llamas, guanacos, fox, vizcachas, vicuñas and alpacas. This impressive landscape is surrounded by volcanos and mountain reliefs, where the Miscati and Miñiques hills stresses the most. We will return to San Pedro de Atacama.

Day 5 - Tatio Geysers & High Plain towns

Breakfast at the hotel. We will get up very early in the morning to do our next visit to the Tatio Geysers, in the Tatio Volcano National Reserve, so we can spend the morning enjoying this amazing spectacle. This is the best time because it is when they spout out (between 6 and 7 in the morning) at temperatures that reach 85°C and they can get between 8 and 9 metres high, we will really gaze at this admirable spectacle. These jets (mix of water and steam) are produced when the circulating groundwater comes into contact

with the volcano's magma. They are at more than 4000 metres over the level of the sea and, of course, our visit and tour will take extreme caution and we will see them at a considerable distance.

Later, we will have the opportunity to visit the thermal water pool where we will take advantage of a relaxing bath in these waters, at a 40°C temperature, approximately.

When we return to San Pedro de Atacama, we will do a visit to Machuca town, where we will see its buildings made of mud and brava straw. There are very few people living in the town but they are dedicated to agriculture, cheese production, among other farm activities. The Salada Lagoon is very close to this town, where big communities of flamingos, ducks and seagulls live and offer us a great spectacle together with their beautiful landscapes.

Day 6 - Altiplanic Lagoons: Colorada, Verde & Blanca, Siloli Desert, Arbol de Piedra & Sol de Mañana

We leave San Pedro de Atacama in Chile to go to the Chilean-Bolivian border at Hito Cajón, 4,500 metres, where we take a transfer before going on to San Juan del Rosario, our night time destination. Along the route we pass the Altiplanos lakes, a true show of natural colours commencing with the White lake (laguna blanca), Green lake (laguna verde) and then later the Red lake (laguna colorada). All the lakes are covered with pink flamingos and andino birds.

The lakes are situated in the Eduardo Abaroa National Reserve of Fauna Andina in Potosí and take their colourings from their mineral content. The emerald green lake is produced by the presence of magnesium. The Red lake, which is closest to the Chilean border, is produced by the presence of algae that change from brown to strong red in colour. These lakes are ideal for the breeding of Flamingos because of their mineral content.

The Sol de Mañana is the zone where we come across the Laguna Colorada on the way to the Salar de Chalviri that is at an altitude of 5,000 metres. This region in particular has a lot of volcanic activity with the presence of geysers that are in the craters of lava that are in a state of boiling the water. The geysers give out plumes of water that reach up to 20 metres and are a combination of water and vapour. This landscape seems to take us back to the creation of the land.

On the way we make a point of seeing the 'Arbol de piedra', Stone tree. It is a natural geomorphic formation produced by wind erosion. After, we pass the Siloli Desert famous for its rock formations and considered part of the Atacama Desert and the entrance to the Eduardo Abaroa National Fauna Reserve. We arrive at an altitude of 4,000 and the road becomes one of sand and minerals. Once we arrive at Los Flamencos Ecolodge we relax after the journey.

Day 7 - Incahuasi Island, Uyuni Salt Flat, Colchani & Uyuni

We then visit the Incahuasi Island that is right in the middle of the salt deposits and in the Quechua language is translated as the 'House of the Inca'. We have lunch at the Island restaurant where the tables are made out of salt. Here we can take a trail round the island where we can see many huge cacti that are up to 10 metres of height and experience the sensational cobalt blue skies. We then travel on to San Juan del Rosario where we have dinner and sleep.

We visit the Uyuni Salt Flat. Here we encounter a great plain of salt on the altiplanos where the horizons seem infinite. The salt plains are the largest on earth, an incredible sea of salt that you cannot imagine. It gives the sensation of an unending ice field. At night the stars shine so brilliantly and are reflected on the

plains. Many say there is a fusion of the stars and earth at this point and time stops to hear the sound of the frozen wind. The salt plain covers 25,000 square kilometers and lies at 3,660 metres. All year round the temperature oscillates between -25°C during the night and 20°C during the day generating a altitudal climate with little rain and strong solar radiation.

We also visit Colchani on the edge of the salt plains. Its indigenous population is dedicated to the artisanal extraction of the salt. They live in another dimension of time. Colchani is not a tourist town although the Indians are used to a flow of tourists. There are many ruined and abandoned houses that show the economic effect of its closed railway station.

Day 8 - Uyuni

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the bus terminal in Uyuni to take the bus bound for Potosí. End of the program.

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