



**Argentinian
Explorer**



ARGENTINA TOURS

SAN JUAN & LA RIOJA IN 10 DAYS

A very complete program travelling through the 2 provinces in the Argentine North: San Juan & La Rioja. We discover its best places, the Valle de La Luna (Moon Valley) in Valle Fértil, San Juan and the Talampaya Canyon in the Ischigualasto Provincial Park in La Rioja. We continue visiting the cities of San Juan and La Rioja, we go to Chilecito, in La Rioja we explore the surroundings so as to know the whole region.

10 DAYS - 9 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 - San Juan & its surroundings - The Wine Route of San Juan: Vineyards and wineries

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.

Por la tarde vamos a visitar las bodegas más importantes de la provincia de San Juan, degustaremos algunos de los vinos premiados a nivel mundial, conociendo el proceso de elaboración desde su inicio en la misma tierra hasta su llegada a la mesa de los hogares. Hay dos rutas del vino en San Juan, la ruta sur donde se destacan vinos, champaña y licores, ellas son Viñas de Segisa, Fabril Alto Verde, Miguel Más y Las Marianas. La otra ruta es la oeste, aquí conocemos la historia del vino sanjuanino, sobresalen Bodegas y Museo Santiago Graffigna, Merced del Estero que es una bodega boutique, además de establecimientos para la producción de frutos secos, oliva y aceto.

Day 3 - 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 Alkázár.

Day 4 - North of San Juan: Jáchal, Cuesta del Viento and 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 5 - 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 6 - 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 Ligosuchus 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 7 - 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 8 - 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 9 - 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 10 - La Rioja

Breakfast in the hotel. Transfer to La Rioja 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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