

SAN JUAN, LA RIOJA & CATAMARCA

Ischigualasto + Talampaya + Chilecito + Laguna Brava + Cuesta del Portezuelo

We go to the Valle de la Luna (Moon Valley) in the Ischigualasto Provincial Park and the Cañón del Talampaya (Talampaya Canyon), where we feel we stop in time going to the dinosaurs land, in the Triassic period of the Mesozoic Era. We meet a heavenly place in this region: Laguna Brava and we continue our route towards the Province of Catamarca along the Cuesta del Portezuelo, discovering the northern central region of Argentina.



7 days - 6 nights

- ✓ Accommodation and breakfast - Double Room
- ✓ Transfer IN OUT APT/HTL/APT
- ✓ Regular Tours with Spanish & English Guide
- ✓ Permanent Coordination
- ✓ Tickets to the Provincial Parks

Itinerary



1 San Juan & its surroundings

Reception and transfer from San Juan Airport to 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.



From San Juan to Valle Fértil

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.



Laguna Brava: The natural perfection

Breakfast at the hotel. 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.



We continue along La Rioja, Chilecito & La Rioja Capital

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

La Rioja and its charms

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

Breakfast at the hotel. 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

7

Catamarca

Breakfast at the Hotel. Catamarca Airport or bus station, as appropriate.

End of our services.