



**Argentinian  
Explorer**

## **NORTHWEST ARGENTINA AND CHILE IN 17 DAYS**

From Tucumán making the Grand Tour, Salta with trekking and horseriding, San Pedro de Atacama with the Geysers del Tatio and until Jujuy visiting the Lagunas de Yala.



**17 days - 16 nights**

- ✓ Accommodation and breakfast- Double Room
- ✓ Transfer IN OUT APT/HTL/APT
- ✓ Regular and Private Tours with Spanish & English Guide.
- ✓ Permanent Coordination

### **Itinerary**

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#### **Buenos Aires – Tucumán**

We will be transferred from Ministro Pistarini (Ezeiza) International Airport to Jorge Newbery Metropolitan local Airport (Aeroparque) in Buenos Aires city to take the flight to San Miguel de Tucumán city. Reception and transfer from Tucumán's Airport to the hotel.



#### **El Cadillal, Raco, El Siambón, San Javier and Villa Nogués (Grand Tour)**

Breakfast in the Hotel. We leave from the capital of Tucuman to make the Grand Tour, passing localities representative of this interesting province, taking the National Route 9 until we enter Tafi Viejo (Old Tafi). We divert at kilometer 20 to visit the Celestino Gelsi Dam, found in the locality of El Cadillal, and its town, Veraniega. We appreciate the very beautiful adjoining lake of nearly 3,000 acres surrounded by mountains marking the ultimate elevations of the Sierra de Medina (jagged mountain range of Medina). This is an ideal area for adventure sports such as kayaking, aquatic skiing, diving and amongst others, point to point trekking in the jungle or simply to refresh in the hot summer months.

We continue to the towns of Raco and El Siambón, the first, located at 48km from city Tucuman and dates from the 17th century. It is a small picturesque town that has the river Raco running through it and has a club for diverse activities. A few more kilometers and we find El Siambon, another beautiful place know for its gentle green slopes in harmony with the blue skies and pretty houses, here we also find the Benedictine Monastery built in 1955.

After visiting these places we go to the town of San Javier situated some 1150 metres above sea level that beholds a mountain park of the same name and an ideal place to relax amongst this natural beauty or take in other activities such as parapenting, trekking and horse riding. On the way to the park we pass through an attractive residential zone. After, we visit el Cerro San Javier, a special hill top viewpoint where we can also see el Cristo Bendicente, a 28 metre statue. This is followed by a visit to Villa Nogués, another picturesque locality in the middle of the valley amongst zones of yungas jungles that are notable for this region. We then return to San Miguel de Tucumán.



### **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 Tucumán 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.



### **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 María 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 José and San María 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.



### **Calchaquí 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.



#### **Horse riding Potrero Grande – San Lorenzo**

We take a horse by the Finca las Costas passing by places of incredible beauty until we are in the zone of Potrero Grande, which is our objective. Treat yourself to a tranquil region that is far from the city and where the people are dedicated to graze their horses, amongst other activities of the area. The mountain sides are covered with jungles and on our way we encounter many different species of flora such as laurels, walnut trees, bromelias, orchids, huge ferns and climbing plants that integrate to make the landscape so natural. We arrive by crossing the river Potrero that is in a quebrada between the mountains. The horseriding is for a complete day with stops to appreciate the various views and nature.



#### **Trekking to Los Cajones – San Lorenzo**

Breakfast in the hotel. We prepare ourselves for a trekking in San Lorenzo. Our starting point is los Cajones where we then ascend by the quebrada (mountain fissure) to the mountains of the Cordillera Oriental. On our way we can appreciate the dense vegetation of the mountain jungle with huge trees such as the Ceibos, Walnut trees, Cedars, Arrayanes, Alisos together with the ferns, orchids and climbing plants. From here we will have impressive views of the Lerma Valley and the Cordillera Oriental. We arrive at the river Castellanos that falls in the form of cascades and produces water holes that invite those that wish to enjoy a relaxing bath in the fresh water.



#### **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, ocres 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 its 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.



#### **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, aproximately. 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. We will stay in Purmamarca.



#### **Purmamarca- San Pedro de Atacama**

Breakfast at the hotel. We will go to San Pedro De Atacama city by regular bus. Reception at the Bus Station in San Pedro de Atacama and transfer to the hotel.



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### **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, pequenes, 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-juar, 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.

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### **Pukará del Quito & Aldea Arqueológica de Tulo**

Breakfast in the hotel. We spend the morning visiting el Pukará del Quito, la Cordillera de la Sal and the Inca ruins of Catarpe. El Pukará del Quito is close to the town of San Pedro de Atacama and is an example of the strong indigenous culture of the region. The pre Inca fortress was built in a key defensive position on the mountain alongside the river San Pedro with unworked stone excavated from the banks of the river Lipartita and was used to fend off the attacks of the Aymarás indians. It was declared a National Monument in 1982. Quito takes its name from the pre Hispanic agrarian culture of the 'Ayllu de Quito'.

We then go to the ruins of Tulo where we can observe the social system of subsistence and work in the Ayllus community. The archeological village is over 3,000 years old and is well conserved because for many years it was buried in the arena. The village had habitations that were interconnected in the form of a circle and that opened out to a central patio. We return to San Pedro de Atacama at lunchtime.

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### **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.



## **Argentinian Explorer**

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.



### **San Pedro de Atacama - Jujuy**

Breakfast at the hotel. We go from San Pedro de Atacama by regular bus to San Salvador de Jujuy. Reception in the Bus Station in Jujuy and transfer to the hotel.



### **Jujuy - City Tour**

Breakfast in the hotel. In the afternoon we visit the historic remains of the town, including the San Francisco church, the Lavalle Museum, the Government House and the room of the flag. The Government House is a beautiful French style palace. We also pass the old railway station, the artisanal way and the residential areas like the Perales and the old rough streets with large colonial houses and their typical windows and central patios with wells. We finish our excursion in Alto La Viña where we find the Jorge Pasquini López Archeological Museum which has a unique viewpoint where we can enjoy the marvelous landscape that this northern city has.



### **Lagunas de Yala & Termas de Reyes**

Breakfast in the hotel. We journey from San Salvador to the Yala lakes that are some 20km from the city. Here there is an imposing group of six small lakes situated at an altitude of 2000m surrounded by the exuberant green of the alder and pine forests. We ascend by the mountain pass to a trout fishing area. The lakes are in the Provincial Park. Potrero de Yala, and are classed as a Biospheric Reserve that is a protected part of Jujuy and the North East. Yala is an ideal place to practice adventure sports, fishing and ecotourism. This region is part of the Jujuy Valleys and is similar to the National Park of Calilegua. Later we leave Yala to go to Reyes by an isolated very picturesque route where we find the panoramic viewpoint of la Quebrada, a giant mountain fissure.



### **Jujuy - Buenos Aires**

Breakfast at the Hotel. Transfer to San Salvador de Jujuy Airport. Reception at Jorge Newbery Airport (Buenos Aires). Transfer to Ministro Pistarini (Ezeiza) International Airport.