



**Argentinian
Explorer**

SALTA, JUJUY, UYUNI SALT FLAT & ATACAMA DESERT

A journey across the Andean Altiplano travelling from the Northwest of Argentina to Bolivia and Chile completing a unique crossing to the north of Argentina, Atacama Desert and Uyuni Salt Flat



14 days - 13 nights

- ✓ **Accommodation - Double Room with Full Board**
- ✓ **Transfer IN OUT APT/HTL/APT**
- ✓ **Private Tours on 4x4 Trucks with Spanish & English Guide**
- ✓ **Permanent Coordination**

Itinerary



Salta - City Tour

We will move from Ministro Pistarini International Airport in Ezeiza to Aeroparque Metropolitano Jorge Newbery in Buenos Aires to take us flying to the city of Salta. We receive and we will go 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.



Train to the Clouds

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.



Calchaquí Valleys - through Cachi

Breakfast at the hotel. We will do the way around through the Calchaquí Valleys, this time through Cachi, driving between extremely lovely landscapes. During our tour to this charming town, we will be able to see beautiful tourist spots in particular, starting in Quebrada del Escoipe, almost a wild region followed by the homonymous river and it crosses several Bridges until getting to Cuesta del Obispo. This last one is also a nature work, as we start the ascent by a twisted and cornice road, where we will be surrounded by impressive green coloured hills, an indescribable view together with the vegetation, in contrast with the sky. The highest point in this way is Piedra del Molino, to 3348 metres above the level of the sea and, from where we will have a unique panoramic of the Quebrada del Escoipe.

Two kilometres before getting to Piedra del Molino, we will be able to appreciate the sign which says that we are in Los Cardones National Park that protects its vegetation, such as Neblina, Monte, Puna and Alta Montaña bushes. Some fauna like the taruca, vicuña, guanaco, puma, red fox, wild cat, Wessel, quirquincho, condor, carpintero de los cardones, ututo lizard, coral, yarara, among others, are preserved in this national park.

After coming through the highest point, Piedra del Molino, we will arrive at Valle Encantado, a place where shapes and colours are mixed and where the action of the wind and water sculpt the landscapes with curious shapes and reliefs. There we will find a small lagoon and cave paintings. Of course, if we are lucky, we will be able to watch condors flying through the sky. Later on, we will get to a small soft mountainside valley covered of bushes, which is eaten by the cattle, that we are surely going to cross during the tour. If we continue a few kilometres more, we will appreciate an enclosed basin and El Hervidero lagoon, the favorite place to graze by the guanacos. The Tin Tin Straight Line (Recta de Tin Tin) will be another unforgettable spot in our tour as we will watch it along the way we go, as it is a perfect straight line of 18 kilometres, from where we will be able to watch a great quantity of thistles and looking at our right we will see the Tin Tin Hill and at our left we will see the Negro Hill. We will go through this old inca road so we can get to Payogasta where we will be surprised with the red and reddish pepper plantations, now descending to Cachi town, which is located at the base of Nevado Hill between the homonymous river and Calchaquí. There we will go for a walk along the streets watching its dazzled white buildings, its houses made of adobe and paving streets, but the town stresses more because of its kindness and warm contact that the local people give. We will return to Salta in the afternoon.



Salta - Jujuy

Breakfast in the hotel. We will leave from the city of Salta to San Salvador de Jujuy. 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.



Salinas Grandes, Purmamarca, Quebrada de Humahuaca, Tilcara

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 Jujena 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 sleep in Tilcara.



Walking with Llamas in Tilcara

Breakfast in the hotel. This begins a special day because we encounter the llamas. The llama is a true companion of the local peasants. They are used, like donkeys, to transport goods across the puna, valleys and the jungles. In Tilcara they use a system of 'positive stimulation' to tame them and this results in them becoming docile and perfectly domesticated.

Called the 'camel of the heights', the llama became a sacred animal for distinct ancient cultures and was an emblem of richness or nobleness. It is identified with Jujuy and its cultural legacy. Here we can go walking to rural houses and panoramic points to enjoy visiting the local inhabitants and experience the spectacular views. Also we will be able to perceive the ancestral wisdom that the Jujuy men incorporate in whichever cultural activity they realize. In the afternoon we begin our trip to La Quiaca following the rest of La Quebrada de Humahuaca to arrive at the extreme northwest of Argentina.



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La Quiaca - Yavi - Villazón - Uyuni

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. From Villazón, depending on which day, we either catch the Southern Express Train or the Southern Wara Wara train in executive class to pass by Torpiza and Atocha until finally reaching our destination Uyuni at night.

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Uyuni Salt Flat - Colchani - Isla Incahuasi - San Juan del Rosario

Breakfast in the hotel. 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 altitudinal 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.

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.

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San Juan del Rosario - Villa Alota, Valle de los Sapos, Aldea de Villamar

Breakfast in the hotel. We take the road to Aldea de Villamar where we pass by Alota and Valle de los Sapos which is famous for its rocky formations. The towns have been restored to their original state using minerals of the zone. We have dinner and stay in Villamar.

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Villamar - Altiplanic Lagoons - San Juan del Rosario

Breakfast in the hotel. We travel to Hito Cajón at an altitude of 4500 metres on the Bolivian Chilean border where we wait for a transfer to finish our day in San Pedro de Atacama. 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 5,0000 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 takes 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 San Pedro we relax after the journey.



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 Ayllu 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.



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, peques, 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,



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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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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.

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San Pedro de Atacama – Salta

Breakfast at the hotel. We go from San Pedro de Atacama by regular bus to Salta. In the afternoon we will take the flight to Buenos Aires. End of Services.