SAN JUAN & LA RIOJA

San Juan + Ischigualasto /Valle de La Luna + Talampaya + Chilecito + La Rioja

Two provinces to discover: San Juan & La Rioja. We leave aside the traditional programs offered to conventional tourism to travel to the west-central Argentina with the Cañón del Talampaya and the Valle de la Luna as objectives, apart from going through San Juan and its surroundings, La Rioja, Chilecito, etc.

6 days - 5 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

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day 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.

day 2 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.

day 3 We leave the Valle de La Luna to go to Talampaya, 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 Lagosuchus 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 dinousaurs´ pawprints are found. The return journey to San Juan is through the majestic Cuesta de Huaco.

day 4 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 sillouette 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 La Rioja

Breakfast at the Hotel. Transfer to the airport of La Rioja or bus station, as appropriate.

End of our services.