

Iconic Journey

Puna & Atacama Experience



Socompa

ADVENTURE TRAVEL
ESTABLISHED 2004

Travel Itinerary

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The natural environment of the Argentine Northwest is among the most wonderful in the world : streams that represent the gateway to the sacred mountains of the Andes, surrounded by an exuberant yungas jungle and bordered to the west by the imposing high-altitude desert that, in Argentina, is called Puna. These lands, which are still inhabited today by natives of the American continent, preserving their traditions and culture, will connect you again with the transcendental.

Itinerary Day by Day

Day 1: Salta | Uquía | Humahuaca | Hornocal | Tilcara | Purmamarca (L)

Distance: 320 km paved road. 70 km gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.300 m./ 14.108 feet. Purmamarca 2.192 m. / 7.192 feet

Estimated driving time: 6 hs

The Humahuaca Gorge is a large valley that ends at the border with Bolivia and it is located in the province of Jujuy in the far north of Argentina. It is quite a young Valley, given that its formation dates a million years old. The Gorge is famous for its colourful mountains, its geological formations and its historical villages. During our visit we will have the best place to feel the real atmosphere of this part of Argentina: the Humahuaca Market, a walk in the Colorado's Gorge, a sacred garden of Cardones at 3200 meters, the impressive Serranías del Hornocal and the Pucara of Tilcara – a pre-Inca fortress. We will also visit the villages of Tilcara, Humahuaca and Purmamarca with their typical artisanal markets.

Day 2: Purmamarca | Cuesta de Lipan | Salinas Grandes | Susques | Paso de Jama| San Pedro de Atacama (B|L)

Distance: 430 km paved road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.700 m./15.420 feet. San Pedro de Atacama 2.475 m. / 8.120 feet.

Estimated driving time: 6 hs

A fantastic drive on a perfectly paved road will guide us across the Andes, through dry salted lakes, volcanoes, groups of wild vicunas, and the infinity of the Puna Plateau. Visit



to the Salinas Grandes, a salt mirror covering more than 30,000 acres and the old capital of the Puna, Susques and its 1598-built Church. We will cross the border to Chile at Jama Pass. At sunset, we will arrive at San Pedro de Atacama, after a 50 km straight downhill with a view over the Atacama Desert and the perfect cone-shaped Licancabur Volcano, the real Master of the Region.

Important Note: *Since we operate many of our tours in remote high altitude areas itineraries may be subject to change due to weather and road conditions or any other conditions of an operational nature throughout the year (such as: snow fall, heavy rain, strong winds, etc.), especially in places higher than 4000 meters. As such we reserve the right to alter, and/or cancel any section and/or parts of the itinerary which may result from conditions beyond our control.*

Day 3: San Pedro de Atacama | Full Day Tour to Geysers del Tatio | Sunset in Valle de la Luna| San Pedro de Atacama (B|L)

Distance: 30 km paved road. 190 km gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.200 m./13.780 feet. San Pedro de Atacama 2.475 m. / 8.120 feet.

Estimated driving time: 5 hs

A very early departure will take us to the Geyser del Tatio. El Tatio Geyser Field (locally known as Los Geysers del Tatio) is located within the Andes Mountains of northern Chile at 4,200 meters. With over 80 active geysers, El Tatio is the largest geyser field in the southern hemisphere and the third largest field in the world. There, you will be participating in one of the most astonishing phenomena produced by nature and see contrasting colors produced by the steam columns in the highest geothermal field in the world. You will walk across the tracks over the geothermal field.

Return to San Pedro de Atacama for a rest and in the afternoon we will see the sunset on the mountains of the Andes and on the Moon Valley on the outskirts of the village. Valle de la Luna is an area of stone and sand geological formations. It was declared a Natural Sanctuary and is also part of Los Flamencos Reserve, a protected zone. A place of desolation where the wind has sculpted mounds and ravines of salt, clay and gypsum. There is no life in this valley and no humidity; it is the most inhospitable place on the planet. We will have time to visit the Tres Marias (Three Marias), rocky mounds formed by erosion, la Mina de Sal Victoria (mine), where you can take a short walk of 15-20 mins, and also take a walk around the Valle de la Luna, and climb the Duna Mayor



(dune of 2600m), from where you can see the sunset. For those who aren't keen on walking, instead of climbing the dune, there is another option of leaving the Valle de la Luna and travelling in vehicle to the Mirador del Coyote (Viewpoint), also part of the reserve from which you can also see the sunset.

Day 4: San Pedro de Atacama | Lagunas Miscanti & Miniques | Paso de Sico | Pocitos | Desierto del Laberinto | Tolar Grande (B|L|D)

Distance: 110 km paved road. 250 km gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.600 m./15.092 feet. Tolar Grande 3.500 m. / 11.483 feet.

Estimated driving time: 6/7 hs

Today will probably be one of the most intense days of the whole Trip. Following one of the ancient routes made by llama's caravans trading goods between the Oases of the Puna, we'll drive to Sico Pass. Miscanti & Miniques lagoons offer one of the most famous scenes, with dark blue water, cobalt sky, flamingos and sacred Volcanoes. Back in the Argentine Plateau, the landscape will completely change. The labyrinth Desert, a fossil dunes desert, made by clay and gypsum crystals, is the only maritime sediment deposit of the Puna. This area is actually studied for its similarities to other planets' physical characteristics (Planetary Geology). Arrival to the tiny village of Tolar Grande, one of the most remote places on earth.

Note: Since we operate many of our tours in remote high altitude areas itineraries may be subject to change due to weather and road conditions or any other conditions of an operational nature throughout the year (such as: snow fall, heavy rain, strong winds, etc.), especially in places higher than 4000 meters. As such we reserve the right to alter, and/or cancel any section and/or parts of the itinerary which may result from conditions beyond our control.

Day 5: Tolar Grande | Cono de Arita | Oasis de Antofallita & Antofalla | Antofagasta de la Sierra | El Peñón (B|L|D)

Distance: 340 km earth track and salt road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.500 m./ 14.764 feet. El Peñón 3.400 m. / 11.155 feet.

Estimated driving time: 7 hs.

The crossing of the Arizaro Salted dry lake resembles the ancient journey of the *Arrieros* (shepherds guiding caravans of animals to Chile). Arizaro, meaning *Vultures Cemetery*, comes from a period when many animals (cows and horses) perished during the



crossing of the salt flat. Antofalla is an important and spectacular example of a Puna Oasis; in the middle of a high altitude desert there is a green valley, thanks to a natural pure water spring, full of Poplar, Molle and Willow trees. Antofalla, together with Antofagasta and Santa Rosa, were important stations for Llama caravans connecting this part of the Andes with the Oasis of Atacama. The Oasis is located just at the border of the longest salt flat in the world, among red mountains and lava strips. Antofalla is still inhabited by a tiny community of 60 people, they are all shepherds. We will stop for lunch, and then travel across the colored mirror of the salt lake. Above 4.200 meters with wide views over the Antofalla Volcano (6.400 mts) lays a kind of green field (Vega Colorada) home of llamas, suris (Andean ostrich), wild donkeys and vicuñas. The valley of Calalaste, just a few kilometers away from Vega Colorada is the best spot to find wild camelids. Antofagasta de la Sierra, was the biggest Oasis on the path connecting this side of the Andes with the Oasis of San Pedro de Atacama (Chile), it is a big village with more than 2.000 people who maintain their ancient traditions and culture. The name Antofagasta means "place where the sun shines" and it is surrounded by uncountable Volcanic Peaks

Day 6: El Peñón | Volcán & Laguna Carachi Pampa | Campo de Piedra Pómez | Dunas Blancas | El Peñón (B|L|D)

Distance: 130 km of earth, gravel and salt tracks.

Altitude: Highest point 4.200 m./ 13.780 feet. El Peñón 3.400 m. / 11.155 feet.

Estimated driving time: 7 hs.

Our adventure starts today at the edge of Campo de Piedra Pómez, as we reach the Carachi Pampa basin, in its margins there is a Volcano of the same name, surrounded by black lava fields and a lagoon, where the Andean flamingo, and the James' (or puna) flamingo can be found. During the dry season a small salt lake is formed around the lagoon. Later, our journey will continue into the Natural Reserve *Campo de Piedra Pómez*, a strange and stunning landscape carved into the rock that gives rise to its name: The Pumice. Of purely igneous origin, it was produced from a massive explosion of the volcanic stratum, this explosion was so powerful that if one could have seen it, it would be similar to the mushroom cloud produced by a nuclear bomb. This cloud has spread the ashes and debris in large areas and in different directions, which crystallized by the effects of the temperature giving shape to these wonderful rocks with special features and with plenty of holes produced by the escape of gasses during the chilling stage. This degassing phenomenon made the rock very easy to carve by the winds of



the Puna, arid and harsh winds that move freely through the region, becoming the best and most prominent Andean rock sculptors.

This strange landscape of white labyrinths and climbing sand dunes is located a few miles to the west, on a track where the path continues through some sand that we could describe as the dream of the explorer, an overlanding adventure. Return to the Hotel, just on time to enjoy stunning sunset views from the village.

Day 7: El Peñón | FD Cerro Galán Caldera & Laguna Diamante (B|L|D)

Option A: El Peñón | Antofagasta de la Sierra | Campo Las Tobas | Real Grande | Laguna Diamante | Cerro Galán Caldera | Laguna Grande | El Peñón

Season: from October to April

Distance: 120 km dirt path and gravel road, 60 km paved road (El Peñón-Antofagasta)

Altitude: Highest point 5.000 m./ 16.404 feet. El Peñón 3.400 m. / 11.155 feet.

Estimated driving time: 8 hs.

With an early start, we will drive in direction to Antofagasta de la Sierra as we enter the región of Real Grande (4050 meters), where traces of the first settlements of the Puna can be found in ancient petroglyphs, dated 10000 B.P. and entrance point to Cerro Galán Caldera from the Northwest.

Cerro Galán, is one the world's largest volcanic calderas and greatest of the Andes Mountains, its dimensions are 34 km from north to south and 24 km from east to west, and it is the result of an extreme plinian eruption that occurred 2.2 million years ago. Its identification as a volcanic caldera was performed using satellite photographs, since its elliptical shape is too large to be able to be appreciated from the ground. Its walls reach 5,000 meters of altitude and the central peak 5,912 meters, while its floor is at 4,500 meters of altitude. The Caldera contains a lake in its south western corner, known as Laguna Diamante, which is home to flamingos and ducks, protected from the wind by the walls, in this extremely harsh environment.

Our path will lead us to another high altitude Andean lake, known as Laguna Grande Reserve, a saline lake that sits at an altitude of 4150 meters. During winter, the water freezes completely, but when spring arrives, it becomes the largest gathering center of the Puna flamingo birds, also called Small Parina (*Phoenicopterus jamesi*), with more than 19,000 birds (25% of the known total population). It is also a place for summer congregation for the Andean flamingo (*Phoenicopterus andinus*) and it is a common



nesting site of Southern flamenco (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*). We will drive to El Peñón with the perfect warm light of sunset.

Option B: El Peñón | Laguna Grande | Cerro Galán Caldera | Laguna Diamante | El Peñón

Season: from May to September

Distance: 150 km dirt and gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.750 m./ 15.584 feet. El Peñón 3.400 m. / 11.155 feet.

Estimated driving time: 8 hs.

Our path will lead us first, to a high altitude Andean lake, known as Laguna Grande Reserve, a saline lake that sits at an altitude of 4150 meters. During winter, the water freezes completely, but when spring arrives, it becomes the largest gathering center of the Puna flamingo birds, also called Small Parina (*Phoenicopterus jamesi*), with more than 19,000 birds (25% of the known total population). It is also a place for summer congregation for the Andean flamingo (*Phoenicopterus andinus*) and it is a common nesting site of Southern flamenco (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*). Cerro Galán, is one the world's largest volcanic calderas and greatest of the Andes Mountains, its dimensions are 34 km from north to south and 24 km from east to west, and it is the result of an extreme plinian eruption that occurred 2.2 million years ago. Its identification as a volcanic caldera was performed using satellite photographs, since its elliptical shape is too large to be able to be appreciated from the ground. Its walls reach 5,000 meters of altitude and the central peak 5,912 meters, while its floor is at 4,500 meters of altitude. The Caldera contains a lake in its south western corner, known as Laguna Diamante, which is home to flamingos and ducks, protected from the wind by the walls, in this extremely harsh environment. We will drive back to El Peñón with the perfect warm light of sunset.

Day 8: El Peñón | Hualfín | Santa María | Quilmes | Cafayate (B/L)

Distance: 250 km paved road. 50 km gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.000 m./13.123 feet. Cafayate 1.683 m. / 5.522 feet.

Estimated driving time: 5 hs

After days of intense travel on the High Desert Plateau, the North West still has plenty of surprises. The paved road from El Peñón to meet Route 40 is a 150 km long yellow field of Paja Brava, white lagoons and a deserted narrow canyon filled with rich vegetation.



We will visit the Quilmes Ruins, probably the most interesting Pre Inca Archeological site with a dramatic story that gave an end to this ancient population. Arrival and overnight at the pleasant village of Cafayate and its green vineyards.

Day 9: Cafayate | Quebrada de las Conchas | Quebrada de las Flechas | Molinos (B|L)

Distance: 100 km paved road. 90 km gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 2.300 m./7.546 feet. Molinos 2.020 m. / 6.627 feet.

Estimated driving time: 5 hs

Cafayate will be a perfect place to visit a winery since it is the capital of the Northern wines, most famous for its "Torrontés" variety of white wine. We'll visit the Quebrada de las Conchas gorge, 55 km of scenic sediment rocks formations dated from 40 to a hundred millions years, with geological formations as the Yacoraité or the Pirguas with great importance. The Ruta 40 is one of the most famous and longest roads in the world. The route between Cafayate and La Paya passes through desert scenarios, small ranches of local *campesinos*, vineyards and giant colored mountains. The Quebrada de las Flechas is a desert of Quartz ashes and rocks covered by the mud of an ancient lake, the result of 500 million years of geological history.

Day 10: Molinos | Cachi | Los Cardones National Park | Cuesta del Obispo | Salta (B|L)

Distance: 122 km paved road. 81 km gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 3.457 / 11.342 feet. Salta 1.200 m. / 3.937 feet.

Estimated driving time: 4 hs

The road from Molinos to Salta is one of the most scenic drives in NW Argentina. We'll travel through four different ecosystems; from the green Yungas Forest to a semi-deserted dry valley. 50 km will take us from Piedra del Molino Pass at 3.457 meters down to Salta's Valle de Lerma at 1.200 meters: condors flying in the dark blue sky, guanacos and wild donkeys between thousands of Cardones - the local protected species of giant cactus. Time to stroll around and have a short walk in a small colored desert, rarely visited in the Cardones National Park.

End of our services.

The Itinerary is subject to weather conditions in the region to be visited, to flight schedule changes, roadblocks or any other unforeseen circumstances. In any of these



cases last minute changes may take place in order to ensure a safe trip. Any expenses derived from these situations of force majeure must be paid by the passenger.

Food references: | B: Breakfast | L: Lunch |D: Dinner

The Tour Includes



Accommodation

1 Night in Manantial del Silencio Hotel or similar

2 Nights in Hotel Altiplanico www.altiplanico.cl or **Similar**

1 Night in Hosteria Casa Andina www.casa-andina.com.ar

Casa Andina is a small 6-bedroom Hotel managed by the local community of Tolar Grande. All the rooms have private bathrooms and the facilities are comfortable and clean. The Hosteria does not include breakfast service; it has a common seating area, with a coffee maker and electric kettle to prepare tea at any time.

3 Nights in [Hostería de Altura El Peñón](#)

The Hostería is an 8-bedroom small Lodge. The rooms are spacious, all of them with private bathroom, comfortable bed ware of pure cotton. The Hosteria offers restaurant services, Wi-Fi Internet connection (Satellite) and heating provided by stoves (wood).

1 Night in Viñas de [Cafayate Wine Resort](#)

1 Night in [Hacienda de Molinos](#)



Notes:

1. *Breakfast is included in every hotel, except Casa Andina (Tolar Grande); in this case it will be served in a local restaurant.*
2. *Accommodation in Standard Category, upgrade can be quoted upon request.*
3. *Accommodation in these properties is subject to availability. If there is no availability, we will propose options of the same category.*
4. *As an alternative, if there is no availability in Casa Andina (only hotel in town), there are Family Homes that receive guests and there is also a Refuge with shared bedrooms.*



Included Meals

- Day 1: Lunch in a restaurant.
- Day 2: Breakfast at the Hotel. Lunch in a restaurant.
- Day 3: Breakfast in Geysers del Tatio. Lunch in a restaurant.
- Day 4: Breakfast at the Hotel. Box Lunch. Dinner in a restaurant.
- Day 5: Breakfast in a local restaurant. Box Lunch. Dinner in a restaurant.
- Day 6: Breakfast in a local restaurant. Box Lunch. Dinner at the Hotel.
- Day 7: Breakfast at the Hotel. Lunch in the Hotel or Box Lunch. Dinner at the Hotel.
- Day 8: Breakfast at the Hotel. Surprise Lunch.
- Day 9: Breakfast at the Hotel. Lunch.
- Day 10: Breakfast at the Hotel. Lunch

Notes:

1. *Soft drinks are included with every meal.*
2. *In the Puna the provision of supplies is limited, so the meals are mostly based on local products.*
3. *Please be patient with the timing for the services.*





Entrance Fees

- Entrance fee to Pucará de Tilcara Archeological site (Tilcara)
- Entrance fee to Hornocal Viewpoint (Humahuaca)
- Entrance fee to Geyser Tatio & Moon Valley (Atacama)
- Entrance fee Laguna Miscanti & Miniques Natural Reserve. (Atacama).
- Entrance fee to Pumice Stone Field Natural Reserve (Catamarca).
- Entrance Fee to Quilmes Ruins Archeological site (Tucumán)



Logistical Support

Pick up 4WD vehicle of Socompa comprising of:

- Professional guide/driver.
- Permits for passenger's transportation.
- Insurance for transported passengers and drivers..
- Water (1 ½ liters per day per person) and snacks on board.
- Special equipment for overland trips (first aid kit, satellite communication, extra tools, fuel and extra tyre).
- 24/7 Logistics support from the Salta office with daily monitoring.
- Oxygen tube.

About the Puna

Because of its altitude (the Puna is on average 3,500 / 3,700 m) the Puna is in contact with rare layers of the atmosphere. When the share of gas in the air changes, the human body manages the new environmental situation, compensating the lower presence of oxygen with a rapid breathing, to provide more air into the lungs, and a faster heart rate to pump more blood and oxygenate more. All of this can cause some



agitation and a feeling of lack of oxygen. In addition, the altitude causes a substantial difference in air pressure. A person at sea level is below a column of air equivalent to a difference of almost 4,000 meters with respect to the same person in the Puna.

Therefore, these conditions require special attention during our trips, when spending one or more nights in the Puna. It is particularly important:

- Travel to the Puna only after a period of rest in Salta (one day is fine), and avoid traveling under physical or mental fatigue;
- Hydrate continuously during the trip;
- Keep your eating habits; avoid eating or drinking in excess, before and during the journey;
- Important: follow instructions from our guide;
- Our trips with an itinerary of one or more nights in Puna are particularly unadvised to people with cardiovascular problems or with high / low blood pressure for safety reasons.



Suggested packing list

- Water bottle (1lt) to avoid the use of plastic bottles for mineral water. Our guide will make sure to refill your bottle whenever necessary. All year round!
- Sunblock and sunglasses (protection against UV) All year round!
- Hat. All year round!
- Gloves (made of wool or similar material). All year round!



- Winter clothes (in autumn/winter (May to August), clothes must be reinforced: winter jacket, sweatshirts, polar long-sleeve shirt, scarf, etc.). All year round!
- Windproof Jacket (it's important because the area is windy). All year round!
- Warm socks (made of wool or cotton). All year round!
- Trekking shoes (comfortable). All year round!
- Moisturizing cream. All year round!
- A thermal suit is advisable (the clothes under layer type). In Austral autumn/winter (May to August).



Passenger Information Form

- All passengers must fill in the Information Form and it is compulsory for them to inform about health conditions and/or any other relevant information regarding health. The form must be sent through email before the departure date.



VAT Refund Regulations (Applies to accommodation and breakfast only)

1. This quote is only valid if guests are eligible for the VAT reimbursement benefit.
2. The VAT Refund benefit is exclusive for foreign visitors with proven residence outside Argentina. A copy of each passport is required to confirm reservations. If the country of residence is different from the country of citizenship please confirm details by email. Bookings with no passports provided will be re-quoted to add the applicable VAT rate.



3. When passports are not provided at time of booking, the accommodations with breakfast will be re-quoted to include applicable VAT (currently 21 %) to be collected with payment.
4. VAT Refund applies only to accommodation and breakfast (if included in the room rate). Other services provided by the hotel are excluded from the VAT Refund policy.
5. VAT Refund will not be applicable in the event of cancellation fees or no-shows charges.

General Conditions

1. All services were quoted as per the itinerary above described; the rates are Net, expressed in US Dollars and include Taxes (VAT).
2. The accommodation does not include early check in or late check out.
3. The itinerary proposed can be modified according to changes in flight schedules or weather conditions in the area to be visited.
4. The rates do not include air fares.
5. Extras and tips of any kind are not included in the rate
6. The meals included in the itinerary include one soft drink. Alcoholic Beverages are not included.
7. The rates are subject to modification due to changes in the policies of our suppliers or due to unforeseen circumstances.
8. For tours on the 25th December or 1st January there is an extra fee of USD 100.- per tour and per guide.

Cancellation Policy

1. Cancellation 7 days before departure: 100% penalty for services provided directly by Socompa. As for the accommodation and rent a car services, the penalty amount will be informed according to the cancellation policy of each local supplier.
2. Cancellation 15 days to 8 days before departure: 50% penalty for services provided directly by Socompa. As for the accommodation and rent a car services, the penalty amount will be informed according to the cancellation policy of each local supplier.
3. Cancellation 16 days or more before departure: 25% penalty for services provided directly by Socompa. As for the accommodation and rent a car services, the



penalty amount will be informed according to the cancellation policy of each local supplier.

4. **Important:** VAT Refund benefit will not be applicable in case of cancellation or no-show fees and charges. If cancellation is subject to charges, the VAT tax will be calculated and invoiced at the time of receiving the cancellation.