

Iconic Journey

El Peñón Desert Adventure




Socompa

ADVENTURE TRAVEL
ESTABLISHED 2004

Travel Itinerary

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The small village of El Peñón is located in the heart of the unbelievably beautiful Argentine Puna (Andean High Altitude Desert). Is the perfect base to explore wonders like Laguna Grande where thousands of flamingos meet in spectacular surroundings, as well as towering dunes, the vaste Natural Reserve Pumice Stone Field (Campo de Piedra Pomez), the Oasis of Antofalla inhabited by 60 people along one of the most important Salt Flats of South America. The village is also strategically located to go on expeditions to the remote Galán Vulcano and the stunning Peinado Volcano & Lake regions among other hidden gems of the Andean Mountains.



Itinerary Day by Day

Día 1: Salta | Quebrada de las Conchas | Cafayate | Santa Maria | Hualfín | El Peñón (A)

Distance: 440 km paved road. 50 km of gravel.

Altitude: Max 4.100 m. Altitude in El Peñon 3.400 m..

Estimated driving time: 7 hs.

To start the day, we will cross the imposing Quebrada de las Conchas, also declared a natural heritage of Humanity is a 65 km canyon of sedimentary rock formations from the Mesozoic and Cenozoic eras (90-60 million years). The characteristic red color derives from the presence of ferric oxide in its mineral deposits. The name of the Shells derives from the abundant amount of fossil colonies of seashells, fish and mollusks, testimony to the humid tropical climate that dominated the area in remote times. Then we will travel through the desert highlands of the Puna. A path of 150 km, which goes uphill between imposing landscapes in the land of the highest volcanoes in the world. At the height of the highest mountain pass of the route, we will find an immense sand dune. We will arrive at the small Oasis del Peñón and in the distance to the left the Campo de Piedra Pómez. Night at the Hosteria de Altura El Peñón.

Day 2: El Peñón | Volcán y 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 3: 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 4: El Peñón | Quebrada de Calalaste | Oasis de Antofalla | Ojos del Campo | 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.



Its name derives from the native Kunza language and means village where the sun dies. Getting to it from EL Peñón involves climbing the mountains to the Abra de los Colorados at 4,667 masl along a road that was only opened in 1989. The largest Oasis in the Puna, the Salar de Antofalla is the longest in the world, its width never exceeds 12 kilometers. The extreme southeast of the Salar de Antofalla is a hyperarid place with extraordinary tertiary salt formations that can be reached from Antofagasta de la Sierra or from Salta territory following the Arizaro salt flat south. It is one of the most inhospitable and inaccessible places in the Argentine Puna. The salt flat nestled between the Sierras de Antofalla and Calalaste, the latter has an infinity of unique colors, has an average altitude of 4,210 meters, the maximum being 6,227 and the minimum 3,270. Within this there is a formation of lagoons called "Ojos de Campo" among them there is one that contains reddish waters. There is also an area of hot springs, including the isolated Botijuelas hot springs. The local community is open to tourism and they provide a homemade lunch and homestays to experience life in one of the most remote corners of the globe. Return to El Peñón with the stunning sunset colors of the andean mountains.

Day 5: El Peñón | Salar del Hombre Muerto | Pocitos | San Antonio de los Cobres | Quebrada del Toro | Salta (B|L)

Distance: 150 km of paved road. 280 km gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.300 m./ 14.107 feet. Salta 1.200 m. / 3937 feet.

Estimated driving time: 8 hs.

This day is a true Andean crossing, from the Puna of Catamarca, through the Puna of Salta to the Quebrada del Toro. Leaving the oasis of Antofagasta behind, we will tour the area of the Salar del Hombre Muerto and its Laguna Verde, an important nucleus in the extraction of Lithium. After crossing the salt flat we go to another, that of Pocitos, its multicolored colors will accompany us for 70 km until the junction of the RP27, we take it to the east, passing through the junction of Cauchari, its old town and Olacapato station. The Chorrillos pass (4,560 m) brings us to San Antonio de los Cobres, one of the towns with the longest mining tradition and the most inhabited in the entire Puna. The last part of the trip will take us to visit the Quebrada del Toro, the History of the C-14 Branch and its works of Art. A mixture of landscapes, colors and railway architecture accompany us to the Lerma Valley and the City of Salta.

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.

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

The Tour Includes



Accommodation

4 Nights in Hostería de Altura El Peñón www.hosteriaelpenon.com

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

Important note:

- 1. Accommodation in Hostería El Peñón is subject to availability. If there is no availability, we will propose options or a change of dates.*



Included meals

- Day 1: Lunch in a local restaurant. Dinner at the Hotel.
- Day 2: Breakfast at the Hotel. Box Lunch during the tour. Dinner at the Hotel.
- Day 3: Breakfast at the Hotel. Box Lunch during the tour. Dinner at the Hotel.
- Day 4: Breakfast at the Hotel. Lunch in Antofalla village. Dinner at the Hotel.
- Day 5: Breakfast at the Hotel. Lunch at a local restaurant or box 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

- Pumice Stone Field



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.

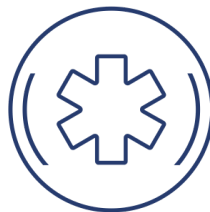
Therefore, these conditions require special attention during our trips, when spending one or more nights in the Puna. It is particularly important:

- 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 exclusively unadvised to people with cardiovascular problems and people with high / low blood pressure.



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.