

Iconic Journey

# Noa & Puna Experience



**Socompa**

ADVENTURE TRAVEL  
ESTABLISHED 2004

**Travel Itinerary**

+54 387 4315974  
info@socompa.com  
www.socompa.com





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 | Cuesta del Obispo | Cachi | Molinos (L)**

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

*Altitude:* Highest point 3.457 m. / 11.342 feet. Molinos 2.020 m / 6.627 feet

*Estimated driving time:* 4 hs

The road between Salta and Molinos is one of the most spectacular paths of the Argentinean Northwest. We will travel through four different ecosystems, from the green jungle of the yungas forest to the arid desert of the Calchaquí Valley. 33km of mountain will bring us closer to Paso Piedra del Molino at 3.457 meters: condors flying in the blue sky, guanacos and wild burros among thousands of cardones, the local species of giant cactus. We will have time for a walk in Los Colorados red desert, rarely visited and a moment to relax under a cozy molle tree in the white colonial village of Cachi, where the sun shines almost all year round. We will spend the night in the historical hotel, Hacienda de Molinos.

#### **Day 2: Molinos | Angastaco | Quebrada de las Flechas | Cafayate | Quebrada de las Conchas | Cafayate (B/L)**

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

*Altitude:* Highest point 2.300 m./ 7.546 feet. Cafayate 1.683m. / 5.522 feet.

*Estimated driving time:* 5 hs.

Route 40 is one of the most famous and longest routes in the world. Between the towns of Molinos and Cafayate we will find many little villages populated by local winemakers and farmers, we will drive across the *Quebrada de las Flechas*, a desert formed by dust



of limestone and quartz, eroded by wind and water creating the shape of thousands of Arrow Peaks. Cafayate is the perfect place for lunch or to visit a traditional winery. Just before the sunset with the best lights of the day, we will explore the Conchas' Gorge: a deep ravine built in the last 50 million years with huge deposits of minerals (clay and sandstone in particular) molded by water and wind that comes from an age when the region was dominated by a humid and warm climate with animals such as turtles and crocodiles.

**Day 3: Cafayate | Quilmes | Hualfin | El Peñón (B|L|D)**

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

*Altitude: Highest point 4.050 m./13.287 feet. El Peñón 3.400 m. / 11.155 feet.*

*Estimated driving time: 5 hs.*

Following Route 40 in direction to the south, we will explore one of the most deserted regions of Argentina. In the morning we'll visit the archeological site of Quilmes, probably the most interesting Pre Inca Ruins of NW Argentina, with a dramatic history that gave an end to its ancient population. After Hualfin, the road will start to climb to reach the Desert Plateau called Puna. Between groups of vicuñas, giant white sand dunes, volcanos and lagoons, we will reach the Oasis of El Peñón, our starting point for tomorrow's excursions. El Peñón is a small village at 3.400 meters, where 200 people, mostly shepherds live and work. It is one of the last authentic Puna villages, with water and green grass (Vega) that allows the grazing of llamas, goats and sheep. Night at Hosteria de Altura de El Peñón.





**Day 4: 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 5: El Peñón | Antofagasta de la Sierra | Quebrada de Calalaste | Vega Colorada | Oasis Antofalla & Antofallita | Cono de Arita | Tolar Grande (B|L|D)**

Distance: 340 km earth track and salt road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.500 m./ 14.764 feet. Tolar Grande 3.500 m. / 11.483 feet

Estimated driving time: 7 hs.

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. The valley of Calalaste, just a few kilometers away from Vega Colorada is the best spot to find wild camelids. Above 4.200 meters with wide views over the Antofalla Volcano (6.400 mts) lays a green field (Vega Colorada) home to llamas, suris (Andean ostrich), wild donkeys and vicuñas. 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 who are all shepherds. 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. Tolar Grande lies at the border of a giant depression, the Salar de Arizaro, one of the biggest salt flats in the world. From this tiny old railway village built in 1940, there is a unique view over the western ridge of the *Cordillera*, an infinite skyline of Volcanoes higher than 6.000 meters.

**Day 6: Tolar Grande | Ojos del Mar | Desierto del Laberinto | Santa Rosa de los Pastos Grandes | San Antonio de los Cobres (B|L|D)**

Distance: 140 km earth track.

Altitude: Highest point 4.000 m./ 13.123 feet. San Antonio de los Cobres 3.700 m. / 12.140 feet.

Estimated driving time: 5 hs.

The morning will be dedicated to the exploration of the surroundings of Tolar Grande. The Ojos del Mar are Blue Holes in the middle of a white salt lake, where in Feb. 2009, researchers discovered a huge colony of living stromatolites. The surroundings of Tolar Grande offer chances of great small hikes, the best one is the hike to a hidden sand dune in the middle of the desert. From the highness of the dune the traveler will be rewarded by a 360° view over the area, from the Sacred Macon Mountain to the Lullaillaco Volcano, where the National Geographic discovered in 1999 at 6.735 meters an Inca treasure including the body of 3 Inca children perfectly kept by ice and dryness. It is also a perfect place for meditation. The Labyrinth Desert is a 10 million–year fossil dune desert formed by clay picks and gypsum crystals. Nowadays it is possible to drive across this natural wonder, a must for photo safari lovers. Abra Chorrillos will be our highest point and there we will learn about the *Apacheta* and its cultural importance for the Andean tradition. San Antonio de los Cobres is the actual Capital of the Puna, a



dusty village with a colored community, our last point of civilization and the arrival point of most tourists.

***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 7: San Antonio de los Cobres | Sey | Susques | Salinas Grandes | Purmamarca (B|L)**

Distance: 140 km paved road. 120 km earth track and gravel road.

Altitude: Highest point 4.500 m./ 14.764 feet. Purmamarca 2.192 m. / 7.192 feet

Estimated driving time: 6 hs.

San Antonio de los Cobres is the actual Capital of the Puna, a dusty village with a colored community, our last point of civilization and the arrival point of most tourists. El Mojon, a small settlement lost in this high desert, is an extraordinary example of the strength of the people inhabiting the Puna and how they can live in the XXI century without forgetting their ancestral traditions. Salinas Grandes is a place with more than 100km of salt surrounded by volcanoes, where the horizon seems endless. Finally, crossing the highest point of the itinerary, we will enjoy the best view on the Eastern Cordillera of the Andes going down the Cuesta de Lipan. At sunset, we will arrive at the andean village of Purmamarca, built in the surrounding area of the Cerro de los 7 Colores.

**Day 8: Purmamarca | Humahuaca | Hornocal | Tilcara | Salta (B|L)**

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

Altitude: Highest point 4.300 m./ 14.108 feet. Salta 1.200 m. / 3.937 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. The Gorge is famous for its colorful mountains, its geological formations and its historical villages. During our trip we will visit the best places in the region in order to get a true feeling of this part of Argentina: the Humahuaca Market, a walk in the Colorado's Gorge, the sacred garden of the



Cardones (cactus species) at 3200 meters, and the impressive 14 coloured mountains of 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. In the afternoon we will return to 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. 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 [Hacienda de Molinos](#)

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

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

*The Hostería is an 8-bedroom small Lodge. The rooms are spacious, all of them have a 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 Hosteria Casa Andina

*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.*

1 Night in [Hotel de las Nubes](#)

1 Night in [Manantial del Silencio Hotel](#)



**Notes:**

1. *Breakfast is included in every hotel, except Casa Andina (Tolar Grande); in this case it will be served in a local restaurant or our guide will prepare breakfast.*
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 suggest 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**

1. Day 1: Lunch in a local restaurant at Payogasta or Cachi.
2. Day 2: Breakfast, Lunch at Cafayate.
3. Day 3: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner at Hotel
4. Day 4: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner at Hotel
5. Day 5: Breakfast, Box Lunch and Dinner at Restaurant.
6. Day 6: Breakfast, Box Lunch and Dinner at Restaurant.
7. Day 7: Breakfast, Lunch at Restaurant.
8. Day 8: Breakfast, Lunch at Restaurant.

**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**

- Entry ticket to archeological site "Pucará de Tilcara".





- Visit fee to “*Serranías del Hornocal*” viewpoint.
- Entry ticket to Campo de Piedra Pómez Protected Area.
- Entry ticket to Quilmes Ruins, archeological site.



### **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:

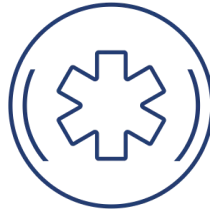


- Travel to the Puna only after a period of rest in Salta (one day is fine), and avoid traveling under physical or mental fatigue;
- Hydrate continuously during the trip;
- Keep your eating habits; avoid eating or drinking in excess, before and during the journey;
- Important: follow instructions from 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.