



## Trip Itinerary

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Summit the highest mountain in South America, and the second highest of the Seven Summits
- Breath-taking views of the Andes
- Three days set aside for the summit attempt in case of bad weather, allowing the greatest chance of success

### DETAILED ITINERARY:

#### DAY 1: ARRIVE MENDOZA AIRPORT

The team will meet you at Mendoza airport and transfer you to your pre-trek hotel. Enjoy a day exploring the bustling city of Mendoza, the centre of wine-making in Argentina. With wide tree-lined streets and plazas, the city is easily explored on foot, with plenty of shops and restaurants. Siesta time is 14:00-17:00 so expect businesses to be closed. We will spend tonight at the hotel.

#### DAY 2: MENDOZA TO LOS PENITENTES

Elevation: 700m to 2580m, Drive Time: 3 hours

We will transfer in private vehicles from Mendoza to Los Penitentes. At 2580m, we may start to feel the effects of altitude, so some gentle exercise around the town is advisable. We will spend our final night in a hotel before we begin our trek.

#### DAY 3: LOS PENITENTES TO CONFLUENCIA

Elevation: 2580m to 3400m, Time: 4-5 hours

Before we leave Los Penitentes we divide our kit into two loads: the high altitude kit, such as crampons, ice axe and climbing boots, will be transported by mules to base camp. The rest of the kit remains with us as we trek to Confluencia. We drive from Los Penitentes to the Horcones Valley (2950m) where our permits are checked at the ranger station and we begin our trek. An undulating track follows the Rio Horcones to the campsite at Confluencia (3400m).

#### DAY 4: CONFLUENCIA TO PLAZA DE FRANCIA TO CONFLUENCIA

Elevation: 3400m to 4050m to 3400m, Time: 7-8 hours

Our main objective today is acclimatisation. We will get our first clear view of the imposing South Face of Aconcagua as we trek up the Horcones Inferior Valley to Plaza de Francia, the base camp for the South Face routes. We will then return to our camp at Confluencia for the night.

**DAY 5: CONFLUENCIA TO PLAZA DE MULAS**

Elevation: 3400m to 4350m, Time: 7-8 hours

This is the toughest day so far as we trek to our base camp at Plaza de Mulas, with an altitude gain of 1000m from the start point. The trail begins with a relatively flat walk alongside the Rio Horcones, crossing several tributaries. This section of the trek can be very dry and dusty. The trail becomes steeper on the final climb to the Plaza de Mulas campsite. This will be our base for our summit attempt, and we will set up a mess tent where we will hold briefings, eat and relax. Our ascent team will join us here.

**DAY 6: ACCLIMATISATION AT PLAZA DE MULAS**

Elevation: 4350m

Today we rest after the exertions of the previous days, and allow our bodies to adjust to the altitude. Make sure you drink plenty of water and eat well. The nearby Hotel Refugio Plaza de Mulas, the highest hotel in the world, has showers available, as well as a pay phone.

**DAY 7: ASCEND CERRO BONETE, RETURN TO PLAZA DE MULAS**

Elevation: 4350m to 5004m to 4350m

We spend a second day acclimatising at Plaza de Mulas. Today we will climb Cerro Bonete (5004m) which will give us a clear view of the route almost all the way to Aconcagua. We will return to Plaza de Mulas to camp overnight.

**DAY 8: EQUIPMENT CARRY TO CAMP CANADA, RETURN TO PLAZA DE MULAS**

Elevation: 4350m to 5050m to 4350m, Time: 5-6 hours

Today will see our first serious outing onto the flanks of the mountain, as we make our way to camp 1, Camp Canada (5050m). We ascend over a series of switchbacks, passing the Conway Stones, named after a 19<sup>th</sup> century English mountaineer. This trail is much steeper than anything we have trekked on so far. We will be carrying some of the expedition gear and food up to Camp Canada to cache before returning to Plaza de Mulas.

**DAY 9: REST DAY IN PLAZA DE MULAS**

Elevation: 4350m

This is our last day to rest and acclimatise at base camp before we begin our ascent of Aconcagua. This is the opportunity to finalise your gear and prepare yourself for the climb.

**DAY 10: PLAZA DE MULAS TO CAMP CANADA**

Elevation: 4350m to 5050m, Time: 2-3 hours

Today we begin our ascent of Aconcagua, as we move up to Camp Canada (camp 1). This should feel a lot easier than it did when we carried the kit up two days ago, and we will appreciate the benefits of our days spent acclimatising at base camp.

**DAY 11: CAMP CANADA TO NIDO DE CONDORES**

Elevation: 5050m to 5560m, Time: 4 hours

Assisted by our porters who will carry the tents and most of our equipment, we will set off for El Nido de Condores (The Condor's Nest), where we will set up camp 2. From here we have great views of Aconcagua and the Canaleta that leads to the col.

**DAY 12: NIDO DE CONDORES TO BERLIN**

Elevation: 5560m to 5930m, Time: 3-4 hours

Today we will climb to camp 3, the Berlin camp at 5930m. The campsite here is exposed and can be cold and windswept. However, we will be rewarded with some wonderful views of the high Andean peaks. This will be our last campsite before attempting the summit.

**DAY 13: BERLIN TO SUMMIT TO BERLIN**

Elevation: 5930m to 6962m to 5930m, Time: 10-12 hours

Summit day, and the most arduous day of the expedition. We set off early in the morning, climbing the north ridge to reach the Independencia Refuge (6250m) for sunrise. From here we follow the route and traverse up to a ridge known as Cresta del Viento. This area is very exposed and is often windy and cold. We then cross the top of the Gran Acarreo, a huge scree field that stretches all the way to Plaza de Mulas, to reach the base of the Canaleta. This 300m scree climb leads to the summit ridge, and we will appreciate the early start if the ground is still frozen. After about an hour of extremely demanding effort, we will reach the Cresta del Guanaco, the ridge that joins the south summit (6930m) to the north summit (6962m), and follow the track to the north. A simple aluminium cross marks the highest point in South America. On a clear day the views from the summit are stunning, with Tupungato mountain to the southwest.

The amount of time we can spend on the summit will be determined by the weather and the time of day, to ensure that we can safely descend. We retrace our steps down the Canaleta to reach camp 3 at Berlin for a celebration and well-deserved sleep.

**DAY 14: CONTINGENCY DAY**

To ensure the success of the expedition, we have included two contingency days so that we have further opportunities for our summit attempt in case of bad weather.

**DAY 15: CONTINGENCY DAY**

Our second contingency day. If we have already been able to summit, the lead guide will use these days to make our walk out easier.

**DAY 16: BERLIN TO PLAZA DE MULAS**

Elevation: 5930m to 4350m, Time: 3-7 hours

We descend from Berlin all the way down to base camp at Plaza de Mulas. This descent can take anywhere from 3 to 7 hours. Safely back at Plaza de Mulas, the crew will welcome us back with a celebration dinner.

**DAY 17: PLAZA DE MULAS TO LOS PENITENTES TO MENDOZA**

Elevation: 4350m to 2580m to 700m, Trek Time: 7 hours, Drive Time: 3 hours

Once again, we hand over our high altitude kit to be carried by mules back to Los Penitentes. This is a tough walk out and will take around 7 hours to reach the park exit. If we did not use the contingency days on the ascent, it may be possible to split this day into two and spend another night at Confluencia. We will collect our gear from the muleteers at Los Penitentes before we catch our vehicle back to Mendoza, a drive of around 3 hours. Once in Mendoza, we will check into our hotel.

**DAY 18: DEPARTURE**

Our driver will collect you from the hotel and transfer you to Mendoza airport for your departing flight.



**SUMMARY:**

The 'Stone Sentinel' reaches an amazing 6,962m, the highest peak in South America and considered by many to be the highest trekking peak in the world. The fact that it is a 'trekking peak' does not mean that it is easy by any stretch of the imagination. Aconcagua is a popular choice for those climbers who have successfully summited Kilimanjaro, but it is a significant step up and should not be taken lightly. While not a technically demanding peak, the difficulties of the ascent are, as always, those of trekking at extreme altitude. However, the altitude, weather and environment can conspire to make this an adventure that will test even the most experienced trekker.

The route we offer is known as the 'Normal Route' via the Horcones Valley, and is suitable for those without experience of roped mountaineering. Crampon and ice axe experience is desirable, but not necessary as we can conduct refresher training on the mountain. We have built plenty of rest, acclimatisation and contingency days into our itinerary to allow you the best opportunity to enjoy the benefit of all your effort and experience the astonishing views of the Andes from the summit.

The best time to climb Aconcagua is during the high season, from mid-December to the end of January. The period generally offers the most stable weather on the mountain and lots of summit window opportunities.