



## CHILE & ARGENTINA

### ACONCAGUA EXPEDITION CLIMBING THE HIGHEST PEAK IN THE AMERICAS

- DURATION : 18 days / 17 nights
- SEASON : December through February
- DEPARTURES : Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 participants
- TRIP RATING : Very Strenuous Climbing Expedition/Grade (IV +) - Although Aconcagua's normal route is nontechnical (not requiring snow and ice climbing skills), it is a rigorous ascent that demands excellent physical fitness and stamina. The trip involves 8 nights of camping at elevations ranging from 11,000' to 19,685'. Any departure is subject to the vagaries of high altitude weather including blizzards, ice storms, extreme cold and wind.
- 2006/07 DATES : On request any week during the season for a minimum of 4 travelers

#### INTRODUCTION :

Mount Aconcagua (22,834'), whose name is appropriately derived from Quechua words meaning *Stone Sentinel*, is the highest peak in the world outside of Asia. Located in the central Argentine Andes, this impressive giant towers over the surrounding mountains and rugged countryside, a short distance from the Chilean border. It is a peak sought after by climbers from around the world, both in preparation for higher Himalayan summits and as a destination in itself.

After an introductory visit to Chile's cosmopolitan capital, Santiago, we fly across the Andes to Mendoza, Argentina where we obtain our climbing permits, then drive to the town of Puente del Inca to finalize preparations for the climb. From here, we have a fully supported approach trek. Following the wide Horcones Valley, our approach is designed to allow for systematic acclimatization to the higher elevations. Inspired by our sight of Aconcagua's spectacular 10,000-foot vertical south face, we continue on to *Plaza de Mulas* (13,945'), the basecamp area for staging most climbs of this giant. Under the leadership of an expert mountain guide, we spend a couple days here, preparing for the climb and adjusting to higher altitudes, before beginning our ascent along the classic northwest, or *normal*, route. Depending on weather and group conditions, we should be able to make our first summit bid 5-6 days after leaving the *Plaza de Mulas*. We suggest selecting expedition dates that correspond with the full moon for the best chance of good weather, spectacular views and great photo opportunities! Our descent follows the same route back to Puente del Inca and Mendoza where we have a celebration dinner concluding our expedition. Finally, we fly back to Santiago and the USA.

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## DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

### DAY 01: USA/SANTIAGO

We depart the USA on an overnight flight to Santiago, Chile.

### DAY 02: SANTIAGO/MENDOZA

We're met upon arrival this morning in the lively Chilean capital, **Santiago**, situated at an elevation of 1,800' near the foot of the central Andes. In the early afternoon, we enjoy a tour of the city, stopping at the Plaza de Armas downtown, dominated on one side by the Cathedral, and on another by the *Casa de la Moneda*, or Presidential Palace. Afterwards, we walk a path on San Cristóbal Hill, enjoying a panoramic view of the city and, with clear skies, the nearby Andean peaks. Returning to the airport, we have a late day flight across the Andes to Mendoza, Argentina (2,480'), a region well-known for its vineyards and orchards. We are met upon arrival and transferred to the Aconcagua Hotel. This evening we have a trip briefing and welcome dinner with our mountain guide. (D)

### DAY 03: PUENTE DEL INCA

Following breakfast we finalize our climbing permits. When everything is in order, we are picked up at the hotel to drive westward toward the mountains. We stretch our legs, en route, with a short stop at the town of Uspallata and a visit to the Los Penitentes ski center before continuing to **Puente del Inca** (8,925'), a quaint community where we find a natural stone bridge, created by sulphur springs, crossing the river. After checking into a small hostel, we have the remainder of the afternoon to organize our gear and prepare for our approach trek. **Driving distance:** 90 miles or 3 hours (B,L,D)

### DAY 04: PUENTE DEL INCA/CONFLUENCIA CAMP

This morning, we drive 2 ½ miles toward the Park entrance and the Horcones Valley, to begin hiking. If the day is clear, we have our first views of the massive south face of Aconcagua ahead, in the distance. Supported by Argentine *gauchos* and their horses, our first day of trekking is fairly easy as we follow the barren Horcones Valley, gradually gaining elevation and slowly adjusting to the altitude. After 8 miles and 5 - 6 hours of hiking through arid terrain, we reach our first camp at **Confluencia** (11,000'), where the broad main valley forks into two smaller tributaries. (B,L,D)

### DAY 05: CONFLUENCIA CAMP

Today we hike along the right-hand fork of the Horcones Valley, following the **Lesser Horcones** for 4 hours, to **Plaza Francia** (13,800'), the base camp for climbers attempting Aconcagua's impressive south face. As we gain elevation, this massive ice, rock, and snow wall starts to loom over us, providing us with excellent photo opportunities. We enjoy lunch in the shadow of this huge peak while, perhaps, spotting a condor or two soar over the valleys. This endangered species is the world's largest flying bird with a wingspan of up to 10 feet. We return to our camp at **Confluencia** in the afternoon. (B,L,D)

### DAY 06: PLAZA DE MULAS

We face our longest trek today, about 13 miles, as we gain elevation to reach **Plaza de Mulas** (13,945') the well-known basecamp for climbs along the *normal* route, or other variations from this side of the mountain. Our trail continues gradually uphill along this high altitude, desert-like valley. First in our view will be the rocky Cathedral Peak (17,390'), then as we near our camp, we come within sight of the glaciers on the pyramidal summit of Cuerno Peak (17,717'). This evening, we have our first view of the sunset on the immense western face of Aconcagua. We stay overnight at the mountain hut. (B,L,D)

### DAY 07: PLAZA DE MULAS

Today is a well-deserved day at leisure in camp (optional short hikes available). Part of the time is devoted to preparing food and equipment for the ascent, and we will discuss the activities for the upcoming days. Overnight at the mountain hut. (B,L,D)

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### DAY 08: CAMP 1/PLAZA DE MULAS

The toughest days of our expedition are before us, and today is one of the longest. A good breakfast is necessary. Everyone who is sufficiently acclimated will take a portion of the group's supplies in their pack (approximately 40 pounds). We proceed to our first camp site at 17,225'. Our route switchbacks up a well-marked, but rocky, trail. The trip is slow, requiring about 5-6 hours, as we use the climber's "rest-step" to reach the camp. Here we cache our supplies for future use and return to the **Plaza de Mulas**. The descent should take approximately 2 hours. Hot dinner, prepared by the hut's cook, will be well appreciated. Overnight is spent at the mountain hut. (B,L,D)

### DAY 09: CAMP 1

After a relaxed breakfast, we organize our personal gear, leaving what will not be necessary for the next 5-6 days of the climb at the basecamp. Once our packs are loaded, we begin the trudge back up to yesterday's high point (17,225'). Here we set up our camp, erecting tents and preparing our evening meal, establishing a routine to be followed for the next several days. From this point through the summit attempts, the climb is self-supported, so weight is of the essence and camp chores will be shared by all group members. (B,L,D)

### DAY 10: NIDO DE CONDORES/CAMP 1

Today is an easier load-carrying day, as we follow a less steep, but higher, trail to bring supplies up to our second camp at the *Nido de Condores*, or Condor's Nest, at 18,370'. Our route traverses the huge, rocky slopes of the *Gran Acarreo*, possibly crossing short sections of snowfields to reach the saddle between the north ridges of Aconcagua and the rounded peak, Manso. Here we stash our gear for the next days and return to camp 1 for the night. (B,L,D)

### DAY 11: BERLIN HUTS/NIDO DE CONDORES

Leaving early this morning, we continue slowly gaining altitude as we resume our ascent. We pass the area of the *Nido de Condores* camp on our way to the Berlin Huts at 19,685', where we leave our loads. The huts are small, rustic climbers' shacks, built in the 1950s by Argentina's president Juan Perón, and are still in use today by groups attempting the summit. Once our gear has been cached, we head down to our second camp at **Nido de Condores**. We should have excellent views of the sunset over the mountain, as we melt ice for drinking and meal preparation. Participants who are having difficulty with the altitude can ascend as far as the Nido de Condores camp and wait for the rest of the group to return from carrying the loads up to the Berlin Huts. (B,L,D)

### DAY 12: BERLIN HUTS

Depending on the group's general acclimatization, overall health, and the weather conditions, everyone planning to attempt the summit via the normal route hikes up to the Berlin Huts today to spend the night. The system we have been using for the past few days, hiking with loads to a higher elevation and descending to a previous, lower elevation camp at night to sleep, is the best method known for acclimatization to the extreme altitudes found on the world's highest summits. (B,L,D)

### DAY 13: SUMMIT BID

Today, the final summit bid begins! The strategy for the climb will be organized by the mountain guide according to the weather, the group's overall condition, and the necessary logistics. The final summit push involves a lot of excitement and requires stamina. We leave camp early (around 5:00 a.m.) and face 7-9 hours of slow, steady ascent, crossing some sections of snow and ice. Before reaching the ridge that leads toward Aconcagua's main summit, we face the most demanding and dangerous section of the climb, the *Gran Canaleta*, a steep, rocky couloir where falling rocks gain momentum and can seriously injure an unwary climber. On top, we enjoy one of the most incredible views in the world before descending to spend our last night in one of the high camps, the **Berlin Huts** or the **Nido de Condores**. (B,L,D)

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### DAYS 14-15: PLAZA DE MULAS/CONFLUENCIA CAMP

Once the entire group has made the final descent, we have a rewarding, easy hike from our high camp to the **Plaza de Mulass** mountain hut, where staff is waiting to welcome us with a special dinner and treats. The afternoon is spent resting and preparing our gear for the return trek. Our personal loads are much lighter now, as our gear is loaded onto the backs of the faithful horses and mules. We retrace our trail, following the Horcones Valley down to camp at **Confluencia**. (B,L,D)

### DAY 16: PUENTE DEL INCA/MENDOZA

The last trekking day is short, just 3-4 hours, back to the trail's end at **Puente del Inca**, where we have lunch and a dip in the local hot springs. Then, we drive back to **Mendoza** in our private vehicle, arriving at the familiar Aconcagua Hotel in time for a good hot shower before joining our guide for a special celebration dinner. **Driving distance:** 90 miles or 3 hours (B,L,D)

### DAY 17: MENDOZA/SANTIAGO

Today is unstructured for shopping or personal explorations in **Mendoza**, lunch is on your own. This afternoon, we'll transfer to the airport and fly to **Santiago** and connect on our own to the overnight flight back to the USA. (B)

### DAY 18: USA

Arrival to the USA.

**NOTES ON THE ITINERARY:** It is our policy to provide you with the safest and most satisfying expedition possible. Therefore, considering the uncertainties inherent in this type of expedition, we cannot guarantee that any or all members of the trip will make the summit. Furthermore, although we will do our best to adhere to the schedule listed above, this itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control including group pace/acclimatization/health, road/trail /river, and weather conditions. We reserve the right for our office or the mountain guides to alter, substitute or cancel the itinerary or any portion thereof, at any time that it is deemed necessary for the comfort or safety of the participants. We will notify participants, as far in advance as possible, should any itinerary changes be necessary.

Hiking distances and altitudes are approximate, and times indicated are NET. They do not include lunch breaks, rest stops, time to explore the area, etc.

<b>2006 LAND COST:</b>	\$4,965 p.p.d. (4-5 participants)
	\$4,565 p.p.d. (6-9 participants)
	\$4,265 p.p.d. (10-12 participants)
	\$ 455 Single Supplement

p.p.d.=per person based on double occupancy

2006 Land Cost valid for departures through February 2007.

### SERVICES INCLUDED:

- Comprehensive **pre-departure planning packet** and expert travel advice.
- All **in-country transfers** as scheduled (transfers on different days are additional). Ground transportation in spacious and comfortable private vehicles with professional drivers.
- All **accommodations in standard-class (3-4 star) hotels** as listed (or at similar hotels) on a shared basis with private bath at the major cities (Santiago & Mendoza). Basic Hostel and Mountain hut accommodations with shared rooms, bunk beds and shared bathrooms at Puente del Inca & Plaza de Mulass. Note: Double beds for couples (primarily queen-sized) can be requested in advance, but

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- cannot be guaranteed, as most hotels offer few rooms with double beds.
- Single Supplement provides single room accommodations in all hotels and single tent during the approach trek. Tents for the summit attempts are shared. Due to the small size of some of the hostals we use, there is a maximum of 2 singles allowed per group. If you require single accommodations, making reservations well in advance is recommended.
  - All **meals** indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner). **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required).
  - All **guided tours and excursions** (as listed) conducted on a private basis by knowledgeable, English-speaking local guides in each region (includes applicable entrance fees).
  - **First-class trekking/climbing service** which includes:
    - A fully supported approach trek with *gauchos* (mule drivers) and mules or horses to carry the equipment and food, and a specialized camp chef/assistant guide to prepare meals.
    - An English-speaking, expert climbing guide with previous experience on Aconcagua (1:4 guide to climbers ratio on first camps and 1:3 for summit day).
    - High altitude porters (1 for every 3 climbers to Camp 1 only).
    - All fees and climbing permits.
    - All group camping equipment including NorthFace VE-25 or Mountain Hardwear expedition tents (3-person tents shared by only two group members); Thermarest™ sleeping pads; kitchen/dining tent for the approach trek; ropes; mountain stoves, dehydrated foods, etc. for the summit bid.
  - First aid kit and basic emergency equipment including radio, oximeter, GPS and altimeter. Additionally there are Gamow bags and oxygen available at the Plaza de Mulas basecamp and a helicopter is stationed at the entrance of the Horcones valley in case of evacuations from Plaza de Mulas.

### NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic, International flights, nor the round-trip flight Santiago-Mendoza-Santiago.
- Chilean & Argentine airport departure taxes (approx. \$150 per traveler).
- Three (3) meals at about \$20 each per person.
- Tours or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment (boots, crampons, ice axe, sleeping bag, etc.), laundry & phone calls.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Additional costs due to delays in flights or other unforeseeable events such as bad weather, strikes, canceled or suspended flights, nor the costs involved in preparing for an expedition of this nature, including, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets, vaccinations, personal equipment, etc.
- Expenses incurred in preparing for this program such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets or traveler's insurance, and additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

We strongly recommend all travelers take out some form of **Travel Insurance**—plan information and an application are sent upon receipt of your deposit (sooner if requested). Policies with **Travel Insured International** can be purchased online through our website at [www.southwindadventures.com/links.htm#insurance](http://www.southwindadventures.com/links.htm#insurance). **If you or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition**, you need to purchase this policy within 10 days of booking your trip to qualify for reimbursement of non-refundable trip costs in the event that a recurrence of the pre-existing condition forces you to cancel your trip (some restrictions apply). For more information or to purchase Southwind's recommended travel insurance plan, please visit the link above.

☞ **Please note** that most Travel Insurance companies will provide Trip Cancellation Insurance, Emergency Evacuation Reimbursement and Medical Coverage for group

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members prior to leaving the USA and during the warm-up trek (DAYS 01-07 and DAYS 14-18). Due to policy restrictions, no coverage is available for the actual climb itself - DAYS 08-13.

**GUIDES: Diego Magaldi** - An Argentine-born educator and professional mountain guide, currently living in Buenos Aires, Diego is a Chief Instructor for the Pacific Crest Outward Bound School and has worked in wilderness areas in California, Oregon and Washington. At PCOBS he is responsible for conducting instructor training and directing the mountaineering programs. He has led numerous expeditions in the Andes of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Peru as well as in Mexico and the USA. His area of expertise is Aconcagua where he has led 22 successful international expeditions to the summit.

**Adrián Penzotti** - a professional high altitude mountain guide with a well-rounded set of skills, ranging from mountaineering and mountain biking to outdoor cooking. He has participated in many expeditions to the Andes, including more than 15 ascents on Aconcagua. He has also climbed all of its neighboring peaks. His career began as a porter on this mountain and he quickly acquired climbing skills. He then joined the Mountain Guide School of Mendoza. His tenacity and great sense of humor make him an ideal expedition partner. In addition, wilderness first aid is one of his specialties and passions.

**PARTICIPANT QUALIFICATIONS:** This is a strenuous trip and members **MUST** have systematically trained and be in TOP physical condition, certified by a signed, completed medical release returned to this office (no one will be allowed to join the expedition without a signed medical release). Climbers are required to have 2-3 years of strong backpacking or mountaineering experience (**minimum** experience should include at least one ascent of a nontechnical peak of 14,000' or higher) and must be able to carry a 40 pound pack at high altitudes and participate in camp chores, such as melting ice for drinking water, pitching tents, cooking, etc. Non-experienced members can participate as support for the climb, arriving to the basecamp and monitoring the climbers' progress through binoculars. Team members should be prepared for any kind of weather as Aconcagua is renowned for its temperamental climate, which can change from sunshine to snow, with extreme winds and cold on any day. Climbers must bring their own personal equipment (a complete list will be provided with your pre-departure materials, once you have returned your signed **Trip Reservation Form**, with a \$500 deposit).

**GROUP SIZE:** Assuring the best, personal service possible, this expedition is limited to a maximum group size of 12 participants and can be operated with as few as 4-5 group members. If there are only 2 participants in your party, you can choose the dates that work best for your schedule and we will try to form a larger group. We suggest, in this case, that you sign up at least 8-10 months in advance so we have more time to promote the departure and assure the best guides (minimum 4-6 months for larger groups).

**ESTIMATED AIRFARE:** The Land Cost for this trip **DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY FLIGHTS**. Round-trip **international** air from US gateways (New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta) is approximately \$800-1,100 per person. **Local** flights **ARE NOT INCLUDED**, budget on approx. \$200-300 per person for the Santiago-Mendoza-Santiago flights. International carriers offering service to/from Santiago include; American, Lan, Aerolineas Argentinas, Varig, Tam and Northwest. United and Continental offer service to Buenos Aires with local connections to Santiago and Mendoza). December 15-January 15 is peak travel time and higher fares may apply. Upon receipt of your deposit, Southwind will send you more information about booking your flights to match your land itinerary.

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☞ Southwind will need your flight schedule within 45 days of your departure to arrange your transfers. We recommended that you **DO NOT** purchase any airline tickets until your trip is guaranteed to operate. Southwind sends out a trip confirmation letter once a trip is guaranteed or you may call to check the status of your departure.

**HOW TO SIGN UP:** A \$500 per person per trip deposit (payable by check or credit card) is required to make a reservation. You can call 1-800-377-9463 or reserve securely online at [www.southwindadventures.com](http://www.southwindadventures.com). Click "Book a Trip" and you are on your way!

**Trip Reservation Form:** Please send us your completed and signed form within 10 days of placing your deposit (online under "Forms" on our homepage or call Southwind). Upon receipt of your reservation form and once your trip is guaranteed to operate, a comprehensive pre-departure packet will be sent to you.

**Land Balance:** Payment is due at 60 days by Visa, Mastercard, Discover or check. American Express balance payments are due 90 days in advance. You will receive an invoice with your pre-departure packet. A rush service fee of \$150 per person will be applied to your invoice for reservations placed 45 to 21 days before departure.

Cancellation Fees and other policies are outlined under Terms & Conditions on Southwind's website (click [Book a Trip](#)>Terms & Conditions).

☞ **Please note:** Due to the challenging nature of this trip and the need for EVERY participant to be sufficiently trained and prepared, deposits cannot be accepted for the ***Aconcagua Climbing Expedition*** less than 60 days prior to departure.

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