

Tierra Atacama Hotel & Spa Excursions

On 4 Wheels

1. Altiplanic Lagoons (Miscanti and Meñiques Lagoons)

Duration: 6 to 8 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

We depart the hotel towards the highland lagoons of Miscanti and Miñiques, which are at an altitude of 4,200 m / 13,860 feet. The scenery here is ideal to make a stop in our journey and contemplate the beauty of the Altiplanic landscape, with its mountains, many contrasts and extraordinary colours. Lunch is taken in a local restaurant in the village of Socaire, a small way to give much needed support to the local community.

2. Salar de Tara

Duration: 6 to 8 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

Heading east from the hotel, we travel towards the Argentinian border and the Salar de Tara. As the terrain rises, enjoy marvellous views of the Licancabur volcano and spot bird life, salt lakes and areas of marshland. At a height of 4200m/ 13,860 feet approximately igneous rock plugs from the "nuns" of Tara, a marvellous sight in the middle of an amazing plateau. Continue to Tara itself, where lunch is enjoyed.

3. El Tatio Geisera

Duration: 7 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy (with acclimatization)

Description:

The Tatio Geisera are located at an altitude of 4300m /14,190 ft. The geothermal field has close links to the volcanic activity in the zone and consists of huge steam columns which reach heights of 12m/almost 40 ft. Breakfast is served as dawn breaks. On the way back to the village, there is the opportunity to spot families of vicuñas and if we are lucky, foxes, vizcachas and Andean ostrich. We stop in the hamlet of Machuca before returning to the hotel by vehicle.

4. Machuca

Duration: 5 to 6 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

To the north of San Pedro and reached by van via a steep road, is the tiny village of Machuca at an altitude of 4000 m / 13,123 feet. The village of Machuca has a privileged site surrounded by nature and in its only street we can see the roofs made of cactus and maybe taste barbecued llama, offered by the villagers. The church is of special interest for the cultural significance and birds and llamas can be seen in the area.

5. Puritama Hot Springs

Duration: 3 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

This journey has established itself as a unique experience in an environment where water is an unexpected finding! Hidden at the bottom of a steep sided gorge, surrounded by vegetation, the River Puritama has 8 natural pools, with water which has an average temperature of 33 °C/ 91°F at an altitude of 3500 m asl (11,482 feet). Following a lovely bathe, we return to the hotel by vehicle.

6. Moon Valley

Duration: 3 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

This journey allows participants to appreciate the surreal beauty of the landscape from many viewpoints in the Salt Mountain Range, such as the scenery of Death Valley, Moon Valley and the Andes mountain range. Includes short walks in areas with rocky outcrops, scenery formed by the wind the rain and the temperature changes of the desert. A must for photo buffs!

7. Atacama Salt Flat (Chaxa Lagoon & Flamingo Reserve)

Duration: 4 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

The journey starts with a brief visit to Toconao village where the square and the historic church are the main attractions. Also visit a local family who lives off the sales of their handcrafts. Continue to the National Flamingo Reserve in the Atacama salt flat. There are three types of flamingo to be found here, living off the microscopic lagoon life. The views of the Andes as the sun sets are truly amazing.

Walking and hiking

1. Cornices

Duration: 2,5 to 3,5 hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

A fun excursion for the morning or afternoon. On arrival at the old road to Calama, the walk starts with a visit to some archeological sites and wonderful views of the volcanoes of the region. At a height of around 2600m/ 8580 feet, descend via the huge dune to Death Valley- an unforgettable experience!

2. Kari Gorge

Duration: 2 to 3 hours walk + 40 mins by vehicle

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

An amazing morning or afternoon hike through incredible scenery. We depart the hotel by vehicle towards the Mirador de Kari, located 2,550 meters / 8,370 feet above sea level. Here, you will appreciate a strange phenomenon where water, wind and temperature extremes have joined forces to produce this unique gorge in the Salt Mountain Range. We walk between dried-up clay riverbeds, calcium carbonate and lime rock formations and finish the walk in a labyrinth like area. Return to the hotel by van.

3. Devils Canyon & Vilama

Duration: 2,5 to 3,5 hours

Level of Difficulty: Medium

Description:

A morning or afternoon excursion. Depart the hotel by vehicle and head to Devil's Canyon to start the walk. The altitude here is approx 2,450m/8,038ft. We walk on flattish ground for about an hour, on the dry river bed through formations of lime which are part of the Salt Mountain Range. We continue along an ancient caravan route, passing by petroglyphs which show the former commercial activity in the area and finish at the old settlement known as Vilama. Return to the hotel by vehicle.

4. Guatin / Gatchi

Duration: 2 to 3 hours walk + 1 hour by vehicle

Level of Difficulty: Medium

Description:

Depart the hotel in a vehicle towards Guatin Valley (2,800m/9,186ft). The confluence of two rivers takes place here; one coming from the warm thermal springs of Puritama, and the other is the Purifica River, whose waters are from the Andes Mountains. This unique mix of warm thermal spring water and cold clear mountain snowmelt gives rise to the new river which supports the unique ecosystem of the Guatin Canyon. We walk here, alongside waterfalls and rocky climbs whilst marvelling at the amazing Candelaria cactus.

5. Guatin / Puritama

Duration: 2,5 to 3,5 hours hike + 1 hour by vehicle

Level of Difficulty: Medium

Description:

This excursion is better done in the morning because of the temperature changes. The walk starts at an altitude of 2,800m/9,186 ft to the northeast of San Pedro. The walk is a steady uphill climb, through the valley which is scattered with igneous rocks from the volcanic explosions of the past. We eventually arrive at the Puritama Thermal Springs, 8 pools of limpid warm water where there is a chance to bathe and relax before returning to the hotel by vehicle.

6. Machuca / Río Grande

Duration: 7 to 9 hours (5 to 7 hours hiking)

Level of Difficulty: Medium

Description:

This walk takes place at around 4,000m/13,200ft and is a great way to acclimatize to the altitude for people who want to climb a volcano during their stay. The walk follows the river bed and on the way we can see llamas, alpacas and local birds. Stop for lunch in the abandoned mountain village of Peñaliri. Following this break, discover the abandoned terraces of the gully and continue on to the village of Río Grande, where typical vegetables are grown. Return to the hotel by vehicle.

7. Ruta Purilaktis

Duration: 4 hrs walk + 2 hrs by vehicle

Level of Difficulty: Easy +

Depart the hotel by vehicle along the road heading to Calama. We continue through the Domeyko Mountain Range to the starting point of our hike (3,000mts/9,840ft approx). The start of this hike will wind along a small gully and then open up to large rock formations marked by petroglyphs. Following dry river beds flanked by mountains we admire spectacular views from various viewpoints. After a gentle climb-descent, we will finish at the Matancilla Valley, also known as Rainbow Valley. We will have lunch here before returning to the hotel by vehicle.

Biking

1. Devils Canyon / Catarpe

Duration: 2,5 to 3,5 Hours

Level of Difficulty: Medium +

Description:

Depart the hotel on bicycles heading north towards the Salt Mountain Range, and the beautiful Devil's Canyon. The ride takes place at an average height of 2,400m/8,000ft. After crossing the San Pedro River, we arrive at the Canyon, which is flanked by clay cliffs and has a sandy bottom in places. The ride is a constant gentle climb until we come out of the labyrinth on to the Catarpe plateau. The return journey follows the natural course of the San Pedro River until we reach the village and the hotel.

2. Cejar Lagoon

Duration: 4 hours approx (2 hours cycling)

Level of Difficulty: Medium

Description:

This is a morning excursion to make the most of the temperature at this time of day. Depart the hotel heading south by bike towards the edge of the Atacama Salt Flat. The terrain is mainly flat and slightly uneven in places. On arrival at the Cejar lagoon, the view of the thick salt crust which has formed around the water hole is amazing. The salt concentration is incredibly high here and one floats in the spectacularly clear waters. Following a swim and a rest, we return to the hotel by vehicle.

3. Windy Lookout Point / Moon Valley, the Dune

Duration: 2 to 3,5 hours

Level of Difficulty: Difficult

Description:

A morning or afternoon excursion. Depart from the hotel heading northeast then head north towards the Salt Mountain range enjoying marvellous views of the Andes and volcanoes.

Continue along the cornices viewing the formations of Death Valley from above, before descending via the old trails into the valley itself. Once at the bottom, continue on to Death Valley and cycle through the amazing scenery before returning to the hotel. The uphill and downhill parts are steep in places and this excursion gives a great workout!

4. Bike Ride through the Ayllus / Atacameñan Communities

Duration: 1,5 to 2,5 Hours

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Description:

Depart the hotel in the morning or early afternoon. The nearby oases villages are typical of the local culture and in many ways their inhabitants still follow the same way of life as their distant ancestors. View the local agriculture and the unique irrigation system. This is a great way to be introduced to the village and the climate of San Pedro.

Volcano Climbing

1. Toco

Duration: 5 to 7 Hours

Level of Difficulty: Medium

Description:

The journey starts from the hotel, travelling in a vehicle for 1 hour 30 minutes to the starting point of the walk at a height of 4.800 m approx (16.500 feet) The peak of the volcano is at 5.650 m. / 18.645 feet and from the top there are great views of the Bolivian Altiplano and the Atacama Salt Flat to the west. After time for a break and a rest, the descent is taken slowly and safely down the same route until the vehicle is reached. Return to the hotel by vehicle.

If time and the weather permits we can arrange more challenging volcano walks once Toco has been successfully conquered!

Horse rides

Atacama on Horseback

Description:

We can arrange a selection of rides with Atacameñan horses. Our saddles are Chilean (Western) style. The horses are mounted at the hotel and we travel with our guide to discover the desert scenery. Depending on experience and wishes of the participants, the rides can take between 2 and 5 hours. Chaps and hard hats are supplied in the hotel.

Cultural, flora & fauna

1. Bird Watching

Description:

Places such as the Nacimiento and Guatin canyons, the Atacama Salt Flat and northern Chilean Altiplano are habitats which house a wide variety of differing species of birds. For example, the Salt Flats are home to the Chilean flamingo, Andean flamingo, Andean avocet and Puna Plover. The open altiplano wetlands houses Andean geese, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipes, Golden-spotted Ground-doves and Ochre-naped Ground-tyrants amongst others. Other species to be found in the area include the Chiguanco Thrush, Cordilleran Canastero, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Andean Negrito and Horned Coot amongst many others. The time of year, migratory cycles, availability of food, temperature, altitude, etc., are all determining factors when bird-watching.

2. Flora & fauna

Description:

The Altiplano is a huge plateau at an altitude of 4,000m/13,200ft. It is an area of vast expanses of land cut into by deep channels and valleys, spotted with high salt lakes and where dark masses of lava from volcanic eruptions change the terrain. Rain is rare, temperatures vacillate wildly and the atmosphere at this altitude is transparent and luminous. Although the conditions

are harsh, many plant and vegetable species exist here and have adapted to the demands of the climate and terrain.

3. Padre Le Paige Museum/ Quitor Fortress

Duration: 3 to 4 hours

Level of difficulty: Easy

Description:

Through vestiges of history and the occupation of the area, we can get an idea of what has happened here in the past. The idiosyncrasies of a people and their culture come to light in visits to the archeological museum in San Pedro de Atacama as does the visit to the “pukara” or Fort of Quitor.

4. Petroglyphs

Duration: 3 hours

Level of difficulty: Easy

Description:

Rupestrian art displays many forms of expression- man has tried to record experiences, common elements, symbols and signs. The description and understanding of them through the science of archaeology gives us the tools to understand. Petroglyph: an inscription or engraving on rock, fundamentally made by hand and with another hard object. These places are now in the middle of nowhere, yet once were important stops on ancient trade routes, they lie witness to the travellers, shamans and merchants of the past who converged here and left evidence of their stories.