

THE NORTHWEST, COLORFUL LAND OF PACHAMAMA

Ideal Months: March through November

This striking, and occasionally overlooked region is a fantastic place to learn the history of Argentina while enjoying some of the country's most fascinating landscapes. Many groups have dominated the area, from the Incas to the high Andean indigenous peoples and, eventually, the Spanish (some of the oldest traces of Spanish history remain here); the Northwest offers a broad snapshot of Argentinian cultural heritage.



DAY 01 – SALTA - CAFAYATE

Salta	Meet and greet at Salta airport & transfer to Cafayate. Great scenarios of the Cafayate ravine to take photos on our way to Cafayate village.
Cafayate	As we enter the Quebrada de Cafayate (Cafayate Ravine), where the cliffs and crags come in every color: brick red, pale orange, yellow, white, green, slate blue and rich purple. These impressive geological formations were produced by the wind erosion on the colorful sedimentation of sandstone over the past 60 million years.

DAY 02- CAFAYATE

Cafayate

Cafayate is the most important city in the Calchaqui valleys, and a tiny paradise for wine lovers looking for a tranquil hideaway. It is also home to some of the world's highest vineyards (1750m / 5740 ft) featuring grape varieties such as Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon and the local's specialty – The Torrontes. This Spanish grape produces a white wine of fruity but dry and distinctive flavor, has found its perfect terroir in these lands.

The first Torrontes vines were planted in 1850 on La Florida vineyard which was owned by the Etchart Winery. Nowadays it has passed into the hands of Pernod Ricard, the famous wine and Spirit Company.

We will visit some wineries to sample the exquisite wines and for private visits some very special ones will be included such as: El Esteco, host of the amazing Patios de Cafayate Hotel and the winery Finca Las Nubes, home to Jose Luis Munier wines. This is an idyllic hillside spot 5 km from Cafayate. The winery is framed by a backdrop of steep, rising mountains covered in cacti that stand like sentinels on the hillside.



DAY 03- CAFAYATE – QUILMES – AMAICHA

Cafayate

Visit to the Quilmes Ruins during the morning. The ruins of Quilmes, as they are known, belonged to the Calchaqui natives who settled on the hillsides and on the mountain, range called Calchaqui, from which the tribes got their name: Quilmes and Calchaqui. The huge mountain that seems taken from a fairy tale is a stone fortress.

The pens and cactuses have contributed to the development of these communities that raised animals and grew quinoa, corn and other plantations that helped feed the people.

The highest part of what today we refer to as ruins was the place chosen by the locals to set their defense against the enemy. First, there were other tribes and eventually the Spanish conquerors who found a strong resistance upon arrival until they were able to impose themselves.

A gravel road takes us down to the foot of the hill named Alto del Rey (the King's Heights) where this impressive city lies. None of its old inhabitants can be seen. With luck, visitors can find some traces of what once was this civilization, like arrow tips, stone or pottery axes.

The ruins of Quilmes were one of the most important pre-Hispanic settlements in Argentina and it are known that the Calchaquí tribe lived there from about 800 AD until 1666, when it was conquered by the Spanish.

Finally, visit to Amaicha Museum. The Pachamama Museum is a synopsis of imagination and effort by Hector Cruz, a plastic artist that have valued the life of the natives and their descendants.

The museum is focused on all the aspects of the aboriginal culture. It is made up of two geology and anthropology rooms, and other two rooms where tapestries, paintings and sculptures are displayed. The large backyard features huge statues made of stone and representing divinities worshipping Pachamama, accompanied by local cardons and cacti.

DAY 04- CAFAYATE – COLOME – MOLINOS

Cafayate

Early morning visit to "De las Flechas" Ravine and surroundings.

Visit to the quaint small village of Colome, the modern winery and the unbelievable James Turrell Museum with an installation of James Turrell's masterpieces which belong to the owners' private collection. A museum which will make you think you are in the heart of New York City!

Molinos	<p>What makes it so special? An incredible combination for wine and art lovers! Colome Winery is located 25 km off the road to Molinos; a dirt road which takes straight to the winery and vineyard itself.</p> <p>The experience includes: Visit to the winery and a wine tasting session. Lunch in a beautiful verandah overlooking the Andean Range. Afternoon leisure time to explore on own and relax. Late afternoon visit to James Turrell installation. Transfer to the Molino's hotel.</p>
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DAY 05 – MOLINOS - CACHI - SALTA

Molinos	<p>During the morning we will visit weavers at Seclantas.</p> <p>Later, we will visit Cachi. Stop en route for lunch (not included). The small village of Cachi (2300m / 7544 ft) is located within a short distance from “Los Cardones” National Park: a national park populated by thousands of huge cardon cacti. The park is also crisscrossed by myriad stone trails constructed by colonizing Inca forces in the 15th century.</p>
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Cachi	<p>Cachi is tiny, but a good place to rest. Cachi's restored colonial church is a national historic monument. The museum of local archeology has a collection of native artifacts of the Andean region.</p> <p>Doubling back and forth as it descends, the road eventually climbs to about 12,000 feet. The terrain is stark. The mountain sides are mostly a dry baked brown. Cattle, sheep and llama graze for what little vegetation they can find on the lower and middle slopes. Eagles and condors soar above the peaks.</p>
Salta	<p>The exploration continues through Valle Encantado (Enchanted valley) both huge, verdantly green valleys come into view, the landscape changes abruptly at Cuesta del Obispo (Obispo Pas). Then we reach RP 33 the gravel road that journeys through the parched Quebrada de Escoipe (Escoipe canyon). Skirting the rust-colored tobacco fields at the city's edge, we arrive to Salta City</p>

DAY 06 – SALTA.

Salta	<p>Full day visiting the city of Salta searching for photo opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful Cathedrals & Basilicas • Plazas & monuments • Contemporary crafts and unique pieces • Local markets
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DAY 07 – SALTA – PURMAMARCA- TILCARA

Salta

Purmamarca & Tilcara.

Tilcara

We leave Salta and after about 2 hours drive we reach **Purmamarca**, which is the base town from where to explore the amazing Cerro de los Siete Colores. This polychromatic mountain (considered an artist's palette of colors) is best seen from a hill on the edge of the village, and is a backdrop of this enchanted village. A colorful market is part of the experience.

The red streets and easy access make **Tilcara** the favorite of all visitors. Within walking distance (a short trek outside town) is the Pucará, a restored pre-Columbian fort which offers spectacular views.

The access fee (to be paid locally) includes the access to the Museo Arqueológico which houses an excellent and diverse collection of artifacts and offers insight into native cultural beliefs.



DAY 08 – PURMAMARCA

Tilcara	<p>FD Humahuaca Ravine & Hornocal Mountain range.</p> <p>A full day expedition enjoying the multicolored landscape of the Humahuaca canyon, the peaceful villages, old chapels, native markets, small museums, and the remains of an ancient pre-Inca fortified town.</p> <p>Humahuaca, Uquia, and Maimara will be some of the fascinating stops during our day.</p> <p>The Quebrada de Humahuaca, an Andean gorge of rust-colored mountains and ancient settlements, is one of Argentina’s most distinctively South American Natural experiences.</p> <p>The Hornocal, the mountain of the 14 colors, is located 25 km far from Humahuaca going to the mountains of Zenta, is part of the limestone formation called Yacoraite which is the same that crosses the Quebrada de Humahuaca.</p> <p>Humahuaca with its narrow shaded streets of adobe houses is a picturesque village worth of visiting. Visits to the local church and the Town Hall famous for its clock tower where a mechanical San Francisco Solano gives a daily blessing at noon.</p>
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DAY 09 – TILCARA – SALTA - DEPARTURE

Tilcara Salta	Morning at leisure to explore on own until the time for the transfer to the airport in Salta or stay in Purmamarca and catch the bus to San Pedro de Atacama in Chile.
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