

# CHILE & ARGENTINA

## Volunteer Northern Chile & Argentina (Santiago to Buenos Aires) 22 days

You will begin your trip looking at the stunning, snowcapped Andes mountains which make up the backdrop for Santiago, the capital of Chile. From here you will head north to participate in a volunteer project helping a local indigenous community in the driest desert in the world, the Atacama Desert. After exploring this spectacular location which includes salt flats, geysers and lagoons, you will head across to Northern Argentina, and eventually finish your trip learning Tango and eating steak in Buenos Aires, the vibrant capital of Argentina.

### Itinerary

**Day 1 International flight to Santiago de Chile.**

**Day 2 Arrival Santiago - City Tour**

We will be met by our group leader. We will drop off our bags at our accommodation, before beginning a short sightseeing tour of Santiago, stopping for lunch and including the key sights such as Plaza de Armas, and “La Moneda” (the Government Palace). We will finish the tour in the bohemian area, Bellavista where we will take the funicular up the San Cristóbal Hill, to see a fantastic view of the city and the snowcapped mountains that make a beautiful backdrop to the city. In the evening we will have a Welcome Meeting, to hear more details about Chile and the rest of the trip.

Accommodation in hostel Santiago or similar

**Day 3 Valparaíso – Viña del Mar**

We will spend the day visiting the famous port of Valparaiso, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Valparaiso is a city known by its hills, unique colourful architecture, narrow winding streets and the oldest funicular system in the world. We will then head along the coast to the popular beach resort of Viña del Mar. After a relaxing walk along the beach, we will head back to Santiago.

Accommodation in hostel Santiago or similar

**Day 4 Santiago – Travel to Calama – San Pedro de Atacama - Salar de Atacama & Altiplanic Lagoons**

Early in the morning we will take a 2 hour flight north to Calama. From here we will take private transportation to our host community. On our way to the community, we will take in the breathtaking scenery made up of immense snowcapped volcanoes dotted across the desert, visit the Salt flats of the world famous “Salar de Atacama”, and head to the Chaxa Lagoon where many graceful Andean flamingo colonies, a rare, threatened species, live year round.

Accommodation in host community.

## **Volunteer Project Phase: Atacama Desert**

### **Day 5 to 11 Volunteer Project: Help northern communities self-sustain and maintain their cultural heritage**

The region's main tourist spot, San Pedro de Atacama, receives many foreign visitors all year round. While local tour operators profit from these visits, many villages belonging to different indigenous communities remain unnoticed and struggling to survive. Through tourism, many indigenous communities are now trying to find ways to generate an income for their families and have found that the improvement of their cultural and archeological sites is putting them in a position to do that.

Our project's objective will be related to sustainable tourism development, the maintenance and conservation of their cultural and historical heritage, and other communal activities, such as crop harvesting, sowing and farming.

Project Work may be: Preservation and improvement of the cultural heritage to allow tourists to see the archaeological and cultural sites; Work in harvest and sowing; Repair of communities' communal infrastructure.

Accommodation is locally run such as homestays, guest houses or communal rooms. This depends on the resources of the different communities. The accommodation is very basic. Sleeping bags required for cold temperatures.

### **Day 12 Toconao - Laguna Cejas - San Pedro de Atacama**

We say farewell to the community and leave first thing in the morning. We will stop off to visit Toconao, en route to the Laguna Cejas, where we can lie back and float in this incredible lagoon. We will then head to San Pedro de Atacama to rest and prepare for next days' journey to Argentina.

Accommodation in San Pedro in hostel or similar.

### **Day 13 San Pedro de Atacama- Tatio Geysers**

Starting with a very early morning pick up at your hotel, the day will begin with a visit to the geothermic area of the Tatio Geysers (4,230metres above sea level). We will then stop for breakfast, and have a chance to bathe in some natural hot springs and walk around the area. We will then head back to San Pedro and enjoy a free afternoon in the town.

Accommodation in San Pedro in hostel or similar.

### **Day 14 San Pedro de Atacama – Tilcara, Jujuy.**

Today we depart towards Argentina, through the Paso de Jama border crossing, which lies at approximately 4200 meters above sea level. We will drive through the deserted "puna" or high plateau, a landscape dominated by colorful mountains, volcanoes and salt flats. We will first get to the town of Susques in Jujuy province, a tiny colonial village. We will then pass through the blindingly Salinas Blancas (White Salt flats), a place of striking beauty. Then a sinuous road takes us to the highest point of the Argentinean

northern mountain range. From there, the road descends through the Cuesta de Lipan (Lipan Slope) which finally ends in the town of Purmamarca. Little Purmamarca sits under the celebrated Cerro de los Siete Colores (Hill of Seven Colors), a spectacular and jagged formation which offers a memorable range of hues. Handcrafts are offered here to visitors by its friendly inhabitants. We will keep travelling up to the charming village of Tilcara, which will be our place to spend the night.  
Accommodation in hostel or similar in Tilcara.

#### **Day 15 Tilcara, Jujuy – Salta, Salta**

From Tilcara we will drive down to Salta passing through the city of Jujuy. In the afternoon, we will do a city tour of Salta, visiting the San Bernardo Hill, where the view of the city is magnificent. At night, we will enjoy dinner at a typical “peña”.  
Accommodation in hostel or similar in Salta.

#### **Day 16 Salta – Cachi**

Today we will drive up to the scenic *Cuesta del Obispo* (Obispo slope) up to the enchanting and picturesque town of Cachi, a place surrounded by stunning scenery. Overlooked by noble mountains, it boasts fresh highland air, sunny days and crisp nights. The cobblestones, adobe houses, tranquil plaza and opportunities to explore the surroundings are just some of the attractions. Here we will also visit the Archeological Museum and local church.  
Accommodation in hostel or similar in Cachi

#### **Day 17 Cachi – Cafayate - Salta**

Today we will drive towards Cafayate, the second most important wine region of Argentina. This is a tranquil and small colonial Spanish city. Through 183 km, the road passes through the stunning Calchaqui Valleys where the wind and water have sculpted mountains in a unique way. From Cafayate we will drive back to Salta.  
Accommodation in hostel or similar in Salta

#### **Day 18 Salta - Travel to Buenos Aires (afternoon flight)**

Today we will explore the city of Salta, visit the archeological museum and then take a cable car up a hill to enjoy views of the entire Lerma Valley before flying to **Buenos Aires** on an evening flight.  
Accommodation in hostel or similar in Buenos Aires

#### **Day 19 Arrival Buenos Aires - Walking tour**

Buenos Aires, abundant in historic and monumental buildings, mixes together old buildings and new artistic neighborhoods. All this combined with the Argentinean personality has turned this city into a favorite place to visit. We will explore the streets of La Boca and San Telmo, stop for souvenirs, enjoying street shows and staying the night at a hostel in this area, famous for its “tango shows”, old cafes, museums, antique shops and bohemian nightlife. Welcome evening meal.  
Accommodation in hostel or similar in Buenos Aires

**Day 20 Buenos Aires center and Recoleta.**

Today we will visit Buenos Aires historic and financial/commercial centres. After lunch we will head towards Recoleta neighbourhood to visit the handcraft fair and its famous cemetery where Evita's grave can be found. At night, we will enjoy a tango class, and enjoy a farewell dinner whilst watching a world-famous tango show.

Accommodation in hostel or similar in Buenos Aires

**Day 21 International flight home.**

Today we will leave Buenos Aires and take our flight home.

**Day 22 Arrival UK**