

North Chile & Bolivia

3 volcanos up to 6000m, salt lakes, hot springs and a unique fauna

Dates: Saturday November 17 – Friday December 7, 2012 (21 days)

Guide: Martin Stettler, Switzerland, qualified mountain-guide UIAGM



Laguna Colorada, Bolivia, photo: Archiv Tinu Stettler Archives

THREE SOLITARY CLIMBS, UNESCO NATURAL WORLD HERITAGE LANDSCAPE AND A RICH FAUNA

The vast north of Chile (and the southwest of Bolivia) is characterized by its volcanic origin and the desert plateaus at the foot of the Andes. In this extraordinary landscape lie the Atacama Desert in one of the world's driest flat belts of land as well as the Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt lake.

Here we hike through Unesco natural world heritage landscapes and climb 3 attractive volcanos: two five thousands to get accustomed, as well as the highest point and highlight of the whole trip: the 6060m high Guallatiri.

Despite the aridness of the Altiplano we come across a surprisingly rich fauna living around the colourful lagunas: lamas, vicunjas, guanacos, flamingos, condors and many more.



Drive along the Atacama Desert to Laguna Miscanti, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

CHILE

About 4300 km and 39 degrees of latitude lie between the Atacama Desert in the north and Tierra del Fuego in the south (which roughly equals the distance from Norway to the Sahara) whereas the average width is only about 180 km. In between you come across the most astonishing contrasts of landscape: an almost Mediterranean area of developed and cultivated land in the centre, the volcanic belt of the snow-capped Andes, tropical rain forests, and in the deep south the labyrinthine archipelago of Patagonia with its glaciers and fiords. Since the nineties Chile, the „Tiger of South America“, has experienced a tremendous boom; its gross national income per inhabitant is the highest of the subcontinent.

IN THE ALTIPLANO

At the edge of the Atacama Desert lies San Pedro, our starting point for acclimatization. At an altitude of roughly 2500m we discover several natural wonders, all star-shaped around this oasis: for instance the Lagunas Miscanti and Miniques, the geysers of Tatio or the Valle de Luna. Well acclimatised we climb the volcanos Soquete, 5200m and Lascar, 5154m.

Then we cross the border to Bolivia by jeep where we visit the Lagunas Santa Rosa and Colorada on the way to the Salar de Uyuni. Here a unique world of colours and animals is waiting for us.

On the Bolivian-Chilean plateau in the far north lies Lauca National Park (Unesco natural world heritage), which is well-known for its extraordinary variety of animals



Parinacota, 6348m and Sajama, 6542m, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

and the majestic six thousanders Parinacota and Sajama (the highest mountain of Bolivia).

GUALLATIRI

Nearby, too, is Guallatiri, the highlight of our climbs. This prominent volcano has huge vaporous mists near the summit. The ascent of Guallatiri with a height over 6000 m provides extraordinary views of the Chilean plateau and the volcanos Parinacota and Sajama.

In the upper part we come across the ice pillars (penitentes) typical of this region, where we skilfully have to find our way to the summit. Though technically easy this can be rather strenuous depending on the height of the ice!

INDIO CULTURE

The arid and barren highland (altiplano) is sparsely populated. The few inhabitants we meet are Indios. They live along the few watercourses and depend on cattle breeding and some agriculture. The lagoons are too salty for people to live there.

Their forebears belonged to the very first settlers on earth. Evidence for this are the objects on display in the small museum.

EXPERIENCING AND DISCOVERING

On this trip we experience magnificent nature and a kind of solitude rarely found these days.



At Laguna Miscanti, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

The intensive yellow and ochre hues of the sand and the dried up grass as well as the blue-green lagoons form a unique kaleidoscope of colours. Starry nights let the visitor look up amazed at the sky, while a hot spring is bubbling or a desert fox is howling close by.

RELAXING AND ENJOYING

Our trip is meant to provide a good balance between physical activity and rest.

Hikes, ascents and days of travelling, hotel accommodation and nights in tents alternate in a well-planned manner. The inevitable drives between the various destinations are arranged so as to allow participants to lace up hiking boots again after a few days! And last but not least the innumerable hot springs are an opportunity to relax with a refreshing bath.

PROGRAMME

(subject to change)

1st day: Flight to Santiago

Individual flight to Santiago. Overnight stay in hotel.

2nd day: Onward flight to Calama, transfer to San Pedro de Atacama

Morning flight to Calama. From there we drive on to San Pedro de Atacama (2438



m), a lovely oasis at the edge of the Salar de Atacama, which has become a small up-and-coming tourist resort in the past few years. Towards the evening we take a short walk to the Valle de Luna in the Salt Cordillera. In the twilight of the evening this unreal lunar landscape is particularly impressive. Hotel accommodation.

3rd day: San Pedro - San Bartolo - Rio Grande

Visit to the museum and the Quito fortress. Then a 3-4 hours' hike through a mysterious canyon with a small brook – a tremendous contrast to the omnipresent desert landscape! Arrival in San Bartolo (2700 m). Further on to Rio Grande (3200 m), a typical village hidden away in a fertile valley. Camping out.

4th day: Rio Grande - Machuca

Hike (about 6 hrs.) up to the Altiplano. We walk through fertile valleys with local cultures and inhabitants. We eventually reach the village of Machuca (about 4000 m), where we learn more about how the local Indios live. Camping out.

5th: Machuca - Puritama - Tatio

Short hike (about 2-3 hrs.) to the hot springs of Puritama (3400 m), where we enjoy a refreshing bath before going on to the Tatio Geysers (4300 m) by bus. Camping out.

6th day: Ascent of volcano Soquete, 5200m

Today we climb our first volcano. The ascent first takes us along grass-covered crests before we finally reach the summit across a typical volcanic flank of lava. We descend through varying scenery down the other side of the mountain, passing puffing and steaming mud pots – the living earth! Duration 6-7 hrs. all in all. Camping out in El Tatio (4300 m).

7th day: El Tatio - San Pedro de Atacama

Early in the morning we marvel at the famous geysers of El Tatio. The sunrise with its change of light and shadow is a unique spectacle of nature. Afterwards we drive back to San Pedro de Atacama where you are free for the rest of the day. Hotel accommodation.

8th day: San Pedro - Laguna Miscanti/Miniques - Talabre

Drive to Toconao where we visit the fertile Jerez gorge at the edge of the Atacama salt lake. The onward drive to the lagoons of Miscanti and Miniques (between 4100 and 4350 m) certainly deserves five stars. Later on we drive on to Talabre (about 3100 m) where we camp out.

9th day: Ascent of volcano Lascar, 5154m - San Pedro de Atacama

Ascent of volcano Lascar (4-5 hrs.), provided its activity allows climbing the summit that particular day (normally no problem). In case this is not possible for safety reasons we will climb another peak nearby. Afterwards drive back to San Pedro de Atacama. Hotel accommodation.

10th day: San Pedro - Laguna Colorada - Guallajara (Bolivia)

Drive across the border to Laguna Verde (4320 m) in Bolivia at the foot of volcano Licancabur (5916 m). We cross beautiful landscapes and magnificent lagoons (Laguna Colorada). Towards the evening arrival in Guallajara. 8 hours' drive including stop-overs. Accommodation in a guesthouse.

11th day: Guallajara - San Juan

An extraordinary, but rather long drive through the Bolivian Altiplano to San Juan (4000 m). Fascinating expanses open up with magnificent kaleidoscopes of colours and a good opportunity to see another country and its inhabitants. 7 hours' drive including stop-overs. Accommodation in a guesthouse.

12th day: San Juan - Salar de Uyuni - Jirira

Drive to the Salar de Uyuni and crossing of the entire salt desert, the vastest in the world. On the way we stop at the Isle of Incahuasi before driving on to Jirira (3690 m) where we spend the night. 8 hours' drive including stop-overs. Accommodation in a guesthouse.

13th day: Climb to the vantage point of volcano Thunupa, 4750 m

After a short drive and the visit to a cave of mummies we hike (about 5-6 hrs.) to the vantage point of volcano Thunupa. From here we enjoy an incredible view of the salt lake and its islands. Afterwards we descend and return to Jirira. Accommodation in a guesthouse.

14th day: Jirira - Colchane (Chile)

Return to Chile. You will be free for the rest of the day. 8 hours' drive including stop-overs. Accommodation in a guesthouse.

15th day Colchane - Rio Arabilla - Salar de Surire

Short drive to the Arabilla river basin where we go on a 3 to 4-hour hike. Later we drive on to Surire salt lake (4250 m) where we will pitch camp close to the hot springs. 3-4 hours' drive.

16th day: Salar Surire - Guallatiri base camp

After a relaxing morning bath in the hot springs or some dolce far niente at the



View of Guallatiri at dusk from base camp, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

lagoon we drive on across the Altiplano to Guallatiri base camp, 4300m. 4 hours' drive. Camping out.

17th day: Ascent of volcano Guallatiri , 6060m

While it is still night we drive on an old mining road up to an altitude of about 5000 m. With the help of our headtorches we make our way through lava rubble to reach the gentle lava slopes of Guallatiri at daybreak. At an altitude of about 300 m below the summit we come to a steep slope across which we climb through a labyrinth of ice chunks up to the summit plateau, (normally) without crampons. After traversing it we tackle the final ascent of the summit where we are rewarded for our exertion by an overwhelming view! 7-9 hours' climb. Camping out.

18th day: Guallatiri base camp - Lago Chungara - Parinacota - Putre

We drive on to Lago Chungara, one of the highest lakes in the world at the foot of Parinacota. From here we continue to Parinacota Village through Lauca National Park either on foot (in 3-4 hours) or by bus, depending on how we feel. In any case we will have enough time to explore Lauca Park with its numerous animals! After visiting the typical Altiplano village of Parinacota we drive on using the most important road linking Chile to Bolivia down to Putre (3500m) where we spend the night. 5 hours' drive including stop-overs. Hotel accommodation.



Parinacota seen from Lago Chungara, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

19th day: Putre - Codpa

Drive to Codpa (2050m), a pre-altiplano oasis. On the way we visit typical villages such as Belén, Tignamar, Timar etc. Hotel accommodation.

20th day: Codpa - Arica - Santiago

Drive down the Azapa valley to Arica on the Pacific Ocean. In the late afternoon flight back to Santiago. Hotel accommodation.

21th day: Individual flight back home

REQUIREMENTS

Fitness level

Daily hiking time is usually 3-4 hours, for those who decide to climb the volcanos it will take between 6 and 9 hours (depending on the volcano). Since all of the climbs can be done in a day, you may leave out a tour occasionally.

Required skills

Most of the time we hike on sandy or stony lava paths where no special skills are required. To climb Guallatiri we may have to use crampons. High mountain touring experience, however, is not required.



View of Licancabur volcano from Laguna Verde, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

COMRADESHIP

On a journey like this sincere comradeship is essential. We expect participants to be tolerant and respectful towards each other, towards our local helpers and the native population.

WEATHER AND TEMPERATURES

During this time of the year the climate in the Altiplano is mostly dry and quite warm during the day. But there may be quite a strong wind and at night temperatures may drop to -10° celsius due to the high altitude (mostly above 3500m).

EQUIPMENT

For our trekking tours we need the same equipment as for (high) mountain touring in the Alps. We provide special individual equipment such as warm down sleeping bags, very comfortable mats and down jackets.

A detailed list of equipment is enclosed in the documentation we will send to the participants in good time.

FOOD

We usually have full board. In the cities we have our meals in restaurants or in hotels. When on tour we carry the food, also provided for, in our backpacks. Please note that it is forbidden to import food to Chile.



Stop in the middle of the vastest salt desert in the world: the Salar de Uyuni, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

HEALTH

Individual preparation

For this journey a good state of health is required. We recommend to all participants to do a health check-up with the family doctor.

We stay at altitudes between 3000m and 4300m for a longer period, which means an additional challenge for our body. Hikes in the mountains above 2000m are the ideal preparation.

LOOKING AFTER PARTICIPANTS

The guide has the necessary knowhow and experience to take care of minor injuries and illnesses. We take a first-aid kit with us put together by a medical doctor according to latest standards.

GROUP SIZE

At least 8, maximum 12 participants

BOOKING AND DEADLINE

We ask you to register early, if possible until August 15, 2012, using the form enclosed or online mail@southamerica-trekking.com.

PROGRAMME ALTERATIONS

In spite of minute preparations made for this trip changes in the programme cannot be entirely excluded due to unforeseen events. They can be caused by the weather or short-term changes due to legal or political requirements or health problems of participants etc. In such cases we do our best to carry through the programme within the bounds of safety or, if this is not possible, to offer an alternative, equally satisfactory programme.



TINU STETTLER, MOUNTAIN GUIDE UIAGM, BÖNIGEN

I have been organising mountaineering trips and trekkings in South America in general and to North Chile in particular for over 13 years. Thanks to my annual week-long stays, the many acquaintances and language studies at various schools I speak Spanish fluently.

LOCAL PARTNERS AND ASSISTANTS

For several years I have been working together with the same first-class local agency. On our trekking we are accompanied by additional local guides, a cook as well as several drivers.

COSTS

All travelling costs inclusive in Chile/Bolivia from Santiago and back: CHF 6950.-

(Price and programme are subject to alteration)

WHAT WE OFFER

Included in the price:

- Your tour and trekking guide, a qualified Swiss mountain guide with excellent knowledge of the area and fluent Spanish
- Scheduled flight Santiago – Calama
- Scheduled flight Arica – Santiago
- All transfers according to programme
- Overnight accommodation (double rooms): 6 nights in *** hotels, 5 nights in



Flamingos at Laguna Verde, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

modest guesthouses, 8 nights in tents (for two)

- Full board during the whole trip with the exception of drinks
- Special personal equipment provided by the tour leader such as a warm down sleeping bag, a high-quality and very comfortable insulation mat and a down jacket.
- All group tips

Not included in the price:

- Obligatory cancellation insurance
- Airport taxes
- Individual travel insurance
- Individual flight to Santiago
- Extra costs due to weather or other conditions beyond our control or changes in the programme at participants' special request
- Extra food on-site
- Drinks
- Extra charge for a single room in hotels
- Individual tips



The church of Isluga, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

CONFIRMATION OF REGISTRATION – DEPOSIT – PAYMENT

After receipt of your registration you get a written confirmation. After registration a deposit of CHF 1000.- is payable. 30 days before the start of the trip the full amount is payable.

GENERAL CONTRACT AND TRAVEL CONDITIONS (GTC)

We refer to our General Contract and Travel Conditions (GTC) you will find in the annex.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS FOR SWISS CITIZENS

Passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of the journey home. A visa is not necessary for Chile and Bolivia.

VACCINATIONS

There are no regulations as far as vaccinations are concerned. Please check your protection given by vaccination and contact your family doctor or specialist in tropical diseases. We recommend immunization against polio, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A and B and diphteria.



Early morning natural spectacle of Tatio Geysers, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

INSURANCE

Participants are responsible for sufficient insurance cover. Please check your insurance cover for foreign countries. A cancellation insurance is obligatory. We recommend sufficient insurance for luggage and for breaking off your trip early.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE JOURNEY

After registration you will receive all the information for participants. In good time before the journey starts you get the necessary information about where and when we meet, the flight schedule, the list of participants, important addresses and last minute announcements.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

We are happy to give you more information personally about the trip/trekking and to answer your individual questions. Don't hesitate to contact us: Tel. +41 (0)79 667 17 18 or mail@southamerica-trekking.com.



Evening twilight in the Valle de Luna, photo: Martin Stettler Archives

We are looking forward to welcoming you to this trip!

It will offer you unforgettable adventures and impressions of a superb and extraordinary nature and mountain world. Have we stirred your interest? We would be very happy to welcome you in our group!

Bönigen, in November 2011

Registration Form for the North Chile & Bolivia trip from November 17 till December 7, 2012

The person undersigned definitely registers for this journey.

Family / surname and first name

(Don't fail to give all the names registered in the passport)

Date of birth

Street/Nr.

Place of residence

Tel (private and place of work / mobile phone)

Fax

Email

To contact in case of emergency:

Name, address, telephone number

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Occupation

Nationality

Passport number

Date of expiry / Place and date of issue:

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Cancellation insurance (obligatory):

Name of the insurance company

I have taken note of and accept the General Contract and Travel Conditions.

Place / Date

Signature.....