



Hidden Catamarca

09 DAYS / 08 NIGHTS

DAY 01: BUENOS AIRES / CATAMARCA / TINOGASTA 300 km

Arrival at Coronel Felipe Varela Airport, followed by a transfer to downtown **Catamarca**. There we will have free time to explore the historic center, highlighted by Plaza 25 de Mayo, beside which stands the Cathedral Basilica of Nuestra Señora del Valle—the most important in the province—built in the neoclassical style between 1859 and 1875. It houses the image of Nuestra Señora del Valle, the "Virgen Morena," found between 1618 and 1620 in a grotto in Choya. Free time for lunch. In the early afternoon, we will transfer to the town of **Tinogasta**, the starting point of the *Adobe Route*. The 280 km journey takes us through Miraflores, Huillapima, and Chumbicha, former railway stations that line our way along RN 38. We continue through the imposing *Quebrada de la Cébila* to reach **Aimogasta**, already in the province of La Rioja, a town with major vineyards and vast olive groves. There we will take RN 60 heading northwest and re-enter Catamarca territory, passing through Villa Mazán, Aimogasta, Copacabana, and La Puntilla. Arrival in **Tinogasta**. Accommodation at the [Casagrande Hotel de Adobe 3*](#) or similar. **Dinner. Overnight in Tinogasta.**

DAY 02: TINOGASTA / ADOBE ROUTE / FIAMBALÁ / TINOGASTA 135 km

Breakfast. We will begin our tour of the **Adobe Route**, a 55 km circuit between Tinogasta and Fiambalá along RN 60 that will take us to chapels, old mansions, and historic and prehistoric buildings made of adobe, a mixture of mud, straw, and dung. The circuit starts at the **Posada Restaurante Casa Grande**, in the town of Tinogasta, which dates from 1897; just a few meters away stands the Municipal Cultural Center, originally the town's first hospital, built in 1898. At km 1,337 of RN 60 lies the neighboring village of El Puesto, where we will visit the **Oratorio de los Orquera**, a small chapel from 1747 that houses images of Nuestra Señora del Rosario and of Christ crucified, as well as a painting of the Virgin Mary nursing the Child, all brought from Chuquisaca. Continuing along RN 60, we will come to Anillaco, home to the **Church of Nuestra Señora del Rosario**, built in 1712—which makes it the oldest in Catamarca—and declared a Provincial Historic Monument in 1993. Beside it stand the remains of **El Mayorazgo de Anillaco**, completed between 1712 and 1714. Once in Fiambalá, we will see the Church of San Pedro, declared a National Historic Monument, built by the royalist captain Domingo Carrizo in keeping with 18th-century colonial architecture. On the adjoining grounds stands the **Comandancia de Armas de Fiambalá** (admission not included). We will then have free time for lunch (not included), after which we will visit the **Fiambalá Hot Springs** (admission not included). The incredible Fiambalá Hot Springs emerge from a spectacular gorge at the foot of the Andes, just 17 km from the town of Fiambalá. It is a wonderful place where adventure and tranquility come together, a unique opportunity to enjoy the wellness benefits of thermal waters. The waters—classified as hyperthermal, with sulfate, silicate, alkaline bicarbonate, and weak chloride content—emerge at 1,750 m above sea level and collect in 14 pools built of Andean stone, with temperatures ranging from 28°C to 51°C. After the visit, return to Tinogasta. Accommodation at the selected hotel. **Dinner. Overnight in Tinogasta.**

DAY 03: TINOGASTA / BALCÓN DEL PISSIS / TINOGASTA 400 km

Breakfast. Departure for the excursion to the **Balcón del Pissis**: we will travel 90 km along RN 60, which beyond Fiambalá becomes the "*Ruta de los Seismiles*" (Route of the Six-Thousanders). This stretch will take us through a landscape of breathtaking heights, flanked by some of the highest volcanoes on the planet, many of them over 6,000 m above sea level. Along the way we will spot local wildlife—vicuñas, guanacos, condors, and *suris* (Andean rheas)—as well as native plants adapted to the extreme conditions of high altitude, such as *tola* and *yareta*. Although the *Ruta de los Seismiles* continues all the way to the San



Francisco Pass, our adventure will take a 55 km detour along a gravel road to reach the Balcón del Pissis on a 4×4 expedition into the heart of *Alta Catamarca*. Our first stop will be *Laguna de los Aparejos*, home to flamingos that migrate to the area in summer. Next comes *Laguna Celeste*, known for the intensity of its vibrant blue color. Finally, we will reach the **Balcón del Monte Pissis**, a natural viewpoint at 4,550 m above sea level from which we will gaze out at the Pissis Volcano, the fourth-highest mountain in the Americas and the highest inactive volcano in the world (6,792 m above sea level). *Laguna Verde*, *Laguna Marrón*, *Laguna Blanca*, and *Laguna Azul* will be our next stops. On the way back, we will stop for **lunch** at the *Hostería Cortaderas*. We then continue to Tinogasta. Accommodation at the selected hotel. **Dinner. Overnight in Tinogasta.**

DAY 04: TINOGASTA / TATÓN DUNES / TINOGASTA 180 km

Breakfast. Afterward, we will head to the **Tatón Dunes**: an immense expanse of giant sand mountains near the village of Tatón that form an extraordinary landscape. Among these dunes stands the **Federico Kirbus dune**, considered the highest in the world: rising from a base at about 1,611 m above sea level, it is 1,234 m high and reaches 2,845 m above sea level. In the *Fiambalá bolsón* (basin), vast expanses of sediment lifted by the wind gave rise to this white desert. The dunes offer a unique sense of adventure, and the force of the wind keeps the scenery constantly changing, amazing all who visit. We will head north on RP 34, passing through the villages of La Ramadita, Saujil, and Medanitos. Once at the *Tatón Dunes*, we will have time to enjoy the landscape, take photographs from different vantage points, and, for the more adventurous, go *sandboarding* on the dunes (one board per two travelers included; 4×4 dune tours not included). Return to Tinogasta and free afternoon, with the option of arranging a visit to a local winery. Accommodation at the selected hotel. **Dinner. Overnight in Tinogasta.**

DAY 05: TINOGASTA / EL SHINCAL RUINS / BELÉN 165 km

Breakfast. We will retrace our route along RN 60 to its junction with RN 40, near Alpasinche. We continue north on RN 40 to the town of **Londres**, the first city founded by the Spanish in Catamarca, established in 1558 by Juan Pérez de Zurita on the banks of the Quimivil River; because of the Calchaquí Wars, it had to change location repeatedly. Facing the so-called "*plaza de abajo*" (lower plaza) stands the Church of San Juan Bautista, and facing the "*plaza de arriba*" (upper plaza) is the Church of La Inmaculada Concepción, declared a National Historic Monument. Leaving this village behind, just 6 km farther on we arrive at the **El Shincal Archaeological Site** (admission not included), which covers nearly 30 hectares where numerous partially reconstructed enclosures, stairways, and paths can be seen, all part of a populous urban center built and inhabited by the Incas between 1470 and 1536. Framed by extraordinary natural surroundings, the site comprises more than a hundred enclosures grouped into monumental buildings. Two platforms, each built on a low hill on opposite sides of the plaza, were used as lookouts and for worshipping the gods. From there, visitors can take in the sweeping panorama and structures such as the *Kallanca*—a large stone hall that served as a workshop and storehouse, whose perimeter dry-stone walls (*pircas*) and trapezoidal doorways are still preserved—; the *Ushnu*—a quadrangular throne with a stone stairway—; the plaza; and the *Sinchihuasi*—a row of rooms. After the visit, we continue to the town of Belén. On arrival, free time for lunch (not included), followed by accommodation at [Posada las Cardas](#) or similar. **Overnight in Belén.**

DAY 06: BELÉN / LAGUNA BLANCA / ANTOFAGASTA DE LA SIERRA 280 km

Breakfast. Departure from Belén along the **legendary National Route 40**, through the *Quebrada* de Belén and along the Belén River, past the villages of La Ciénaga, San Fernando, Puerta de Corral Quemado, Villa Vil, and Barranca Larga, then through the *Quebrada* and dunes (*Médanos*) of Randolpho into the **Laguna Blanca UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**, with views of the imposing snowcapped peak of the same name, which rises to 6,030 m above sea level, and vicuña sightings. We continue toward El Peñón via the *Portezuelo de Pasto Ventura* pass at 4,000 m above sea level, arriving in **Antofagasta de la Sierra**, at 3,500 m above sea level, from where we will enjoy a magnificent view of the Antofagasta and Alumbra



Volcanoes and the *Los Negros* volcanic field with its ringing bell stones (*piedras campanas*). In the village, travelers can visit the Mineralogical and Archaeological Museums. Accommodation at the [Hostería Pueblo del Sol 3*](#) or similar. **Overnight in Antofagasta.**

DAY 07: ANTOFAGASTA / ANTOFALLA SALT FLAT / ANTOFAGASTA 220 km

Breakfast. Departure for **Antofalla**, a small high-mountain village and Kolla-Atacameño Indigenous community located at 3,900 m above sea level near the Antofalla Volcano (6,400 m above sea level), which the Incas chose for their sacred rituals. We will pass through the *Quebrada de Calalaste* and the **Antofalla Salt Flat** which, at 150 km in length, is considered the longest in the world. Lunch in Antofalla, then return via the *Quebrada del Diablo*, entering the *salt flat* to see some extinct geysers known as the *Ojos del Campo*, small lagoons lying in the middle of the Antofalla Salt Flat. Each of the "eyes" has a different color, the most striking being black, red, and dark blue. Throughout the journey we will take in a landscape of strongly contrasting colors and native wildlife: vicuñas, llamas, foxes, and *suris*. Return to Antofagasta de la Sierra. **Overnight in Antofagasta.**

DAY 08: ANTOFAGASTA / CAMPO DE PIEDRA PÓMEZ / BELÉN 330 km

Breakfast. We then set out, first passing *Laguna Antofagasta*, repopulated by flamingos and Andean ducks. We will be able to see the Carlucci, de la Copa, and Carachi Pampa Volcanoes before turning off the main road and following 4×4 tracks into the magnificent and unique **Campo de Piedra Pómez** (Pumice Stone Field): a "sea" of white rock covering 25 km² at more than 3,000 m above sea level in the vastness of the Puna, the result of volcanic activity, featuring pinkish crests and spectacular formations. There we will take a very easy walk, followed by free time for lunch in the village of El Peñón. We then continue on to Belén. **Overnight in Belén.**

DAY 09: BELÉN / BUENOS AIRES

Breakfast. Depending on the time of the return flight, in the morning we may visit **Las Arañitas Hilanderas**, a renowned artisanal textile cooperative made up mainly of women weavers. Born in Belén—a town known as the "cradle of the poncho"—, the project began in September 2008 to rescue and keep alive the region's traditional spinning and weaving techniques. Transfer to the airport in La Rioja or San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca. End of our services.