

Aconcagua Frequently Asked Questions

Where is Aconcagua?

Argentina is a beautiful and lively country located at the bottom of the South American continent. It is home to many diverse climatic and geographical regions. Aconcagua is located on the country's western edge, near its border with Chile.

Where does the trip start and end?

Mendoza is the starting and ending place for our trip. It can easily be reached by daily flights from both Buenos Aires and Santiago. Mendoza is a colorful city of approximately 500,000 people full of interesting history, markets, and parks. It is located in the heart of Argentina's wine country and the climate is predominantly hot and sunny!

What is the climate like?

Mendoza is warm during climbing season, with daytime temperatures generally in the 80's and 90's. Trekking temperatures can vary from warm days to cooler nights. High on the mountain temperatures can drop to around -25 degrees Fahrenheit.

What is the primary language used in Argentina?

Spanish is the language in both Argentina and Chile, but English is common.

What time zone is Mendoza in?

Mendoza is Eastern Time Zone + 1 hour (March – November) & Eastern Time +2 hours (November – March). Mendoza does not observe daylight savings time.

What skill level is required for this climb?

The primary route used by MGI is non-technical and no formal mountaineering training is required. Climbing Aconcagua does expose individuals to high altitude where most find ordinary tasks more trying. Thus familiarity with higher elevations as well as having a solid grasp on the various elements of cold weather backpacking and trekking will prove to be most beneficial. Basic ice ax and cramponing is also a plus, but we'll have time on the mountain to review these skills.

How much spending money should I bring?

We recommend bringing at least \$400 cash or travelers checks for Mendoza hotels, restaurants, gifts, and travel after our climb. Always carry a credit card for emergencies as well. Any on-mountain transactions including base camp services and last minute porter hires will also require cash (see question regarding cash on the mountain). There are many ATMs available in Mendoza as well as HSBC banks. Credit cards are accepted for most transactions in-town.

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How difficult is the climb?

TREKKING DIFFICULTY

All trekking is moderate, progressing to difficult at higher elevations. The trail is rocky all the way to the summit, unless there is snow. Trekking days are usually four to eight hours long, in some cases climbing up to 2500 feet in a day. In general the weather is warm and sunny on the approach hike days!

CLIMBING DIFFICULTY

On most routes the climbing is basic level scrambling, with potential for basic snow/ice climbing, depending on the current conditions. The climbing on the Polish Glacier route is demanding, steep, and exposed. It is a serious route that needs to be in the right condition to be safe.

What physical conditioning do I need to have for this climb?

Climbers should be conditioned such that they could easily run continuously for at least 2 miles or be able to complete lengthy all day hikes varying in elevation with a weighted pack.

What is the best way to train for a successful Aconcagua climb?

Aconcagua is a physically demanding mountain that requires excellent physical conditioning. There are a variety of ways to prepare for such a climb, but training should include a cardio exercise, such as running, for a minimum of 1 hour 3 times a week. Getting used to carrying a 50lb pack with double mountaineering boots will also increase your enjoyment while on the mountain. Stairs are your best friend!

We recommend reading *Climbing: Training for Peak Performance* by Clyde Soles or contacting our office for more information.

How heavy will the pack I'm required to carry be?

Everyone will carry a daypack weighing up to 20 lbs, while trekking in to base camp Argentina. Mules will carry the rest of our equipment in to base camp. Above base camp (after day 3) we will double carry loads that will weigh approximately 45 - 60 lbs. Descending from high camp we will carry all of our equipment, in one load, down to base camp. This is the heaviest load of the trip, but it only takes four to six hours to get back down to base camp Mulas. Our equipment will then be carried back to the trailhead by mules.

Will I need to carry EVERYTHING up and over the mountain?

The Vacas Valley itinerary ascends along a variation of the False Polish Traverse route on the North East side of the mountain and descends via the "Normal" route on the West side. These two routes meet at high camp, which means you will need only to carry a light pack on summit day. However, since the ascent differs from the descent route, everything that you begin your journey with will accompany you for the duration of the climb. For this reason, we'll be sure to slim down our kits to the essentials and take only what we need from Penitentes.

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What type of footwear will I need?

Sturdy, but light, hiking shoes offer the best compromise of support-to-weight for the hike up to base camp. They will also work well as in-camp shoes. Double mountaineering boots are **required** by the park service when trekking above base camp, and are better suited for the rough trail and cold temperatures often experienced higher on the mountain. For recommendations on specific boot choices please call our office.

Can I use Porters?

There are porter services on Aconcagua, the porter staff utilized by MGI is comprised of many high quality, hard working locals. Unlike some international climbs such as Kilimanjaro, porters are not included in the cost of the expedition. If you plan on using porters during haul & move days above basecamp, you should budget an additional \$1,500 - \$2,200 USD, and have cash available on the mountain to pay the porters.

Will I need cash on the mountain?

While guests usually don't anticipate utilizing porter services on the mountain, sometimes this support can be the difference in making it to the summit or not. Because it is not included in the cost of the expedition (as it's usually not needed), it is important to consider bringing the necessary funds to the mountain with you to obtain this support should you decide to utilize it. Most porters on the mountain will only accept cash-in-hand (Preferring US Dollars).

The same is true for non-life-threatening helicopter and mule evacuations & departures which can normally only be paid for by cash-in-hand.

While we understand the reluctance of guests to carry large sums of money on the mountain with them, we never-the-less advise bringing \$1,500-\$2,200 US dollars to the mountain in case you need to use porter support or have to leave early and opt for a helicopter or mule as your mode of transportation. While there are plenty of ATM's and currency exchange locations in Mendoza, we recommend bringing this cash with you beforehand as it will be one less thing to do in Mendoza as you prepare to head into the mountains.

What ratio of guides to clients will be used?

MGI Aconcagua climbs are staffed using a 4:1 guest to guide ratio, though most enjoy a 3:1 ratio. Additionally, the support of other MGI trips is often utilized in the event a climber needs to descend.

When is the best season to climb / which dates will have the greatest chance for success?

December through February is when the weather is most stable. High winds and cold temps may occur any time of the year.

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How many climbers are on this expedition?

MGI will rarely book more than 8 on a climb. Exceptions for private trip itineraries may be made and are welcomed. Typically a group has between 6 to 8 climbers.

Will I be sharing a tent or lodging with other climbers?

Sharing tents is one of the most efficient weight cutting measures that can be taken. Therefore tents will be shared unless a specific request for other arrangement is made. Most folks find our expedition tents to be plenty roomy. You will share rooms on this expedition in Penitentes, but you can pay a higher fee for single rooms. Contact our office for information on single room supplements

What gear will I need?

Please review the gear list provided on our website.

How does your gear rental system work?

If you would like to request rental gear, please submit the rental gear form included in the registration packet at least 45 days in advance. All rental gear will be mailed out to participants before departure or made available upon arrival in Mendoza. Climbers are responsible for shipping costs, cleaning gear, and returning to MGI.

How is drinking water treated?

All cooking and "hot drink" water is boiled. All other water will be treated using a SteriPEN ultraviolet purifier or iodine water treatment tablets. All climbers are required, at a minimum, to carry enough iodine tablets to treat 55 liters of water.

What are your safety & rescue protocols?

All of our guides are trained Wilderness First Responders, most are also certified Emergency Medical Technicians. Our number one job as guides is to catch any medical issues before they become serious. For this reason we take twice daily pulse oximeter readings and constantly monitor our guests' health. In the event someone develops an altitude related illness, our first action will be to descend. If we cannot immediately descend, we will access on mountain oxygen and portable hyperbaric chamber caches to alleviate altitude issues. Our staff also carries VHF radios, SPOT messengers and satellite phones for instant contact with other guides, park officials and EMS services. Mendoza has several excellent medical centers that specialize in mountain related illness. If someone is seriously ill or injured, an MGI guide will accompany them all the way to the hospital and the trip will continue with the lead guide.

What will the meals on the expedition be like?

At the lodge in Penitentes we will have our meals prepared for us by the hotel staff. After the lodge the guides will be cooking our food. Meals on the trek in and at base camp will include fresh fruits and vegetables. Light weight nutritious foods are prepared higher on the mountain. Climbing and trekking at altitude require three to four times the caloric intake necessary to perform the same work at lower elevations. In order to meet these caloric demands we will be eating higher calorie food than usual. Please let us know if you have any dietary restrictions.

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Can I bring some food from home?

All meals will be provided on this climb but bringing a few items, like cliff bars or Emergen-Cs, is recommended. Make sure you LOVE the items you bring as many people experience a general lack of interest in food at higher elevations.

Are there any inoculation requirements?

There are some suggested immunizations, but none that are required. We recommend that you check the [CDC web site](#) for the most current immunization information. If you have received immunizations, either in the past, or for this trip, make certain to bring your immunization book/card.

What is the best way to get to Mendoza?

Most flights connect through Buenos Aires or Santiago, Chile. Detailed travel information will be sent to you upon registration.

Where do I meet my guides?

Your guide or a Mountain Guides International representative will meet you at the airport. Look for a large Mountain Guides International sign.

Do I need travel insurance?

We highly recommend travel insurance. In many cases travel insurance will cover medical expenses, evacuation costs, lost baggage, travel delays, and other costs in the event you need to cancel your trip. We have worked with almost every provider of travel insurance and feel strongly that for U.S. citizens, the Adventure Travel Protection Plan from Travel Guard is the best one available. It is one of the only plans that covers high altitude climbing and has significant benefits if purchased within 15 days of making your trip deposit. Details can be found on our website at http://alaskamountainguides.com/?page_id=226

Other insurance options include:

Travelers Insurance – (800) 243 3174 – Provides general travel insurance excluding: technical mountaineering and rock and ice climbing. Visit the website for more information: www.travelinsured.com

The American Alpine Club – (212) 722 1628 – Worldwide rescue insurance is included with a club membership however general travel insurance is not. Visit the website for more information: www.americanalpineclub.org

If you are a non-U.S. citizen and would like assistance finding a travel insurance provider, please contact our office.

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What if I arrive early or depart late? Can you arrange extra nights of lodging?

We are happy to make arrangements such as personalized tours, extra hotels rooms, airport pick-ups and arrange for private rooms.

Where will I stay while I'm in Mendoza?

We have good relations with, are willing to make reservations for, and prefer our guests stay at the following tiered levels of accommodation.

The Park Hyatt Mendoza	5 star	\$230 - \$1000 / night
The Hotel Carollo	3 star	\$45 - \$65 / night
The Hostel Independencia		\$10 - \$20 / night

We have found the lodging above to be clean and courteous and all are close to the city center. Please indicate your lodging preference at the time of registration. Guests who do not indicate a preference will have lodging arranged at the Hotel Carollo.

Are there any entry or Visa requirements?

No but there is a reciprocity fee.

Reciprocity Fees & Proof of Payment

Although a visa is not required in advance, in late 2009 Argentina initiated a reciprocity fee in response to Canada, the United States and Australia charging fees to visiting Argentines. As of January 7, 2013 visitors to Argentina are required to use a pre-paid on-line program **before** departing their respective countries.

How do I Pay Reciprocity Fees Online?

1. Start by entering this website: <https://virtual.provinciapagos.com.ar/ArgentineTaxes/>, clicking "sign up" below the username/password prompt, and register.
2. Complete the form including personal and credit card details. This information and the entry code will be sent electronically to the DNM (Argentine Customs).
3. After payment is processed, print the receipt.
4. Be ready to show this receipt to the ticketing agent before leaving your home country.
5. Upon arrival in Argentina, go to the DNM Office and present the printed receipt.
6. The receipt will be scanned by DNM staff and the data will be validated to enable entry to Argentina.

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Will there be any communication while we are on the mountain?

Weather and equipment permitting, MGI guides check in with headquarters every two days. Guides use two way radios as well as VHF radios to communicate with other teams on the mountain, base camp, and the park service. Clients may have an opportunity to make a very expensive phone call or use very slow and equally expensive internet connection while in basecamp.

How much should I tip my guide?

Guides are permitted to accept and greatly appreciate tips. Most guests tip between 5 and 10 percent of the trip's cost.

How do I register for this expedition? What paperwork do I need to send in?

All necessary registration materials can be found on our [website](#) and submitted electronically, by fax, or by mail. A \$500 deposit is required to ensure your spot on any MGI trip. To place the deposit, please call our office toll free at (800) 766-3396.

What is and isn't included?

INCLUDED: Transfers, hotels in Los Penitentes, mules, all meals from Mendoza to Mendoza, group climbing and camping equipment, and guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Meals and hotels in Mendoza, airfare to/from Mendoza, climbing permit, porters, bottled water, soda, and alcohol.

What is your refund policy?

REFUNDS: In the event that you are unable to join us the following guidelines will apply. All deposits include a \$150 non-refundable registration fee. Full Refunds, less registration fee, will be provided 90 days prior to the trip date. 50% refunds will be provided 60-89 days prior to trip date. The 50% retained by MGI can be credited towards another trip or course if used within 12 months. No refunds will be provided with 59 days of the trip date. This policy has been established to meet the demands of planning well-organized trips and courses. If for any reason a course ends early there will be no refund. If you have not paid in full 90 days prior to your trips departure, and you have not contacted us regarding other payment options, we reserve the right to schedule another individual in your place. In this event, you are responsible for any associated costs

IF YOUR TRIP IS CANCELLED: If for any reason MGI has to cancel your trip, all deposits and trip payments will be refunded in full, or, are fully transferable to another trip.

Please see all of our trip policies on our website under registration.

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