

IWLS Aconcagua Expedition Course Itinerary

This is a flexible trip itinerary that shows the general progression of the trip. Our exact schedule will depend highly on the weather, strength of the group, and time of year.

Day 0: Arrive in Mendoza. An instructor will meet you at the airport with an IWLS sign.

Day 1: Mendoza to Penitentes. In the morning we will get our park service climbing permits, and go over risk management considerations for expedition planning. Then we travel by private passenger van for approximately 3 hours to the winter resort community of Penitentes where we will spend the evening. Penitentes, situated at approx. 9,000 ft., is a good elevation to begin acclimatizing. After getting situated in our rooms at the lodge we will do a check of everyone's equipment, pack clothing and gear for the next morning, and pack bags for the mules. Dinner is in the lodge.

Day 2: Penitentes to Pampa Lena.

After breakfast in the lodge, we will trek for approximately four hours up the Vacas valley to our first camp at Pampa Lena (9,200 ft.). The valley is spectacular and the hiking is in a warm, high Andean landscape.

Day 3: Pampa Lena to Casa Piedra.

After packing up in the morning we will use a mule to ferry us across the Vacas River. Hiking time is approximately six hours to our camp at Casa Piedra (11,000 ft.). The deep valleys open up as we travel forward, and we get our first views of the mountain.

Day 4: Casa Piedra to Base Camp.

Hiking time is approximately eight hours to our Base Camp (12,800 ft.).

There is a lot of opportunity to see wild guanaco, a relative of the llama, throughout the day. We also have beautiful views of the Vacas Glacier and all of the glaciers in the upper Vacas valley.

Day 5: Rest/Acclimatization Day.

Day 6: Carry Equipment and Supplies to Camp 1 (14,800 ft.).

Hiking time is approximately six to eight hours round trip.

Day 7: Rest/Acclimatization Day.

Day 8: Move to Camp 1.

Hiking time is approximately four to six hours. Camp 1 has spectacular views of the upper mountain.





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Day 9: Rest/Acclimatization Day.

Day 10: Carry Equipment and Supplies to Camp 2 (16,000 ft.).

Hiking time is approximately six to eight hours round trip.

Day 11: Move to Camp 2.

Hiking time is approximately six to eight hours.

Day 12: Rest and Acclimatization. Mid-course evaluations: Lead instructors will assess participants' level of involvement and assessment rubrics associated with the IWLS curriculum. These, in conjunction with peer evaluations, allow participants to receive positive feedback and develop awareness in regards to fulfilling the requirements to receive certification as an outdoor leader.

Day 13: Carry Equipment and Supplies to Camp 3 (20,000 ft.).

Hiking time is approximately eight hours round trip. High Camp is located at White Rocks on the North Ridge. It is an outstanding high camp that is one of the best protected on the mountain. It is less crowded and more sanitary than other high camps, and its placement saves an hour of travel time on summit morning relative to the regular high camp on the normal route.

Day 14: Move to Camp 3 (High Camp- Cholera)

Camp 3 is at approximately 20,000 ft. and is located just below the Polish Glacier. We traverse from Camp 2 to meet up with the upper portion of the Guanacos route and Camp 3. White Rocks possesses the excellent combination of being high enough to keep the length of summit day to an appropriate duration, without being too high and having the increased likelihood of sleeping poorly/difficulty with altitude. The next protected spot for a high camp is much further up and it is too high to sleep well there. Camp 3 offers breathtaking views of many of the highest peaks of the Andes!

Day 15: Summit Day!

We are up early to prepare. Summit day is usually eight to fourteen hours.

It is a demanding day, but climbers are rewarded with stunning views across the Andes in all directions. Don't forget your camera!

Day 16-17: These days are included to accommodate time for additional acclimatization/rest, and weather days. These extra days are built in to provide the best possible conditions for each individual to summit. Ample contingency days are important to accommodating changing individual and group needs.





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In the last few days of the course we will have final peer and instructor evaluations. Students will be evaluated on their understanding and completion of the IWLS curriculum.

Day 18: High Camp to Plaza Mulas.

We will descend from our High Camp to Plaza Mulas, the base camp for the normal route. We carry all of our equipment in one load for the 6,000 foot descent.

Day 19: Plaza Mules to Penitentes.

We hike for approximately eight to ten hours down the Horcones Valley to the trailhead. We use mules to help carry the majority of our loads to Punta de Vacas. The Horcones Valley is quite different from the Vacas valley that we use for our approach. It is interesting to see both sides of the mountain. By hiking back out from the mountain this way we complete a circumnavigation of Aconcagua!

There is a ranger station at the trailhead where we will check out of the park, and meet our ride back to lodge in Penitentes.

We plan to stay the night at the lodge in Penitentes, but it is sometimes possible to arrange for transportation back to Mendoza that same evening.

Day 20: Penitentes to Mendoza.

After a good breakfast in the lodge we will travel by private passenger van back to Mendoza. In the evening we like to have a celebratory dinner in one of Mendoza's many outstanding restaurants.

Day 21: Flights Home.

**Aconcagua is a summit oriented learning opportunity. Actual course duration will be a function of weather, acclimatization, objectives accomplished, and the rate at which the team absorbs the IWLS course curriculum. If for any reason the course ends early, students are responsible for the associated costs of returning to Mendoza early.*

