

ADVENTURES

INTERNATIONAL INC.

CONSIDERING CLIMBING ACONCAGUA:

Important questions for whatever company you go with:

Over the course of the last 20 years we have lead over 100 trips to Aconcagua and we have learned a lot. We'd like to pass some of this onto you, so you can make an informed decision as to which guide service you choose. Climbing at high altitude is demanding and the guide service you select will have a lot of impact on your experience on the mountain, as well as how smoothly things go before and after the trip. Over time we have repeatedly watched other guide services approach the mountain in a manner that was not conducive to safety, success, and the enjoyment of your vacation time. If you choose not to go with Adventures International, we would be happy to recommend other companies that we know and have seen operate safe quality trips.

Most important- How many people will be on your trip?

A smaller number is critical for a more enjoyable, hassle/conflict free, and safer trip. By limiting all our trips to 6, we can provide a much more personalized trip, where you are not just part of a large crowd.

Number of days to high camp?

We use a very minimum of 14 days, typically 15 days to the summit. This does not include nights in Mendoza. Many groups offer longer trips but spend a lot of the time in Mendoza or Santiago. Our trips do not include any days before the climb in town; if we arrive back early from the summit we can enjoy Mendoza or the Chilean coast then. The reason most groups and individuals do not summit on Aconcagua is not because of bad weather, but simply because they move up the mountain too fast, and are not well acclimatized at high camps! Be wary of any group that plans less than 14 days to the summit, not including Mendoza days. Most people simply cannot acclimatize this fast. Even with Kilimanjaro, Ecuador or Mexico experience, which are in effect day climbs from higher huts, vs. Aconcagua which is a true expedition, for which you have to be acclimatized to sleep at the higher camps.

How many camps above base camp?

- We normally use 4 above Base Camp, which dramatically increases safety, and summit success because of better acclimatization! Each carry between camps is less than 2000 vertical ft. Check this carefully if you go with another company.
- Most other groups, including many guided groups use only 2, sometime 3 camps above base camp. This makes for a much harder and less enjoyable trip (less successful!), while really saving little, or, no time overall.
- This is especially important if you are considering the Polish Glacier route. The need to be well acclimatized here is so critical.

Where is high camp?

We use Lower White Rocks, situated a bit lower than 20,000 ft.--not too high and not too low! It's amazing how many guided groups go from Camp 2 (base of the Polish Glacier) on the Vacas side, which is way too low for most people! Guaranteed over 12 hours out on summit day if you go this way (many people simply cannot summit from this camp). Check on this carefully, a very serious detail that will dramatically decrease your summit chances! Many groups also use a high camp at 20,500-21,000 ft. This requires extra day(s) to acclimatize; and the load carrying at altitudes this high can be extremely strenuous! Many people just cannot do this at those altitudes!

Use of a pulse oximeter?

We use a very small pulse oximeter to check your blood oxygen saturation levels at every step of the way. These are small, highly accurate medical instruments that essentially give a digital readout of your acclimatization rate. Adventures International is one of the only companies using these on all our high altitude trips! In our opinion every high altitude guide should have one to further help assure your safety, otherwise many altitude related decisions are just a guess. If the company you are going with does not know what this instrument is, keep looking.

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Normal route via the Horrocones Valley?

Our advice is to not even consider the Horrocones Valley, or "Ruta Normal", the normal route for ascent. It's extremely crowded, the water is polluted, and it's just not a very aesthetic side of the mountain to spend over 2 weeks acclimatizing on. All of our trips concentrate on the more remote, yet just as easy, Vacas Valley side. On the Upper Vacas route in fact, you will likely not even see another group all the way to high camp!

American or local guides?

- All of our lead guides are professional guides from the U.S.A.
- Most of our lead guides are AMGA Certified Alpine Guides, all have very extensive experience leading Aconcagua expeditions.
- Our company is USA based, with American guiding standards and safety practices.
- Many American companies contract out their trips to local agents, or cut costs with local lead guides.
- Local guides frequently approach the mountain quite differently than their U.S. counterparts. In most cases they are not up to USA guides technical standards and awareness levels concerning safety and the effects of altitude! Be very careful here!

Assistance before and after your trip in Mendoza, Argentina

With our smaller groups we can personally help you plan out any extra time you may have before or after your trip with us! There are so many things to see from Patagonia and the Lake District in the south to the beaches of Chile and Argentina and the desert of northern Chile! Let us help plan any extra time, we've been there and done it and know this area of South America!

To traverse or not?

Most our trips traverse the mountain and descend via the normal Horrocones side route. We believe this is the best way for many reasons.

- Easy to do, a much shorter way out, a better descent trail.
- Non technical.
- Can save up to 3 days on your trip length! You save one day on the hike out, and up to 2 days waiting for mules! These days are better used for storm days, acclimatization or to see Argentina and Chile after the trip!
- When traversing you essentially do a huge loop hike all the way around the mountain, which is actually shorter than going in and out the Vacas valley, saving a day. Both Valleys are beautiful and different, if your going to go to Aconcagua,
- You get to see the Horrocones valley, which is the most stunning of the valleys surrounding Aconcagua, without spending 2 weeks in the crowds on that side of the mountain. We spend only the one night at Plaza de Mules or the hotel refugio on our way down!

Why fly into Mendoza?

All our trips start and end in Mendoza. There are several reasons for this.

- Be wary of any service that is operating trips based in Santiago. There are new park service regulations requiring all climbers to register for the climb in person, in Mendoza. Any trip beginning in Santiago is going to spend extra days on travel and not on the mountain. These are new regulations for 2000.
- save at least 2 days and many times 3 days overall, while still allowing the same number of days on the mountain (its your time)!
- chance to see Argentina or Chile which are very beautiful and a lot of fun following the trip.

Local agents:

- We use the best local company, Grahales, to handle our affairs on Aconcagua, this assures a smooth trip with permits, mules, reservations and schedules and local transportation.
- Many other companies cost less, use cheaper agents for mule transport, then when you want to get out you have to wait for mules, or have trouble with Hotels—inconvenient. We have never had to wait even an extra day for mules to go out.

Equipment and food:

- Our group equipment is generally replaced every season, tents, ropes, rental gear.
- We use the lightest and best tents for the extreme winds Aconcagua can see. This is critical, we have seen lots of tents destroyed by the winds, including other guide services!
- We pack most of our food in the USA so you can be assured of food that is safe and appetizing at altitude.
- We consider every detail to make your experience better, down to all Titanium pots to save weight.

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Why go to Aconcagua with Adventures International?

- We limit all trips to 6! A good number combined with 2 to 3 guides.
- Our focus is on safety each step of the way!
- Our experience and success on Aconcagua! We are the Aconcagua experts!
- Very well designed and thought out schedules!
- Attention to details!
- No local lead guides, all American! All extremely experienced at altitude and on Aconcagua.
- More camps allow better acclimatization and an easier, safer, more enjoyable and successful ascent!
- Our new Upper Vacas route is unique, remote and spectacular!

The advantages of our smaller trip sizes:

- Traveling in foreign countries is simpler, less hassle, and more enjoyable!
- We can focus more on your personal goals and abilities.
- Safety, large enough to be self-sufficient with less potential problems.
- Less incidence of conflicts or potential problems.
- Guides enjoy leading the trips more with fewer people!
- In many cases we can adjust the trip schedule to your schedule if we plan ahead.
- We could make a lot more money if we increased our trip sizes but we truly believe this just is not the best way. We believe this demonstrates our commitment to a quality trip!
- Less environmental impact with smaller groups to the areas of the world we lead trips into!

Do you really want to spend your vacation with a group of 10 to 20 people as some of our competition leads?

This is perhaps the single biggest reason to travel with AI. We see these huge groups on the mountain that are using a very sensitive area on the North Side of Aconcagua (the Upper Vacas Valley) and do not understand why anyone would choose to go with a group this large? We offer very compact, well designed, tighter, more fun expeditions with much fewer problems that surround larger groups. It's simply easier to maintain a personal level of service with fewer people. Safety is a huge concern also, there will be more accidents or problems with a larger group.

Safety is Critical for Expeditions to Aconcagua

We can help assure your safety through a wide support network while on an Aconcagua Expedition. We use satellite phones on all expeditions; unlimited use for all our clients (per minute fee). We use the lightest and most powerful handheld VHS radios for excellent communication with different camps, Park Service, rescue teams and helicopter rescue service if ever needed. We have never used these services on any trip to date on Aconcagua, which many of our competitors cannot say. Offering multiple expeditions each year, we can support each with a network of guides and assistant guides which can allow a lot of flexibility with plan changes or emergency situations on an expedition. Our rates of ascent are designed to not have problems in the first place, this is very simply the critical element in Aconcagua Expeditions. This is something we see over and over again, companies that advertise a slow rate of ascent and when on Aconcagua skip camps and push clients beyond their capabilities to acclimatize safely. We assure you this will not happen on our expeditions.

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