Aconcagua

Argentina | 6,962m

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Aconcagua

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Aconcagua (6,962m) in the heart of **South America** is the **highest mountain outside the Himalayas**, and the second highest of the **7 summits**. Its enormous size, extremes of weather and altitude make for a trekking challenge which is a great step up from Kilimanjaro.

Aconcagua is an alien planet. Wildly contorted and coloured rocks stretch out into vast glacial valleys. Towering above the bustling base camp the enormous red coloured west face twists clouds into bizarre shapes as it gets pummelled by passing storms. To acclimatise and to get a condor's eye view of the route we climb the nearby Bonette Peak then load our rucksacks and begin the challenging work of climbing 'The Stone Sentinel'. Getting to the summit is never easy but prepare to be overwhelmed when you realise this outstanding achievement. Aconcagua is a great teacher and toughens you up for your next challenge: 8,000 metres.

Stormy and sometimes snow-covered Aconcagua is known for being temperamental but we have overhauled the traditional itinerary and created a programme which gives you the best chance to summit. We alternate rest days between strenuous days of load carrying and have designed a flexible summit time-frame where at least 3 nights can be spent at high camp to wait for good climbing conditions.

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Physical - P5

Superlative fitness is called for. Regular, long and intense physical training is required for preparation. Expect long days on the hill of 10-15 hours in testing weather conditions (especially summit day) carrying up to 15-20kg in weight, and/or pulling a pulk with exceptional weight.

Technical - T3

May involve harder scrambling or some trekking and climbing with ropes. If snow is encountered then glacier travel with ropes, ice axes and crampons will be necessary. Basic climbing skills are ideal, but these will also be taught (and certainly practiced) during the expedition and pre-summit phase.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.

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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Depart UK

Today we will depart London and fly to Mendoza.

DAY 2 : Arrive Mendoza

Today we will arrive in Mendoza. You will be transferred from the airport to your comfortable hotel accommodation in Mendoza.

Once you have settled in, your 360 guide will brief you over a fantastic steak and wine dinner. Also, time to meet and get to know our extremely experienced Argentinian mountain guides. (D)

DAY 3 : Mendoza

A full day in Mendoza to get permits, have a final equipment check with your 360 guide, recover from your long haul flight, get better acquainted with your team-mates and take advantage of summer in this beautiful Southern Hemisphere city. (B/D)

DAY 4 : Mendoza - Penitentes - Confluencia (3,400m)

Today we will drive to Penitentes (2,600m) and then trek to Confluencia . Confluencia will be our camp for 3 nights. It is sensationally located below an vast rock face and the camp is staffed by experienced chefs and enjoys modern camp facilities. (B/L/D)

DAY 5 : Trek to Plaza Francia

Today we trek to 4,100m to Plaza Francia or the South face look-out, just below the highest vertical wall in all of the Americas'. A 3,000m high wall of ice and rock, equivalent to two north walls of the Eiger stacked on top of each other; this is a very serious climbing objective which attracts the "crème de la crème" of today's mountaineers. (B/L/D)

DAY 6 : Rest Day at Confluencia

We take a rest day at Confluencia and picnic in a picturesque valley with ample bouldering opportunities. (B/L/D)

DAY 7 : Confluencia – Plaza de Mulas

Long trek to Plaza de Mulas (4,300m), our Base Camp for the expedition. Today we trek for 8 – 9 hrs through the enormous Horcones Valley. We start by crossing the Playa Ancha (Wide Beach) and along the route we will catch glimpses of the south summit and the beautifully pastel coloured peaks that loom above this broad valley. (B/L/D)

DAY 8 : Rest Day at Plaza de Mulas

Rest day at Plaza de Mulas We spend time exploring the area and chilling out. (B/L/D)

DAY 9 : Pico Bonette

Today we bag the 5,000m Bonette Peak. An ascent to this altitude aids acclimatisation and affords stunning views of the entire route we have come to climb. From the summit of Bonette we get a true sense of perspective of the adventure which awaits us. (B/L/D)

DAY 10 : Rest Day at Plaza de Mulas

A day to check out the amazing paintings at the art gallery, visit the internet café, contact home and meet the other teams. (B/L/D)

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ITINERARY

DAY 11 : Plaza de Mulas – Camp Canada

Climb to Camp Canada (C1). Today we get to grips with the mountain and spend a day doing some light portering of group equipment. (5,000m, 3 – 4 hour ascent.) We spend the night at this sensationally located camp and no doubt will be treated to breathtaking sunsets over the nearby Cuerno peak (5,500m). (B/L/D)

DAY 12 : Camp Canada – Camp 2 – Plaza de Mulas

Ascent to Camp 2 (Nido de Condoros 5,500m) and back to Plaza de Mulas Another light portering day of group equipment. (B/L/D)

DAY 13 : Rest Day

Rest day at Plaza de Mulas. (B/L/D)

DAY 14 : Plaza de Mulas – Camp Canada

Ascent to Camp 1 (5,000m). Today we hoist the anchor from Base Camp and begin our ascent to the summit. Carrying all our camping kit and personal luggage we retrace our steps to Camp Canada. (B/L/D)

DAY 15 : Camp Canada – Camp 2

Ascent to Camp 2 (5,500m). We are rewarded for our hard work today with stunning views of the distant Mercedario (6,700m), Plumo (6,400m) and the black mountains of nearby Chile. (4-5 hrs ascent). (B/L/D)

DAY 16 : Rest Day

Rest day at Camp 2. Today the guides will keep you busy with water and ice-fetching duties and perhaps you can demonstrate your culinary expertise in the kitchen tent. (B/L/D)

DAY 17 : Camp 2 – Camp 3

A short but steep ascent brings us to Camp 3. This can either be Camp Berlin (5,950m) or Camp Colera (6,000m). This is the high camp from which we will make our summit bid. (B/L/D)

DAY 18 : Summit Day

We start out in the early hours in the dark after a quick breakfast in our tents. Soon the sun rises as we trek towards the Independencia Hut before tackling the Windy Gap and heading onto the usually snow bound traverse.

The traverse starts flat and gradually ascends to the "La Cueva" our final stop before hitting the Canaleta, a 350m U-shaped couloir which we ascend before arriving at the summit ridge. From here we can see the summit to the east and after a short but hard trek we finally reach our objective, the top of Aconcagua and South America.

We stop for photos and to savour our amazing achievement before retracing our steps to Camp 3. (B/L/D)

DAY 19 : Summit Day

Second potential summit day.

DAY 20 : Summit Day

Third potential summit day.

DAY 21 : Descend to Base Camp

We retrace our steps to Base Camp. (B/L/D)

DAY 22 : Base Camp – Pentitentes – Mendoza

Retrace our steps to Penitentes getting our last views of the mighty Aconcagua. Transfer back to Mendoza for a well-deserved celebration meal. (B/L/D)

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ITINERARY

DAY 23 : Rest Day Mendoza

A day to relax and recuperate from all your efforts on the mountain. (B)

DAY 24 : Depart Mendoza - Flight to UK

We depart Mendoza for our flight back to the UK which lands the following day.

DAY 25 : Arrive UK

Arrive back to Heathrow.

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Duffel bag 120ltr-140ltr

A large duffel bag of 140L or more to transport your kit out to Argentina and then up to Plaza de Mulas Base Camp (PdM). Suitcases and wheeled bags are NOT suitable

Expedition rucksack

Approximately 80L to take your kit from PdM to higher camps carrying up to 15kg. If you are hiring a porter to assist with carrying your load (please see the FAQ) it is possible to carry a smaller pack of 65 litres.

Daysack

30 – 40L for the trek in to Plaza de Mulas.

Drybags

Nylon rolltop bags that keep fresh clothing and other important items like passports and iPods dry in the event of a total downpour that seeps into your kitbag. Good for quarantining old socks. Please note that many countries are now banning plastic bags. We would always advise buying re-usable nylon rolltop bags for keeping your kit dry (and sustainability).

Small kit bag or light bag

This is for any kit you intend to leave at the hotel and could even simply be a heavy duty plastic bag

Padlocks x 2

For use on your kit bag for travel and on the expedition plus your hotel bag

Sleeping Gear

5 Season sleeping bag

5-season with a comfort rating to -25C is essential. Down is lighter but more expensive than synthetic and ratings vary between manufacturers

Sleeping mat

A full lengthrather than a ¾ length Thermarest – we'd recommend a 'foam' type mat as the ground can be quite rough. Any inflatable mats could be at risk of punctures.

Sleeping bag liner

Silk is best for keeping the bag clean and you a little warmer

Headwear

Warm headgear x 2

This can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

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KIT LIST

Sunglasses

Category 4 wrap around style is highly recommended. These sunglasses allow for the highest available protection against harmful UV light found at altitude and from glare from snow and sand surfaces. Worth spending money on good UV filters. Julbo is our preferred supplier

Ski goggles

Category 3 for days when it may be snowing and very windy. Very useful on summit day

Sunblock

Buy the highest SPF you can find as UV intensifies with altitude

Buff/Scarf

Essential for protection from the sun and dust

Lip salve

Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection

Upper Body

Base layer x 3

You should be aiming for long-sleeved base layers as the UV levels are very high. Hooded tops will provide the best protection from the sun and you should take atleast 1 hooded long-sleeved base layer. Check out something like the Mountain Equipment Glace Top.

Mid layer x 2

These are typically lightweight microfleeces or similar technology that provide varying degrees of warmth and insulation without being overly bulky or heavy to pack

Soft Shell (optional)

Optional - These should be windproof (not all are) and insulative. They are mostly made of soft polyester and sometimes resemble a neoprene finish which makes them very mobile and comfortable to wear. While offering a degree of weather repellence, they are not waterproof

Light insulated jacket

A lighter jacket such as a Primaloft or lightweight down which can be worn at lower to mid altitudes is a great addition to your kit offering greater flexibility with layering

Gilet (optional)

Optional - A great low volume additional layer to keep your core warm, whether down, primaloft or fleece

Waterproof top

A good Goretex Hardshell jacket with sealed seams provides effective defence against wind and rain as your outermost layer. This should be big enough to fit over your other layers

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KIT LIST

Down jacket

These provide the best insulation and are worth every penny. They will keep you warm down to around -25C with a couple of layers underneath, the higher the 'loft' the better. Our guides usually wear a lighter down or Primaloft jacket under their down jackets for greater layering on summit day

Warm gloves

Consider a light polartec pair or better still liner gloves for lower altitudes and evenings, and a thicker pair like ski gloves for higher altitudes that can be worn in combination with liners

High altitude down mitts

Worn over liners for summit days on all 6,000m plus expeditions. Mitts provide more warmth than finger gloves. For extreme cold down or prima loft fill is recommended

Waterproof mitts

A great addition to fit over your down mitts high up or gloves lower down for an added windproof or waterproof layer, especially as down ceases to work when it gets wet and takes a long time to dry. Synthetic fill dries much more quickly

Lower Body

Trekking trousers x 2

These tend to be polyester so they dry quickly after a shower and weigh little in your pack. Consider perhaps a pair with detachable lower legs as an alternative to shorts

Midweight trousers

Softshell windproof or thermal lined mid weight trekking trousers. Thermal leggings can still be worn underneath if necessary. Or Primaloft over a pair of thermal leggings. Both good options. All depends on your budget

Waterproof overtrousers

Like the jacket, an essential piece of kit to stay dry and should also be Goretex

Long Johns x 2

Thermal insulation for the lower body

Underwear

Merino or wicking material, not cotton. How many pairs you take is entirely up to you

Feet

High altitude boots

These boots are double or triple layered to offer the best insulation and the warmest feet up high. Either La Sportiva G2 SMs, Scarpa Phantom 6000s, La Sportiva Spantiks or 8,000m boots are suitable. Make sure you can fit 2 pairs of socks for added warmth with room to wiggle your toes.

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KIT LIST

Walking boots

Well worn in 4 season waterproof boots with mid to high ankle support

Trekking socks x 4

Single layer or wearing 2 pairs is a personal choice and lighter weight merino wool is a good option

High altitude socks x 3

These are especially thick to provide maximum insulation. Bring three pairs, keep one pair clean for summit day, and wear with a thinner inner

High altitude inner socks x 3

Lighter weight inner socks, Merino wool is advisable

Spare laces

Just in case

Gaiters

To protect the tops of your footwear from harsh conditions and to provide some added insulation

Technical Equipment

Climbing helmet

A plastic helmet is more suitable rather than the expanded foam helmets available. Make sure you try it on in a shop with a woolly/fleece hat underneath

Crampons

12 point mountaineering crampons with anti-balling plates that fit your specific boots (not ice climbing crampons)

Micro crampons

A smaller style of crampon, designed to give you a bit more grip on more slippy terrain when full crampons are too much, or if you're wearing lighter boots. Microspikes can be invaluable on icy slopes. We would suggest they are carried in your day pack with you when higher up in the mountains. (There's an example here, though other brands and styles are of course available!)

Ice axe

A walking ice axe between 55cm and 65cm. Go to an outdoor shop and try different ones for weight and size so that you get one that feels good to you

Trekking poles

These tend to be a personal preference but help with your stability and can dampen the pressure on the knees coming down hill

Hydration

Water bottle and insulated bottle cover

3L equivalent – a good combination is a Platypus/Camelbak plus 2 x 1L Nalgene bottles. Platypus for use before the water starts to freeze at higher camps. Insulated water bottle covers will come in handy at higher camps to help prevent the water from freezing, and neoprene covers for your Camelbak/bladder tubes will help too.

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KIT LIST

Water purification

If you're using tablets, it's worth taking neutraliser or using Silver Chloride which has little taste

Small thermal flask

May be nice on summit night when it's cold

Pee bottle (+ optional Shewee for the girls!)

A good idea if you are storm bound at higher camps. A 1ltr Nalgene bottle is a good option but do make sure you label it as your pee bottle!!

Toiletries

Travel towel

Travel towels from the likes of Lifesystems are perfect

Wet wipes

Preferably biodegradable, these are great for washing when modern shower facilities become a thing of the past

Alcohol gel

A must have for good camp hygiene

Toilet paper

Provided on the mountain but a spare in your daysack may be useful if you need to hide behind a rock between camps

Nappy sacks or dog poo bags

Only needed to bag your toilet paper if you are caught short in between camps and for keeping your rubbish tidy in your tent

Wash kit

Keep it simple on the mountain. Essentials are toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant, moisturiser and soap (there are showers at Plaza de Mulas & Confluencia camps). Everything else is a luxury!

Medications

Personal medication

Keep this in your daysack

Personal first aid kit

The 360 med kits are designed to be used in emergencies and akin to an A&E rather than a pharmacy on Expeditions so please come prepared with useful meds for yourself such as painkillers (Ibuprofen if you can take it and a Paracetamol) plus blister plasters, plasters, antiseptic, rehydration sachets and any muscle rubs you wish to use.

Miscellaneous

Head torch

We recommend Petzl head torches. Bring spare batteries.

Penknife (optional)

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KIT LIST

Bowl

Light weight bowl that is not easy to break

Insulated mug

A great addition for hot drinks at the higher camps

Cutlery

Camera

Bring plenty of spare batteries and memory cards. The mountain is very dusty, so some sort of camera protective bag is advisable

Sewing kit (optional)

Hand warmers

For summit day

Ear plugs

For protection against the inevitable snorers!

Documentation

Passport

Don't forget this! Your passport should have at least 6 months validity. With your passport expiry date at least six months after the final day of travel.

Copy of passport

Just in case

Passport photos x 4

Dental check up

We recommend you have a dental check-up before your trip. New fillings can be an issue at altitude if there is an air pocket left in the gap

Vaccinations

Check with your travel clinic or the nurse at your GP surgery

Credit card

Useful in emergencies. Check with your card provider that it is accepted in country of expedition.

Money

On the mountain you will need tip money of about $150 and about $100 extra to buy beers or something to take home and cover meals not included in the expedition price

Visa

As applicable – UK residents do not need a visa to enter Argentina

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KIT LIST

Travel insurance

Copy of own travel insurance details. And relevant contact numbers. We have a partnership with True Traveller and would recommend that you contact them when looking for travel insurance for your trip with 360. However, it is vital that you ensure that the insurance cover they offer is suitable for you, taking your personal circumstances (items to be insured, cancellation cover, medical history) into account. Many other insurance providers are available and we do recommend that you shop around to get the best cover for you on the expedition you are undertaking. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

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FAQ'S

The Climb

How does this expedition differ from the other expeditions 360 offers?

Aconcagua is a high mountain just shy of 7,000m in altitude. It stands head and shoulders above its neighbouring peaks and as such is exposed to extreme weather conditions. Primarily due to the costs in hiring porters, climbers rely on expedition style tactics to climb the mountain. This style of climbing involves a lot more work for the climbers themselves but also adds to climbers feeling that they are climbing the mountain on their own terms and allows for a sensible acclimatisation regime to be established.

Many 360 climbers are interested in climbing the Seven Summits or using Aconcagua as an initiation to get onto the 8,000m peaks. For both these future aims climbing a mountain the size of Aconcagua using expedition style climbing tactics where the focus is on you doing the work, has always proven to be an extremely valuable experience and a real eye-opener as to how a "real" expedition works.

In order to get acclimatised to the level of Base Camp another small Mountain called Pico Bonette (5,100m) is climbed. This allows climbers to see our main objective from a distance and allows us to familiarise ourselves with the area that will be our home for quite some time. The approach to the mountain does not involve a long trek in and we explore the area surrounding base camp thoroughly to get acclimatised before getting stuck into the mountain itself.

Why 360?

When you're choosing / comparing expedition companies for your Aco climb, we know that it can be a total minefield! We appreciate it's a complex comparison, but we believe it's important to look beyond the price and consider the expedition as a whole, particularly for these higher peaks where summit success and team safety can be determined by the level of expedition leadership and the inclusions offered.

Our expedition is slightly longer than others you'll see – but our Everest guide Rolfe, head Aco guide Gianni and the 360 team have a tried and tested method after climbing this mountain over 70 times, and acclimatisation is crucial to giving you the best chance for summit success. Read all about it here.

360's expeditions are as fully inclusive as we can make them, we don't want you to feel you have to put your hand in your pocket for hidden extras throughout a trip. The full details are in the itinerary but our climb includes 4 nights in a hotel in Mendoza and your final celebratory meal in Mendoza too – as well as all meals during the trek. It's the smaller, often missed luxuries we include that previous trekkers tell us make the difference.

One climber said "I don't believe that in your marketing material you differentiate yourselves enough! [...] we had large insulated Igloo tents, flush toilet, restaurant quality food at 4,300m [...and] experienced guides who knew the weather patterns & when to do what on the mountain."

Check out other testimonials from previous 360 climbers for more!

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FAQ'S

How do you climb a mountain without support from Sherpa's or porters? What is expedition style climbing?

Once base camp is established and climbers have acclimatised to this altitude, work begins to establish the first of the 3 camps that will be used. This involves moving food and camping equipment up the mountain a little at the time. For the first run, climbers will carry around 18kg of supplies to the higher camp and then return to the lower camp to sleep, adhering to the old mountaineering ethos of climbing high and sleeping low.

Once sufficient supplies have been relayed up to the higher camp, the lower camp is taken down and all tents and personal climbing equipment are moved up to the next camp up. The summit is climbed from camp three in a single push.

The entire carrying process is extremely beneficial not only to get acclimatised to the higher altitudes but also proves to be a great team builder and re-enforces the idea that you are climbing this mountain on your own.

Is it possible to hire a porter to help me carry my load?

Yes! Porters are available to carry loads from Base Camp up to Camp three, and also to carry stuff down from the camps.

360 expedition guides will assist in the negotiations and organise the carry days if you wish to employ a porter. Sometimes, climbers chose to employ a porter between two, thereby reducing the weight they have to carry by 10kg to make life a little easier.

360 Expeditions will sometimes employ porters to assist in carrying loads down the mountain. This is done especially to bring down toilet and camping waste.

Costs of porters:

Porters are restricted to carrying a maximum of 20kg and due to the altitude, load carries to the lower camps are a lower cost than to the higher camps. The porter costs vary each year, but are generally between US$120-140 per 20kg load for the lower camps and around US$200 for carries to the high camps.

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FAQ'S

How long is summit day? What is the crux of the route?

Once the high camp (either Berlin camp at 5,960m or Colera at 6,000m) is established, the itinerary allows for three days to climb to the summit. We wait for conditions to become settled and go to the top. Generally there will be strong gust of winds and temperatures as low (and sometimes lower) then -20C. We leave the camp before sunrise and climb the easy slopes to the windy gap. Then we begin the long traverse and move up to the start of the crux of the climb: The Canaletta. This feature is a 200m+ high scree slope pitched back at around 40 degrees. Sometimes it is snowed over which is slightly better because although now we need to use ice axes and crampons at least we won't need to indulge in the mind numbing pleasures of climbing loose scree at nearly 7,000m. Above the Canaletta we traverse to the summit on the exposed summit ridge. The entire climb to the summit usually takes around 8 hrs from the high camp and usually the same time is taken for the descent.

What is the skill level of this climb?

While technical skills are not necessary, it is strongly recommended that climbers have a basic grounding in the use of crampons and ice axes. Although billed as the world's highest trekking peak the nature of this expedition is more akin to a mountaineering expedition than a trek. The upper mountain is often covered in snow and quite a lot of time is spent sitting out bad weather.

How fit do I need to be for this expedition?

Climbers are expected to be in good physical condition. The better your physical shape the more you will be able to handle the demands of climbing the peak. This expedition is more arduous and physically demanding then other 360 expeditions as load carrying is done by the climbers themselves. Having a good level of fitness will allow you to enjoy the expedition far more and increase your chances of reaching the summit. Summit day can be up to 16 hours long.

Guides

Who is the guiding team composed of (How many guides? Climber to guide ratio)?

Our 360 guides are some of the most experienced in the business. They spend many months a year climbing and trekking, not only in South America but other mountain areas also. They have established a close rapport with our ground crew and run a very enjoyable expedition.

Most trips have a 3:1 ratio. A 6 person team departs with one 360 guide. This ratio also includes local crew (Argentinian guides). Generally your 360 leader will be in charge of the expedition and he/she will be assisted by the local guides.

How many climbers are on this expedition?

Never more than 12. Typically a group has between 6 to 8 climbers.

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FAQ'S

Can I contact the others on the climb? How about the guide?

Generally about 1 month before your trip departure we will create a WhatsApp group where you can start to chat to your team members.

You can call our office at any time and talk to us and/or your guide to discuss any aspect of your expedition.

Training

Any tips on how a climber can maximize their chances of success?

Use the 360 expedition training program as a guide but also feel free to contact us for individual advice on how to incorporate the best fitness program with your own lifestyle.

High altitude mountaineering is about slack days of low activity followed by long days where every grain of stamina you have is called upon and every ounce of determination you posess is required to reach your goal. The essential idea in order to prepare for Aconcagua is to increase the intensity of the exercise you do by small increments over 4 to 6 months before you leave for the expedition. Concentrate on cardiovascular work-outs during the initial weeks by taking short runs when time allows and try to spend at least 2 weekends a month going on long duration walks (longer than 6 hrs) increasing the load in your rucksack gradually from 5kg to 18kg. As you get stronger increase this rate of exercise and the duration by walking every weekend and running 5km every second day, for example.A focused regime will not only prepare your body for carrying minor loads but will harden your body against the big days on the mountain itself.

In addition the weekend walks will help break in your boots and get you used to your equipment. In combination this will pay dividends when you reach base camp because even though you can't train for altitude your body will be ready for arduous days and you will be familiar with how to best use your equipment, both adding to you being able to enjoy and appreciate the mountain all the more.

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FAQ'S

Health and Safety

What happens if I get altitude sickness?

There are different types of altitude sickness. Although our acclimatisation regime ensures that everybody enjoys the best possible chance of getting high on the mountain, altitude related problems can happen. The most common of this is high altitude sickness (AMS – Acute Mountain Sickness). Symptoms for this can include headaches, nausea and vomiting.

This sounds quite dramatic but generally this is just the process your body naturally goes through to adjust to the higher altitudes and the reduced partial pressure of the atmosphere. For some people the acclimatisation process takes a little longer than others. For our guides this is all part and parcel of ascending a 6,000m peak and, although we assess each client's personal situation carefully, we also further consider the compounding effects of dehydration brought on by excessive vomiting and loss of appetite.

AMS might sound frightening but our guides are fully trained (and highly experienced) in helping relieve your personal symptoms and providing advice on how to best proceed.

What can I do to help prevent AMS?

In most cases AMS can be avoided by the following: drink plenty of water, walk slowly, stay warm and eat well – and listen and talk to your guides.
We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the various effects that altitude can cause. During your pre-climb briefing, we will describe altitude sickness to you in detail, and advise you how to cope with it.

The most important thing is not to fear it, but to respect it and to know how to deal with it and more importantly tell your guides how you feel. Our guides have seen every condition that the mountain produces, and they will always know how to deal with problems.

Is there any additional medical support whilst on Aconcagua?

Doctors are permanently stationed at both Confluencia and Plaza de Mulas and we visit them every other day to check up on our stats and health in general.

You will have to undergo two medical checks at Base Camp amd you must complete both successfully before you are allowed to climb.

These doctors are also there for any emergencies.

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FAQ'S

Is there a risk of getting HACE (High Altitude Cerebral Edema) and HAPE (High Altitude Pulmonary Edema) on the mountain?

HACE and HAPE rarely occur on Aconcagua and our guides are fully trained in recognition of the onset of these problems and will deal with them at the first sign of their development.

Should I bring Diamox on the expedition with me?

We recommend you come armed with a course of Diamox on this expedition, though we do not recommend that take you these as a prophylactic during the trek or climb. We view Diamox as a treatment drug rather than a preventative medicine. Most adventure medics give similar advice, however we do appreciate this can be confusing, as many GPs (who aren't necessarily mountaineers) do suggest taking it as a prophylactic.

Here at 360 we pride ourselves on designing all our itineraries with acclimatisation front and centre and this expedition has been carefully designed to allow for your body to adjust to the altitude gradually, safely and comfortably. However, if you find that you are still having problems adjusting to the altitude (see our FAQ on Altitude Sickness) then your expedition leader or medic will recommend the correct course of action regarding taking Diamox.

Should I take Diamox?

It is far preferable to take Diamox if and when needed during the course of the expedition. If you are already taking it and then start having altitude related problems you are left with few options but to descend to a more comfortable altitude which sadly often means that the summit is not attainable.

Furthermore, Diamox is a diuretic, meaning you will have to drink a lot of fluid to prevent dehydration. Of course, the upshot of this is you'll have to pee more which means you'll probably be having to get up more in the night and take cover behind rocks during the day. Another quite common side-effect is that it can cause your extremities to "buzz and tingle" including your fingers, toes and lips which can feel quite unsettling. Other side-effects can include dizziness and light headedness with loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Although all these side-effects are manageable when you have symptoms of altitude sickness, we personally believe it is counter-intuitive to take it unless necessary.

Of course, it is totally up to you, this is just our recommendation and we're not doctors. If you do decide to take Diamox on the advice of your doctor then please do let your leader know in situ so they are aware of this. We also suggest you take the drug for a couple of days a few weeks before travelling so you can experience the symptoms before taking them during the trek.

Aconcagua

Argentina | 6,962m

FAQ'S

Are there any inoculation requirements?

Inoculation requirements change quite frequently. Please contact the 360 expedition office for up to date advice or ask your GP.

What happens if I need to leave the expedition early?

All our guides are in communication with each other by radio. In the vast majority of cases of emergency rescue, the problems can be attributed to slow acclimatisation or altitude and if so the solution is immediate descent to lower altitudes.

Our 360 guide and the local crew are very experienced in dealing with any problems that may arise. Our guides are either doctors or are qualified with the highest standard of wilderness first aid qualifications and can handle any emergency to the highest level of competency without assistance if necessary.

There is a helicopter rescue service which can go as high as Nido de Condores though it would usually pick up casualtiues at Base Camp and transport them to the park gate, from where alternative suitable transport can be arranged.

In all situations our guides will manage the situation on the ground along with any necessary external rescue teams e.g. the Aconcagua National Park Rangers.

You advocate taking a small first aid kit, what should it have in it?

We advocate a self-help principle on this expedition for minor medical problems. If you have a blister developing, for example, then please stop, take off your boot and treat it before it becomes a problem.

We would recommend your own first aid kit should contain:

Diamox, or other high-altitude drug, enough for the duration of the expedition; a basic blister kit, plasters, antiseptic, sun protection, your own personal medication (your luggage might not get to camp before you and so you may not be able to take your medicine according to the regime you are used to), basic pain relief (paracetamol/aspirin/ibuprofen), and a personal course of antibiotics – two different types are preferable, as back up. Generally, the best approach to take when packing your first aid kit is to include such basic medications as if you would on a family or personal holiday.

Having said that, your 360 expedition leader and/or a member of the local crew does carry a very comprehensive first aid kit which contains a wide range of supplies, and they are fully trained to use whatever is needed for any emergency that may arise.

Aconcagua

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FAQ'S

Food and Water

What is the food like on the mountain?

All meals on the mountain are of the highest possible standards. In fact considering that our 360 expedition guides have to produce the best possible meals in a wilderness setting using only the most basic of facilities (kerosene stoves) the meals they produce are nothing short of miracle. The meals are always fresh, nutritious and varied. We ensure that dietary preferences are always met and that the best local ingredients are used. The underlying aim is to provide balanced nutritional meals packed with carbohydrates to refuel hungry bodies and to replenish stores for the next day of activity. On top of well balanced meals clients are provided with coffee, tea and snacks upon arrival into camp. The morning wake-up call is usually accompanied with a cup of tea or coffee in your tent.

Clients are invited to bring along any of their favourite snacks and goodie bags from home or Mendoza as they are expensive to buy at base camp. Concentrate on high energy food-stuffs such as Jelly Babies or nuts to give you that little boost on an arduous day. Meals at base camp will include fresh fruits and vegetables. Lightweight nutritious foods are prepared higher on the mountain.

I have food allergies, can these be catered for?

Absolutely, please inform the office of any allergies or intolerances and we will ensure that these are taken into account on the trek.

Where does the drinking water come from?

Water comes from ice. Above Base Camp we use local snow drifts and snow fields to collect ice and then melt this to water. This is a labour and fuel intensive job.

We boil this snow/ice immediately to make soups and hot drinks. Another round of ice is boiled to produce water for the next day's use.

How often is fresh water available for replenishing during the day?

Before leaving camp in the morning you will fill your water bottles or camel bladder. For most walking days water can be replenished at the evening's campsite. We would advise having sufficient water bottles/camelbaks to carry 3 litres of water. Soft drinks can be bought at base camp although this is quite expensive.

Accommodation

How do you allocate rooms and tent buddies?

We always look at the gender first then age, then buddy you up.

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FAQ'S

How does tent sharing work? And how big are the tents?

Most altitude related symptoms manifest themselves at night. We therefore recommend tent sharing from the onset of all our Aconcagua expeditions. Tent share is always organised according to same sex and where possible age groups. Obviously if climbing this mountain with a friend or partner then you will be able to share tents and if you're a group we'll ask you to make your own arrangements. If you have joined the team by yourself then it is highly likely that you will be sharing a tent with your pre-assigned room buddy unless prior arrangements have been made.

We use high quality 3 man tents to be shared between 2 people to provide extra space for your comfort.

If I join as a solo traveller will I have to pay more?

When travelling with 360 we never like to increase the cost if you come to us as a solo traveller. What we do is allocate you a hotel room and a tent with another climber of the same gender. On all our expeditions we engulf the cost if you are solo by default, however, due to the nature of the Aconcagua expedition we are not able to do this.

On the rare occasions that there isn't another climber of the same gender to buddy you with then unfortunately we are forced to pass over the cost.

The cost of single occupancy for 4 nights in the hotel is £180. The cost of a single tented occupancy at base camp is £180. Once you leave base camp and begin to head higher it is normal that you'll share with another climber regardless of the sex however, if you do wish for single sleeping arrangements on this phase, it is possible to organise – please see the question below for costs.

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FAQ'S

If I want single occupancy for the whole expedition, how much would this cost me?

We would always advise that you share a tent once you leave base camp and sometimes it's simply imperative that you do for your own safety however, if you do wish for single sleeping arrangements then (as above), it will cost £180 for 4 nights in the hotel, £180 for all nights at base camp and a further £380 for all nights above base camp. This cost covers the extra weight needing to be transported on the mules and the porters to and from the different high camps.

The total cost for single accommodation for the whole expedition is therefore £740pp.

What if I arrive early or depart late? Can you arrange extra nights' lodging? Is there a single room option for this expedition?

We are happy to make any arrangements scheduled outside of the trek dates: these may include personalised tours, extra hotel rooms, private airport pick-ups or arranging private rooms. Please get in touch and let us know and we'll make the arrangements for you.

Is all my accommodation included in the price?

Our itinerary allows for three potential summit days in the in the event of bad weather or another contingency. Should we summit on the first or second day we will arrive back in Mendoza earlier than scheduled. In this event your additional accommodation is not included and you should allow approx. £40 per night (based on two sharing).

What are the facilities like on the mountain?

Confluencia (3,400m) is the first of our camps, and is used as an intermediate camp on the way to base camp.

Plaza de Mulas (4,300m) is our base camp for the expedition.

There are then three high altitude camps (C1, C2 & C3) from Plaza de Mulas as you begin your summit rotation.

You'll find hot showers and Wi-Fi at Confluencia and Plaza de Mulas, and you'll even get Wi-Fi at C3.

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FAQ'S

What happens to toilet waste?

There are proper toilets at Confluencia and long drops with seats at Plaza de Mulas. At camps 1, 2 and 3 all toilet waste is bagged and tagged in especially allocated "poo bags". We are required to carry down all toilet waste which is disposed of at Base Camp. Generally we carry the waste down in double plastic bags and early in the morning when it is still frozen.

What if the trip has odd numbers, how does the cost or sharing of a hotel room or tent work?

If the expedition has one person who doesn't have a buddy (by default) this is treated as a single occupancy and there is a price to pay.

The price for the hotel (4 nights) is £180 and the price for the tent (for all nights on the expedition) is £560.

In these circumstances to make it fair, we'll ask the group (within the gender bracket and those who haven't already requested to share) if anyone wants to have single occupancy. If no one does, then for the mountain tented phase only we will suggest that we split the costs between all the same-sex climbers. This makes it a marginal increase for each person and allows each climber to enjoy a night solo when out on the hill.

Kit

What gear will I need?

Please review the equipment list. While all items are required there may be times when some of the items on the gear list may not be used (such as warm weather or changing conditions). The gear lists are created by the guides to so that climbers are prepared to summit in any conditions.

The equipment list will advise our recommended brands you should consider using, based on our experience. The guides will check your equipment whilst still in Mendoza and will advise as to what is suitable or not. A quick trip to the local gear shops may be needed to buy the last essential items.

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FAQ'S

What clothing should I wear on Aconcagua?

The cost of equipment is usually a major deterrent for people coming onto trips in the first place. As this is not your first mountain you should have a reasonably of kit off the kit list anyway. Alternatively, things you don't have can be hired cost-effectively from our partners at Outdoor Hire – www.outdoorhire.co.uk – do ask us for a discount code!

Our guides usually start the trek wearing long, lightweight trekking trousers and wicking (non-cotton) shirts. Long trousers are recommended as a deterrent to insects, stinging plants and to act as sun protection. Shorts can also be worn on the initial few days of the trek as the temperature is usually warm. Ensure that you apply sun protection frequently, or buy a once a day product such as P20 if you're not very good at remembering to apply it. Sun glasses are worn for most of the trek in as well as suitable sunhats.

The prevailing conditions on the trek will dictate what you will wear: if it is cold when you leave the camp in the morning then wear your fleece. As things warm up take advantage of the zipper system which most trekking clothing have and open and /or close the zips to adjust to your own preferred temperature. If you get too warm then take a layer off.

Over the top of your clothing you will wear a climbing harness and you will be attached to a rope when conditions dictate.

Waterproofs are needed on hand at all times. Aconcagua is a huge mountain that creates its own weather system. It is not unusual to be caught out in an afternoon snowstorm anywhere on the mountain. Waterproofs should be Goretex material or similar.

What clothing should I wear on the mountain during Summit day?

On summit day it gets cold and temperatures of -20C are not unusual.

Typically our guides wear 2 sets of base layers (long Johns), a thick fleece layer (top and bottom) and then on the legs insulated climbing salopettes. Whilst on the upper torso the same layers plus a down jacket is worn.

As the wind picks up near the summit ridge our guides will put on their wind proof layer to ward of the wind-chill. On their hands they'll wear a thin layer of fleece working gloves over the top of which a thicker set of "ski gloves" or mittens is worn.

On summit day our guides' heads are covered by a thermal "beanie" hat or a thick balaclava and the hood of their down jackets. On their feet the guides wear one pair of thin socks and one pair of thick. Guides will also wear snow goggles.

On summit day waterproofs are used as an invaluable wind shield to protect you against the effect of wind-chill when a strong wind blows.

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FAQ'S

What is the best type of footwear to use for the trek to the base camp? And above base camp?

Plastic boots are essential for climbing 6000m peaks. You will be wearing these boots above base camp for the mountain phases of this climb. You will not be wearing them on the trek in to base camp nor for when doing the load carrying as high as C2. Your plastic boots should be the double boot (with a soft inner and hard plastic shell) the basic model would be Scarpa Vega's or La Sportiva Spantiks (though both brands have lighter and updated versions).

Temperatures high up the mountain are usually well below -20 and only plastic boots can withstand such conditions. Ensure that you have tried the boots on before you leave home and that you can wear a thin and a thick pair of socks in them and still be able to wriggle your toes, (for adequate circulation).

Crampons are worn for when there has been lots of snowfall above C 3 and sometimes even above C 2. Your crampons are preferably of the easy "heel clip" variety (rather than the strap systems which are fiddly). It is not necessary to use specialist technical climbing crampons as standard 12 point all round crampons such as those from Grivel will do the job very well.

Trekking boots should be sturdy, waterproof, insulated against cold temperatures and offer adequate ankle support. In addition it is highly recommended that your boots are well worn in to prevent the formation of blisters. A range of suitable boots are on the market and further advice as to which brand names are available can be found online or at your local gear store.

Are down jackets necessary?

They are essential and are worth their weight in gold on summit day. Our guides wear them on all evenings from the first camp up. We recommend a down jacket with at least 800 grams of down fill.

What will happen to my mountain hardware during the climb?

All the mountain hardware (plastics, crampons, ice axes, ropes and snow stakes etc.) are placed in separate bags when we reach Mendoza and from Penitentes are taken directly to base camp by mule, along with the bulk of your expedition equipment. We will not see this equipment until we reach there. A smaller bag/rucksack carries essentials for the preceding days at Confluencia.

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FAQ'S

How warm does my sleeping bag need to be?

Sleeping bags should be rated within the -20C comfort zone. From the first camp upwards it is not unusual to experience frosty nights and a good night's sleep is important to giving you the best chance to climb this mountain. And ensure you get a sleeping bag that has this temperature rating at this comfort zone rather than as its extreme zone.

Our guides take sleeping bags rated to well below -20C to ensure that they are warm at night. A 4 season sleeping bag can be enhanced by using an inner silk or fleece bag (or similar). The idea is to be as comfortable and warm as found a "Bivouac bag" useful to increase the warmth of their bag.

It is important to remember that down sleeping bags work by your own body heating the down that's inside the bag.

Once you have warmed up the bag its down will retain the heat and ensure that you sleep at a temperature that's your own body temperature. For best results it is best to wear as little as possible when inside your sleeping bag. Our guides will often only wear a set of thermals in their bag. It is important for the bag to trap the heat. By wearing multiple layers of clothing your clothing will trap this heat and your bag will not function properly.

How much will my pack weigh during the climb?

A rucksack is worn by the climber at all times. During the trek into base camp and for the short climbs around the peak the content of the rucksack should include: a fleece (for when taking breaks or weather changes) a full set (top and bottom) of waterproofs, sufficient water for the day, snacks, camera equipment, personal medication and a head torch.

Your day to day rucksack should weigh no more than 3 – 4 kg and a rucksack of around 30 – 40 L capacity will more than suffice.

This rucksack can be filled to brim with extra stuff when you check in at the airport. Our guides for example put their down jackets or a thick fleece and a pair of mountain socks in this bag to free up space in their hold luggage.

Once the load carrying between camps starts your load weight will increase to around 18kg. For these carries the focus is on moving up as many supplies to the higher camps as possible and your personal equipment may be reduced to a head torch and Goretex jacket. Once the higher camp has been reached we secure a spot to store our provisions and return virtually weightless back down to sleep at the lower camp.

It is important that your rucksacks have an adjustable waist belt to transfer the weight of your daily load onto your hips and from here onto your legs (your strongest muscles) to do most of the carrying. Another handy feature would be a compartment in which to fit a Platypus/ Camelbak or water bladder.

Our initial check in luggage should be around 22kg.

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FAQ'S

Can I hire out equipment when I am out there?

Yes absolutely, there is ample kit available to hire in Mendoza and the quality and price is comparable to the UK, so if you're not sure about the weight limit for your international flight, renting kit once you arrive is a good option. Once you sign up, you'll be sent more information about this.

Finance

When is the money due for this expedition? What kind of payment do you accept?

Generally deposits are due when you book as we need in turn to book the international flights well in advance. The full amount should be paid four months prior to departure. However having said that, our aim is to get you to the top of this mountain and we understand that personal financial situations can vary. Please contact our friendly office crew to discuss a suitable payment plan should you find raising the funds to be difficult. We have been in your shoes after all and go by the motto of where there's a will there's a way.

What is your cancellation policy? What is your refund policy?

Please read 360 Expeditions terms and conditions carefully before you depart.

Along with your travel insurance for the expedition, we highly recommend trip cancellation insurance. Due to the nature and heavy costs of government and operator permits, 360 Expeditions must adhere to a stringent refund policy.

Money - what currency should I take? US dollars?

The local currency is the Argentinean Peso but the rates to the dollar are unstable and in the past have fluctuated widely, overall the peso is devaluing. American dollars are readily recognised and are easily converted to the local currency. Upon arrival there is a bureau de change at the airport or your guide will be able to advise on currency exchange locations.

For most situations when buying gifts or small goods such as drinks or snacks the use of small denomination US dollars is not a problem, but getting change for a $20 USD bill when buying a $1 USD coke can be a challenge. Larger bills are good for tipping your local crew at the end of the expedition and a sufficient amount should be carried with you. Your 360 leader will advise you in the pre-expedition brief as to what is the correct amount to take on the trip with you. We would recommend taking only USD with you, as GBP and EUR can be difficult to exchange in Mendoza.

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FAQ'S

What additional spending money will we need?

The amount of money you will need really depends on how many presents you wish to buy or how much you wish to drink when you come off the mountain. As a basic rule of thumb, US$400 should be more than adequate for any post expedition spending.

You'll need to carry some cash into the mountains – enough to cover the local crew tips (see below), enough to cover any additional snacks and/or soft drinks you wish to purchase from base camp (these can be quite expensive as everything is brought in by mules) and enough to cover withdrawing from the expedition early (see below).

It is also possible that you may come down from the mountain earlier than scheduled if, for example, you summit early. In this situation, your hotel and meals in Mendoza are not covered by 360 Expeditions. $80-$90/day should cover all this (based on twin sharing rooms).

If I need to leave the expedition early, is there a cost attached?

If for whatever reason there was a need for you to withdraw from the expedition early, you would need to pay for a guide and transport to get you back to Mendoza. This costs around $600 and would need to be paid for in cash. If the withdrawal is medically related, there is a medic at Base Camp who can write a report detailing that you left for medical reasons, which means this $600 should be reclaimable from your travel insurance.

How much do we tip our local crew?

Our local crew work extremely hard to ensure that your expedition runs well. Although tipping is not compulsory, once you experience the hard work the crew put in, tipping often seems the least you can do to say thank you. As a general rule, we suggest around $250 per climber for the entire local crew which is traditionally split between your Argentinian guides and between the full camp crew at Confluencia and Plaza de Mulas, with an additional small tip for your driver and muleteer.

Tipping the 360 leader is entirely at your own discretion.

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FAQ'S

The Weather

What is the best season to climb / which dates will have the most chance for success?

December through February is when the weather is most stable. High winds and snowstorms can occur at any time of the year, Aconcagua is such a massive mountain that it really has its own weather system.

How cold can it get?

The temperature at the top of the mountain can vary widely. Sometimes it is only a degree or two below freezing, but climbers should be prepared for possible temperatures as low as -35 Celsius, especially in conjunction with windchill.

Low down on the mountain you can expect cold mornings (usually frosty). An afternoon snowstorm is not unusual at the lower altitudes.

Travel

Where do I meet my guides?

Your guide will usually meet you at the airport on arrival. Look for someone wearing a 360 logo!

What is the best air route to my destination?

Detailed flight information will be sent to you upon registration. We are ATOL licensed and ensure the most direct route with a reputable airline. Please let us know when booking if you wish to make your own travel arrangements to and from Mendoza or if you wish to travel on different dates.

Entry into Country

Are there any entry or visa requirements?

British nationals don't need a visa to enter or travel through Argentina as a tourist for up to 3 months.

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FAQ'S

Insurance

Do I need special insurance for this expedition?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the expedition. We cannot take you on the mountain without proof of insurance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip to include, at a minimum, medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form, however this can be arranged at a later date, though we would always suggest having cancellation insurance in place at the time of booking. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your insurance details 8 weeks before your departure if we have not received them prior to this.

Electronics

Is there mobile phone reception on the climb?

In Argentina telephones and internet access are readily available in every town. Our guides carry satellite phones in the mountains. The quality of the reception varies from location to location but is generally poor on the mountain. Internet facilities are available at Base Camp.

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360 EXPEDITIONS

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Aconcagua

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1	OPT 2
2 x 30 mins weekday walk 1 x 1 hour weekend walk 1 x 10 mins CVS	1 x 30 mins weekday walk 2 x 1 hour weekend walk 1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1	OPT 2
2 x 45 mins weekday walk 1 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS	1 x 45 mins weekday walk 2 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1	OPT 2
2 x 45 mins weekday walk 1 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS	1 x 45 mins weekday walk 2 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1	OPT 2
3 x 1 hour weekday walk 1 x 4 hours weekend walk 3 x 15 mins CVS	2 x 1 hour weekday walk 2 x 4 hours weekend walk 3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1	OPT 2
3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk 1 x 5 hours weekend walk 3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS	2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk 2 x 5 hours weekend walk 3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1	OPT 2
3 x 2 hours weekday walk 1 x 6 hours weekend walk 3 x 30 mins CVS	2 x 3 hours weekday walk 2 x 6 hours weekend walk 3 x 30 mins CVS

360 EXPEDITIONS

"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.

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