SPICE ROADS
CYCLING

TOURING

# NORTHWEST ARGENTINA BY BICYCLE

Tour Code
**ARG-NWA**

**9** DAYS
**8** NIGHTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Destinations | Argentina |
| Tour Meets | Salta |
| Tour Ends | Salta |
| Fly in to | Martín Miguel de Güemes International Airport (SLA) |
| Fly out of | Martín Miguel de Güemes International Airport (SLA) |
| Group Size | 4-14 riders |
| Minimum Age | 18 (on scheduled departures) |

## ACTIVITY PROFILE

| | |
|---|---|
| **8** Cycling days | **509** km Total cycling distance |
| **72** km Avg distance / day | **626** m Avg climbing / day |

## PRICING

| | |
|---|---|
| Price | US$ 4,995 |
| Bike Hire (Mountain Bike) | US$ 765 |
| Single Supplement | US$ 620 |

## DEPARTURES

17 Jan - 25 Jan 2027
14 Mar - 22 Mar 2027
16 May - 24 May 2027
19 Sep - 27 Sep 2027

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ SpiceRoads jersey
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Support vehicle
- ✓ Guide(s)
- ✓ Meals (as indicated)
- ✓ Airport drop off
- ✓ Hotel pick up
- ✓ Hotel drop off
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Snacks and drinks
- ✓ Entrance fees

## WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Domestic flights
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Tips

## TRIP PROFILE

We ride a total of **around 500 km over seven cycling days**. Daily distances average 72 kilometres, with most days between 55 and 85 kilometres and climbing of about 626 metres a day. The week opens in the Calchaquí Valley, with four days south along Ruta 40 through cactus desert, weaving villages, and the rock corridor of the Quebrada de las Flechas. A day in the vineyards around Cafayate breaks up the riding before we turn north through the Quebrada de las Conchas. The last two days push into the Quebrada de Humahuaca and onto the Puna, a treeless high plateau of salt flats and coloured rock. The longest day is **118 kilometres with 861 metres of climbing**, on gravel through the Quebrada de las Flechas. Several stages climb above 3,000 metres above sea level, where the thin air adds to the effort. The trip is fully supported, and your guide's expert knowledge of the area and terrain means that you always know what is coming up in terms of distance and difficulty. This makes a tremendous difference, as does the constant supply of water and refreshments along the way.

**Suitability:** This tour rewards solid fitness and some experience of riding day after day on mixed surfaces. Distances run from 53 to 118 kilometres, most days between 55 and 85, with a good share on gravel through remote desert. The climbs are steady rather than savage, but several days cross 3,000 metres above sea level, where thinner air makes any effort feel harder. The longest day can be shortened by joining partway, with the van close by, so it need not be the deciding factor. In the months before you travel, plan to ride three or four times a week, with one longer ride at the weekend to build up to back-to-back days. This tour is **not suitable for complete beginners or anyone who has not ridden consecutive days before**.

**Biking Conditions:** The route runs roughly sixty per cent paved and forty per cent gravel, but the gravel is concentrated rather than spread. The two big unpaved days are Day 3 to Molinos and the long Day 4 into Cafayate, both almost entirely on gravel. The day around Cafayate, the return to Salta, and the cloud-forest climb out of La Caldera are largely paved. On Day 8 we ride a stretch directly on the salt crust of Salinas Grandes, a surface unlike anything else on the trip. Most of the gravel is well compacted, though loose or corrugated patches turn up on the remoter western stages. While much of the route is on quiet roads with minimal traffic, we will be regularly sharing the roads with other vehicles, including cars, motorbikes, and buses. We generally ride rain or shine, but we can adjust the planned route based on the guide's discretion or your comfort. It's all part of the adventure! Throughout the ride, the support vehicle is always nearby to offer refuge to any weary cyclists.

**Accommodation:** We stay in small boutique hotels and characterful lodges chosen for setting and local identity rather than luxury. Several are converted colonial houses and haciendas, with thick adobe walls, cobbled courtyards, and rooms finished in regional craft and textiles. One night is in a 17th-century hacienda in the Calchaquí Valley; elsewhere we base ourselves in family-run inns within walking distance of the town plaza. The kitchens lean on local Andean cooking, and breakfasts are generous and usually homemade. Gardens and terraces, and a pool at some properties, give somewhere to sit after a long day. Every property has private en-suite rooms and includes breakfast. Please be aware that some older or more characterful properties may show signs of wear and the service pace can be more relaxed than you might be used to. For larger groups we may occasionally split the group between nearby properties or substitute a similar hotel if the listed one is not available.

## Day 1: Meet in Salta

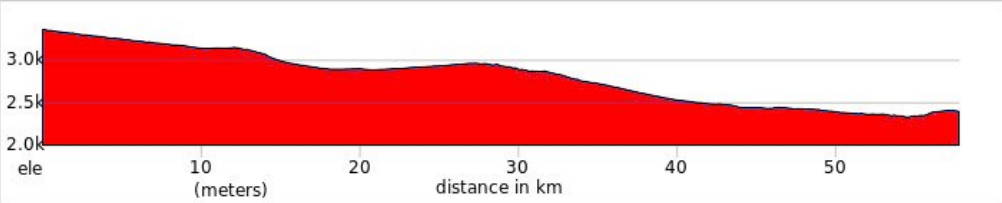
We meet in **Salta** in the afternoon for a briefing on the week ahead and a bike fit, then take a gentle ride through the centre to loosen the legs before the riding starts in earnest. Salta sits in a green Andean valley, and its colonial core still holds its shape: a pink cathedral, the old *cabildo*, arcaded fronts in ochre and white, and *peñas* where folk music runs late into the night. We recommend arriving in Salta a day early, so you are rested and ready to be picked up in the morning. Please let us know if you need assistance with airport transfers or pre-tour hotel bookings.

Inkai (or similar) Dinner

## Day 2: Salta → Cachi

We leave Salta by van and climb west into the mountains, the tarmac giving way to switchbacks as the green valley falls behind. The ride starts at the pass of Piedra del Molino, 3,360 metres above sea level, and from here the road runs downhill for most of the day. It drops through **Parque Nacional Los Cardones**, where *cardón* cacti stand three to five metres tall in ranks across the hillsides, their candelabra arms throwing long shadows over the road. The gradient stays in our favour as the valley opens and the first adobe villages appear. Cachi waits at the bottom: cobbled streets, a whitewashed church on a shaded plaza, and snow on the peaks behind. After we settle in there is time to walk the village before dinner together.

Hostería de Cachi (or similar) Breakfast, Lunch

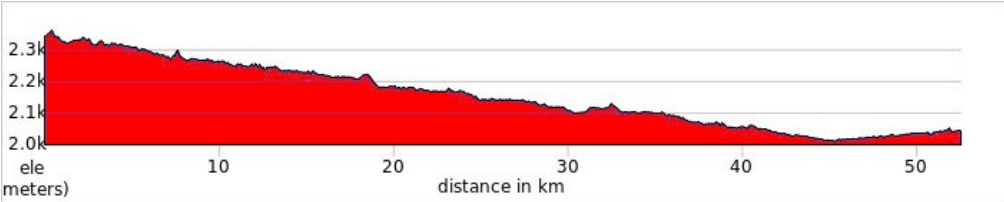



Ride 58km +204m -1170m

## Day 3: Cachi → Molinos

Today we ride **Ruta 40**, the road that runs the length of Argentina from Patagonia to the Bolivian border, here laid over an old indigenous trading path. This stretch follows the Calchaquí Valley floor in long, easy curves between walls of banded rock, the river on one side and vines climbing the lower slopes on the other. It is a day to look around rather than push. At Seclantás we turn onto the Camino de los Artesanos, where families of poncho weavers work handlooms set up in their doorways, patterns building row by row in natural-dyed wool. The road carries on to Molinos and a 17th-century colonial hacienda with a cobbled courtyard and a church weathered by three centuries of Andean sun, where we stop for lunch. If there is energy left in the afternoon, the *bodega* at Colomé and its James Turrell light museum are worth the detour.

Hacienda de Molinos (or similar) Breakfast, Lunch

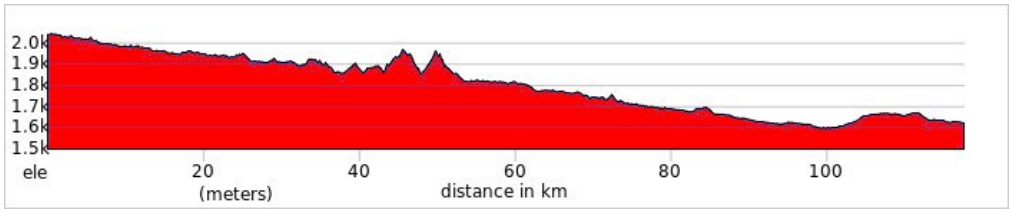



Ride 53km +460m -759m

## Day 4: Molinos → Cafayate

This is the longest day of the tour, and it earns its length. We leave Molinos on back roads through stone-walled farms and dry riverbeds, then enter the canyon country between the upper and lower valley. The **Quebrada de las Flechas** is the centrepiece: a long corridor of sandstone fins and blades, folded and tilted upward until they point at the sky like rows of arrowheads. The light changes them by the hour, and there is every reason to stop often. Beyond the *quebrada* the valley widens, the surface improves, and the air warms as the desert gives way to the first vines of Cafayate. Anyone who would rather ride less can join partway, at Angastaco, and take the best of the route from there into town, with the van close by throughout. Cafayate sits in a bowl of mountains, its streets lined with *bodegas* and small restaurants. We break for lunch on the road, and the afternoon is free, with dinner on your own in town.

Killa Cafayate (or similar) Breakfast, Lunch

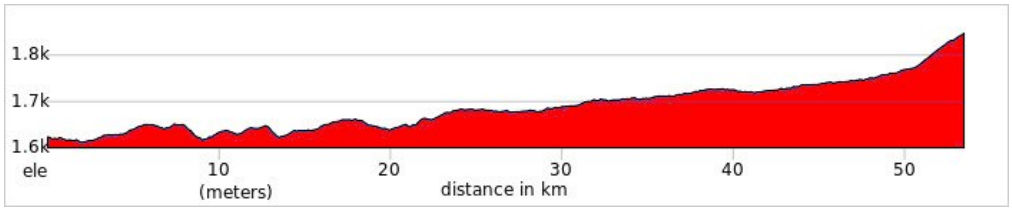



Ride 118km +861m -1279m

## Day 5: Cafayate → Quilmes Ruins → Cafayate

After yesterday's long stage, today is gentler and loops back to Cafayate, so there is no distant goal to chase. The road south runs through one of South America's strangest wine landscapes: low vines planted in sandy desert soil well above sea level, fed by snowmelt and burned by hard ultraviolet light, which together give the aromatic white Torrontés and the dark Malbecs that made Cafayate's name. We ride as far as Tolombón, then transfer the short distance to the ruins of **Quilmes**, a fortified city built into the hillside by people who held out against Spanish conquest for more than a century. A walk through the terraced walls traces a community that once numbered in the thousands. We break for lunch at a winery working biodynamically at altitude. The afternoon back in Cafayate is yours for the market, a *bodega*, or a shaded table on the plaza, and dinner is on your own in town.

Killa Cafayate (or similar) Breakfast, Lunch

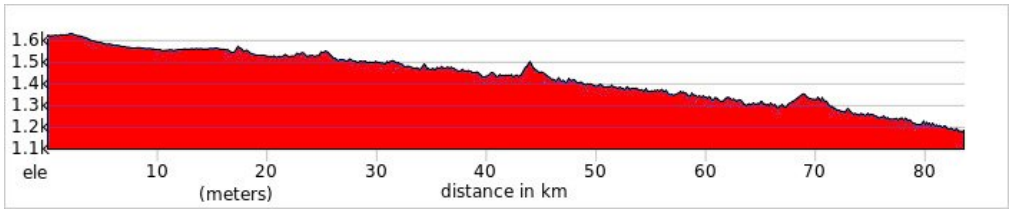



Ride 54km +390m -166m

## Day 6: Cafayate → Salta

We leave Cafayate heading northeast, and the **Quebrada de las Conchas** begins almost straight away. The canyon walls rise on both sides in bands of terracotta, rust, and deep red, the colour shifting as the road bends through the rock. The river keeps pace for much of the way, and we pass formations that locals have named over generations: the natural amphitheatre of El Anfiteatro, the toad of El Sapo, the spires of Los Castillos. A naturalist rides with us today to explain the geology, linking the colours and shapes to the seabeds and lakebeds that were folded and lifted here over millions of years. We stop for a regional lunch midway, then take the van for the last stretch into Salta. Salta feels lively after the quiet of the valley, and the evening is free for dinner out.

Inkai (or similar) Breakfast, Lunch



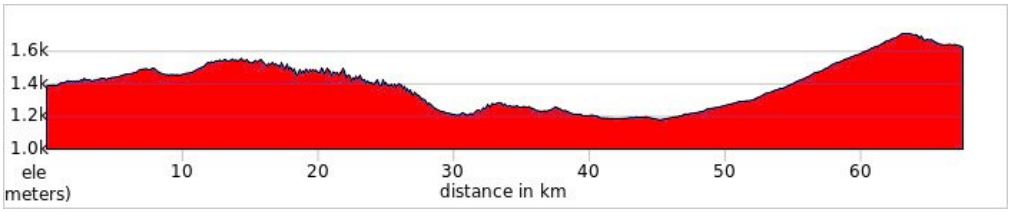

Ride 84km +779m -1218m

## Day 7: Salta → Tilcara

We drive east to La Caldera, a colonial town on the old Camino Real that once linked Lima to Buenos Aires, and start riding there. The route climbs north through the Yungas, a subtropical

cloud forest folded into the eastern slope of the Andes, where the air turns humid and the roadside shifts from ferns and orchids to bamboo and hanging moss. It is a different world from the dry valleys behind us. From the forest we transfer north into the **Quebrada de Humahuaca**, a long, narrow valley listed by UNESCO for its layered pre-Inca, Inca, and colonial past. The hillsides here run with mineral colour, sharpest in the afternoon light. We check in at Tilcara, then visit the **Pucará de Tilcara**, a hilltop fortress set above the valley. Dinner is on your own among the town's small restaurants.

Patio Alto (or similar) Breakfast, Lunch

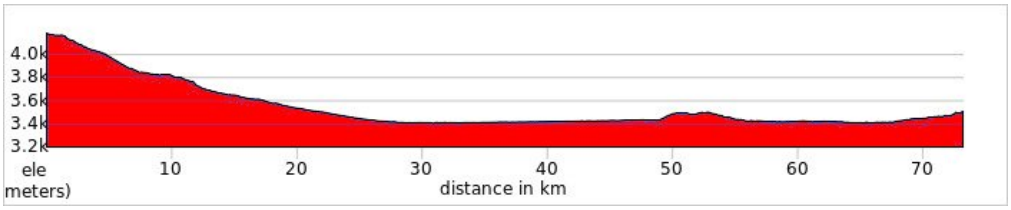



Ride 68km +1340m -1103m

## Day 8: Tilcara → Salinas Grandes → Tilcara

The day starts with a drive up the Cuesta de Lipán, twenty-five switchbacks stacked through hillsides striped in ochre and violet, topping out at a pass 4,170 metres above sea level. The change at the top is total: the mountains fall away and the Puna spreads flat and treeless to every horizon. We unload here and ride down onto **Salinas Grandes**, one of the largest salt flats in South America. Cycling across the salt is one of the strangest stretches of the whole trip, the crust cracked into hexagons underfoot, no gradient and no landmark, only wind and the sound of the tyres. We stop for lunch at a small restaurant run by the local community beside the flat. The ride finishes at San Francisco de Alfarcito, and from there we drive back down to Tilcara, where a farewell dinner of Andean cooking and altitude wine closes the riding.

Patio Alto (or similar) Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

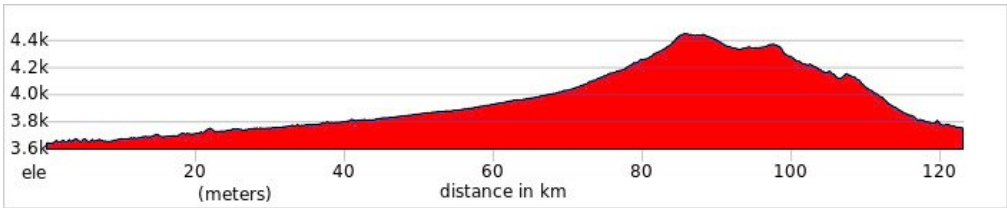



Ride 73km +349m -1025m

## Day 9: Jujuy/Salta departure

There is time for a last walk through Tilcara before the transfers leave for the airport at Jujuy, around an hour and three quarters away, for midday flights to Buenos Aires, or to Salta for early-afternoon departures. We can drop anyone crossing into Chile for San Pedro de Atacama at Purmamarca, to pick up the border bus. Argentina rewards a longer stay. Further up the Quebrada de Humahuaca, the town of Humahuaca and the fourteen-colour ridge of the Hornocal make a striking day out. Buenos Aires is worth several days for its food, tango, and grand avenues. Further south, Patagonia is one of the great wilderness regions on earth, with the Perito Moreno glacier near El Calafate and the peaks of El Chaltén. Please let us know if you need assistance with airport transfers or post-tour hotel bookings, as these are not included in the main price. We are happy to help you organise these final details for your journey home or an extended stay in Argentina.

Breakfast




Disclaimer: The adventure cycling tours we operate often go beyond the beaten track, and the countries where we ride are not always predictable. Due to these reasons, it is occasionally necessary to reroute or update itineraries. Our guarantee is that we will not change a trip unless for safety or to improve it. Our listed hotels are always accurate at the time of writing, but should we have to change any hotel, it will always be for a similar or better one.

## NUTS & BOLTS

### Bikes

Because some people can't imagine going on a trip without their own beloved bicycle, we do not provide them as part of this tour. However, you can hire bikes locally for the price listed in the tour pricing section. We provide high-quality **Topmega Thor hardtail mountain bikes** with 29-inch wheels, front suspension, and a Shimano 24-speed groupset, suited to both the smooth valley roads and the rougher gravel stages. Helmets are included. **E-bikes** are available in a limited fleet and must be requested well in advance. If you bring your own bike, we recommend a mountain bike or a sturdy gravel bike. Whichever bike you choose, please ensure it is in excellent mechanical order before arrival.

### Bike Repairs

Basic spares and tools are carried by the guide and on the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. Carrying a basic tool kit, a spare tube and a pump while riding is recommended.

### Safety

Wearing a helmet is required on all our biking adventures and is non negotiable. If you do not wear a helmet you will not be allowed to cycle. Your tour leader is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.

### Guides

You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 9 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

## THE NITTY GRITTY

### Passports and Visas

Travellers from Australia, the United Kingdom, the US, Canada and the EU **do not need a visa** to enter Argentina for tourist stays of **up to 90 days**. Upon arrival, you will receive an entry stamp in your passport. You must be able to show an onward or return ticket and proof of sufficient funds for your stay. Citizens of certain countries may require a visa; these can be processed through Argentine embassies and consulates abroad. You can check whether you need a visa via the link here. If you require a visa, **please contact the nearest embassy or consulate well in advance of your departure date.** All travellers are advised to carry a **valid passport with at least six months of validity** remaining beyond the intended period of stay. Entry requirements can change, so we recommend checking with your local Argentine embassy or the official Argentine immigration website before travelling.

## Health

Recommended vaccinations include **typhoid, hepatitis A, tetanus and polio**. Depending on the regions you visit, additional precautions may be advised. See here for more recommendations to help you prepare. **Please speak to your doctor or physician for the most up-to-date information before departure.**

## Weather

Argentina's climate varies enormously by region and season. The best cycling conditions in **Patagonia and the Lake District** are generally during the Southern Hemisphere summer **(November to March)**, when days are long and temperatures are mild. The **Andean northwest and Mendoza wine regions** are best visited in spring **(September to November)** and autumn **(March to May)**. Rain, wind and cold can occur at any time — particularly in Patagonia — so **layering and a quality waterproof jacket are essential**.

## Food

Meals are included as per the itinerary where **B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner**. Most meals feature traditional Argentine dishes, with an emphasis on grilled meats, fresh produce and regional specialities. **Special dietary requirements can be catered for — please let us know at the time of booking.** In more remote areas, options may be limited, but we always do our best to accommodate your needs.

## Drink

Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. **Water, refreshments and soft drinks are included** in the tour price while riding. Soft drinks, alcoholic beverages and other beverages during meals are **NOT included**. Beer, wine and other alcoholic drinks are almost always available but are not included.

## Solo Travelers

SpiceRoads **does not require you to pay a surcharge** for travelling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveller of the same gender and if we cannot match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share, **a single supplement is payable** to guarantee your own room. The cost of the single supplement is listed above.

## Extra Expenses

We recommend setting aside a few extra **US Dollars or Argentine Pesos** for possible incidentals that might arise. It is always wise to have some **cash on hand** in case of ATM absence or card issues, particularly in rural and remote areas. It is also customary to **tip local tour guides and drivers**; the amount you give should reflect the level of service you receive.

## Money

The **Argentine Peso (ARS)** is the official currency of Argentina. ATMs are widely available in Buenos Aires and larger cities, but **can be scarce in remote areas such as Patagonia** — we recommend withdrawing sufficient cash before heading into the countryside. It is advisable to **notify your bank before departure** and ensure your cards are enabled for international use. **Exchange rates and regulations in Argentina can change frequently**, so check current conditions before your trip.

## Be Aware

Argentina, like many countries, has areas where **petty crime can occur**, especially in larger cities and busy tourist areas. Common incidents include pickpocketing and bag snatching in crowded places, transport hubs and markets. It is advisable to **stay vigilant, avoid displaying valuables** such as expensive jewellery or large amounts of cash, and **use ATMs in secure, well-lit locations during daylight hours**. Always follow the guidance of your SpiceRoads guide regarding local safety conditions.

# GENERAL BOOKING INFO

If this is the tour for you here's what you need to do to confirm your place:

## FLEXIBLE BOOKING CONDITIONS

Booking a SpiceRoads cycling adventure is easy and we try to do everything possible to make sure you have full flexibility and peace of mind. We do not require a deposit to hold your place on a tour

and once full payment has been made your money is protected in our client account and you have the flexibility to cancel or change your booking if needed.

## CONFIRMING YOUR BOOKING

Just complete our online booking form or send your booking details offline (email or post), and we will confirm your participation. No deposit is needed to confirm your place on a SpiceRoads tour.

You are advised to read our Booking Conditions in full before you make your payment and should you require further clarifications of any of the conditions below, please email us or call our office.

## TRIP STATUS

There is a minimum number of participants (usually 2) required to enable the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to Depart'. Once a trip is guaranteed to depart you are free to book your flights and make other travel arrangements. If the trip status is 'Limited' will mean we have only a small number of spaces available for booking. If you are unsure about the trip status, please email us or call our office.

## BOOKING ONLINE

From the tour page, click the 'Book Now' link. All departures for this tour will appear, just select the date you'd like to travel. For the next steps, you'll need to know the names of the people travelling. If you wish you can also provide extra details such as passport numbers, height (for bike hire), or you can add that later by logging into Manage My Trip (we'll set up an account for you automatically if you don't already have one). Our system will contact you from time to time to fill in the missing information, as it will be required before departure. However, if the trip that you are booking offers a child discount, you will have to fill out the date of birth of each rider (so we can calculate the appropriate discount).

If you are having any problems please send us an email, or give us a call (+66 026 3295) and one of our travel specialists will assist you with your booking.

## BOOKING OFFLINE

Just call us or send an email indicating which trip you want to join and we will happily send you a list of questions and process your booking for you.

## DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS

We do not require a deposit or full payment to book a place for you on a tour.

The balance of the tour's cost (final invoice) will need to be paid 60 days before the departure date with fees for any bicycle rental(s), single supplement(s) and extra hotel nights.

In the case where a booking is made when there are less than 60 days until the tour departure date, the tour's cost should be paid in full within 72 hours of receiving an invoice from SpiceRoads. Payment can be made by credit card using our online payment gateway or by bank transfer. When making payment online you will need to confirm that you have read these booking conditions during the "checkout" process, which equates to agreeing to the terms of services and stipulations as indicated in this document.

In all cases, tour fees need to be paid "in full" before participation in a tour. No person(s) will be allowed to join a tour without fully settling their invoice and receiving a confirmation number from SpiceRoads.

The exception can be made for last-minute miscellaneous fees that can be paid locally (visas, additional local hotel bookings, etc.) can be settled on the day of arrival.

## FULL FLEXIBILITY FOR TOUR CANCELATIONS

If the tour is cancelled or postponed by SpiceRoads because we didn't make the trip numbers and the tour can't run, we will make a full cash refund (by bank transfer or on your credit card).

If the tour is cancelled for any other reason, including due to Covid related travel restrictions, we will give you a full credit (with no deductions for admin or any other small-print item) to use on any SpiceRoads tour with no time limit. (Exceptions being flights, special permits and other non-refundable items and these will be advised when booking the trip).

Before paying for your tour, you can cancel your booking with no charge and up until 40 days before departure, you can change your booking to another travel date or move your booking onto another SpiceRoads tour with no charges.

If you need to cancel after you have made full payment, please see our cancellation policy.

## Loyalty Riders Club

For those who have been on several long tours with us, we reward customer loyalty by offering repeat customers a special discount off the tour price (excludes single supplement and bike rental). If this is your fourth scheduled tour or more you will receive a 5% discount. If this is your eighth scheduled tour or more we will extend a 10% discount. The discount will be reflected in your online booking, but please contact us if any questions. Loyalty discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Note: Only tours of 7 days or more will be applicable for a loyalty discount.

## International Flights

International flights, to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. Once your tour is Guaranteed to Depart you can book your flight. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times. We would only cancel a trip for an extreme circumstance, but in that case, where we cancel your trip, we cannot be liable for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made. Please claim any losses from your travel insurance that you acquired when you booked your holiday.

## Newsletter

Our adventure travel e-newsletter is full of travel news, trip information, interesting stories and contests. To avoid missing out on special offers and updates from SpiceRoads, be sure to subscribe.

## CONTACT US

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