



848 S. Swadley St. Lakewood, CO 80228  
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## **Tupungato / El Plomo, Double-Feature Expedition- Itinerary**

**Tupungato rises majestically above the high crest of the Andes east of Santiago, and carries the distinction of being the highest peak south of Aconcagua. It is the objective of only a handful of expeditions per year, and is truly a wilderness expedition. Slightly more technical than the normal routes on Aconcagua, the long approach and remote setting add up to make this a much more serious undertaking. The word will soon be out, but for now Tupungato is a pristine big-mountain challenge similar to what Aconcagua must have been like 50 years ago.**

**El Plomo is the highest summit visible above Santiago, and is part of the chain of glaciated peaks known as the "Chilean Alps". A short approach and moderate terrain make this a great acclimatization climb. Experience has shown that acclimatizing on a 5000 Meter peak greatly increases summit success on an Andean giant like Tupungato.**

**The combination of these two beautiful and challenging mountains makes this an expedition for those seeking a high-adventure experience!**

**Day 1** After arrival in Santiago, we will be transferred by private mini-bus to the 4-star Hotel Kennedy. Following an afternoon team meeting, the guides will conduct individual equipment checks. There are several outdoor clothing and climbing equipment shops in the city, and any last-minute needs can easily be rented or purchased.

We invite anyone interested in the history, culture, and architecture of Santiago to join a guided city tour this afternoon.

Tonight, we'll have a group dinner, sampling the rich Chilean cuisine and world-famous wines!

**Day 2** Today, we'll leave city life behind, and begin the acclimatization process with a day-hike into the Yerba Loca Park Reserve. Native wild-flowers are abundant, and we may even be treated to our first sighting of the impressive Andean Condor.

Following our hike, we'll check into the ski-area chalet of La Cornisa at Farellones. The oldest ski center in South America, Farellones is only minutes from the outer Santiago suburbs. A good soak in the hot-tub will ease our travel-weary bodies, and then a relaxed fondue dinner.

**Day 3** The El Plomo segment of our expedition begins with a drive to the top of the ski-area of La Parva, where we'll meet our Arrieros and mules. Mules will carry all of our group and personal equipment, leaving us free to enjoy the trek with only a light day-pack.

The trek to the first camp, Piedra Numerada, is gently rolling and without net elevation gain. We'll obtain great views of our climbing route on El Plomo throughout the day.

It's a relatively short hike to Piedra Numerada, typically taking 3-4 hours. You may be surprised how comfortable our camps are, with a large dome dining-tent, tables, stools, and even electric lights!

**Day 4** We'll pack up camp after breakfast, and start hiking as the Arrieros loads the mules. The trek to the second camp, La Olla, is a steady but gentle climb through moraines and occasional snowfields, taking most groups about 6 hours.

La Olla is approximately the same elevation as where we'll be Base Camped on Tupungato. Our 2 nights spent here will be prove valuable to a safe and thorough acclimatization, and will greatly increase summit safety and success on Tupunato.

After dinner, we'll make final preparations for our early morning summit attempt on El Plomo.

**Day 5** Today begins with a pre-dawn breakfast, and will continues with many hours of strenuous hiking and climbing. Typically, 4-6 hours are needed for the ascent, and another 2-3 for the descent.

For most of the route, we'll be following a well-traveled path, with only a few sections of low-angle snow travel.

Near the summit, we'll see the site where mummified remains of a teenage girl were found. Several Inca-era mummies have been found throughout the central the Andes. This one, like most of the others, was apparently a human sacrifice. Forensic experts believe the girl walked high up onto El Plomo while still alive, and then was poisoned. The col, dry air has preserved her remains, which are now housed at the Archeological Museum in Santiago.



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**Day 6** Our Arrieros mules will return this morning to transport our loads back to La Parva. We'll hike out today on a different route than that we followed on the hike in, gaining a high plateau called the Cancha Carreta. We'll even have the option of summiting El Pintor, a small peak on the plateau with fantastic views of the surrounding Andes, and Santiago far below.

Our transportation will be waiting for us at the top of the ski-lifts, and we'll transfer back to the Hotel Kennedy in Santiago. Hot showers, cold beer, and soft beds await! Tonight we'll have another chance to sample Chilean cuisine and wines.

**Day 7** Back to the mountains!

We'll load up and leave the hotel after an early breakfast, headed for the valley of the Rio Maipo, one of the world's premiere wine producing regions. First stop will be the police check-point in the village of San Jose de Maipo, where we need to fill out required forms. Tupungato is on Chile's frontier with Argentina, and there's a few special procedures we need to follow. Second stop is another control point in the canyon of the Rio Colorado, where we need to leave our passports with the special Border Police. This seems to be their way of guaranteeing we don't make any dubious passages into Argentina, a real problem a few decades ago when smuggling cigarettes and electronic goods was a lucrative passtime!

By mid-day we'll be at our trailhead at Alfalfal, where the Arrieros and mules will be waiting for us. There's time for us to enjoy a picnic, while the loads are being weighed and loaded.

The trek to our first camp, Banos Azules, usually takes groups 4 or 5 hours. Although the terrain is semi-arid, we'll see a variety of wild-flowers. There also seems to be an unusual concentration of Condors here, and it's common to see a dozen or more in the sky at once!

**Day 8** The trek continues today to our second camp at Vegas de los Flojos. We continue to follow the course of the Rio Colorado, which by now is only a fraction the size it was at the start of yesterday's hike. Many impressive glaciated peaks come into view today, including Chimbote, Polleras, and even a few fleeting glimpses of Tupungato.

Vegas de los Flojos is set beside a beautiful pond that captures reflections of the icy peaks on the Chile/Argentina frontier. We may even be visited here by guanacos (wild llama relatives), or flocks of wild Andean ducks and geese.

Today will undoubtedly be a longer and more strenuous trek than yesterday, typically taking 7-8 hours.

**Day 9** The Arrieros will want to start early today. They'll move ahead of us, dropping the loads at Base Camp and returning to Vega de los Flojos. There's not sufficient pasture this high to sustain the mules, even for a night. We'll have an easier day today than yesterday, 4-5 hours being typical.

Base Camp Las Espanoles will be home for the next few days, and will remain as a refuge we can drop down to in case of extreme weather or medical emergency.

Base Camp is also where we change climbing styles; from heavy-weight luxury-style to light-weight minimalist-style. The dining tent, propane tanks, and solar panels stay put at Las Espanoles!

**Day 10** Today will be a much needed and appreciated rest day at Base Camp. As important as resting fatigued joints and muscles will be giving our bodies some extra time to acclimatize to the increasing altitude. Take advantage of a leisure day to read, write, wash your socks...

The guides will also take time today to demonstrate the use of the emergency medical equipment; the hyperbaric chamber and the oxygen cylinder.

**Day 11** We'll begin moving up Tupungato today in classic expedition style. This means we'll shuttle food, fuel, and equipment up the mountain and returning to a lower camp to sleep, and making a summit attempt only when we've stocked a high camp and our bodies have fully acclimatized.

Today we'll take loads to Camp 1, and return to base Camp for a final night in 5-star comfort.

**Day 12** With the remaining loads, we'll move up and establish Camp 1.

**Days 13-19** We'll continue moving up in this fashion to Camp 3, at 5,800M. A summit attempt from here usually takes 4-6 hours for the ascent, and another 3-4 hours for descent. In some cases, due to weather, route conditions, or especially fit and acclimatized climbers, it may be desirable to attempt the summit from Camp 2, at 5,250M. This would add several hours to the summit climbing day.



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The climbing on summit day involves mostly steep hiking over uneven, and sometimes loose, terrain. Depending on the annual snowfall, there may be snow travel up to 40 degrees. We will need to cross a short section (20 M) of steep rock scrambling that usually requires us to be roped and belayed. Above this rock section is a broad coulior, usually snow-filled, that we follow to the summit plateau. The climbing in the coulior is up to 40 degrees in steepness, and somewhat exposed to rock-fall. Helmets here add to the safety of the team members. Once we gain the summit plateau, the hardest work is behind us. A false summit is visible and the true summit is another 30-45 minutes beyond. Visible from the summit is the mighty Aconcagua, some 50 miles to the north.

By the evening of day 19, we should be back to the comforts of Base Camp.

**Day 20** Experience has shown that rather than use mules to assist us in the trek back to Alfalfal, a helicopter is more practical. The helicopter needs the cool, calm morning conditions for the safest flying, and this suits us well, as we need to be hiking early. We won't be making camps, we'll be hiking out to the trailhead in on very long day. We can expect 10-12 hours of trekking today. It will all seem worth it, though, when we're back at the Hotel Kennedy in Santiago tonight, celebrating over a gourmet dinner!

**Day 21** You'll enjoy a day of relaxing poolside at the hotel, or shopping in the city until it's time to transfer to the airport.

We'd be happy to arrange any other flights, hotels, or car rentals you might need to extend your visit!